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# Defense Report

AUSA



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## Replacing Military Pistols—A Non-Starter That Is Threatening Combat Readiness

Since a 1978 Committee study revealed 25 makes and models of handguns and 100 types of ammunition in use by the Department of Defense, the House Appropriations Committee has been pressing for significant reductions in the number and types of personal weapons in military arsenals. At that time, the Committee ordered the military to standardize and provided the Army \$2 million to test and evaluate 9mm pistols which could fire NATO's standard ammunition. The Committee simultaneously curtailed funding for .45 caliber ammunition and spare parts. That action is threatening our combat readiness today.

In response, the DoD reduced the types of ammunition stocked from 100 to 25; and the Army conducted competitive firing tests of several 9mm pistols. When none fully met the services' operational requirements, especially for reliability, the Army cancelled the planned initial procurement of 220,000 9mm handguns. This required that it continue to rely upon its proven .45 caliber pistol.

Meanwhile, both the Senate and the House Armed Services Committees have steadfastly refused to authorize procurement of 9mm weapons. Until this year they have also followed the HAC's lead and virtually eliminated authorization to procure ammunition and spare parts for the existing .45 caliber weapons. As a result, spare parts shortages have created a backlog of 100,000 unserviceable pistols, most of which are repairable; and the services have been required to expend war reserve ammunition in training to the point where stocks of .45 caliber ammunition will be exhausted by FY85.

If it weren't so serious, this situation might be comical—it is certainly ludicrous. The Congress has been denying the services money they urgently need to procure ammunition and spare parts required to maintain combat readiness of a basic weapon system while one Committee, at least, urges procurement of an entirely different weapon which has failed its tests, which has not been shown to increase combat readiness or capability, and which, justifiably, ranks low in the equipment priorities of the armed services. Surely, the Congress should postpone 9mm handgun procurement indefinitely and apply the expected \$325 million program cost to .45 caliber ammunition and spare parts and other more urgently needed military projects.

**DR 83-33**