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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

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PROCUREMENT, LOGISTICS,  
AND READINESS DIVISION

March 12, 1982

B-206685

The Honorable Richard C. White  
Chairman, Subcommittee on  
Investigations  
Committee on Armed Services  
House of Representatives



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Dear Mr. Chairman:

Subject: Inspection of Unserviceable .45 Caliber  
Pistols in Storage (PLRD-82-60)

In response to your January 18, 1982, request we have (1) inspected a sample of the .45 caliber pistols in storage classified as unserviceable, and (2) determined the number of pistols rehabilitated each fiscal year from 1976 through 1981. We have also developed information regarding the condition of pistols in storage and the possibilities for repairing them economically. In developing this information, we were made even more aware of supply problems which have occurred because contractors are not delivering pistol parts as required. The detailed results of our inspection of unserviceable pistols, the data on pistol rehabilitation, and photographs illustrating the condition of these pistols are shown in enclosures I and II.

Our on-site inspection of a sample of unserviceable pistols in storage showed that about 53,700 generally are complete or are missing only a few minor parts. Most of these pistols can be repaired at nominal cost. About 41,000 unserviceable pistols have been stripped of barrels and slides to support the supply system but can still be repaired economically. An additional 15,200 pistols have been stripped of all parts and classified as condemned by the Marine Corps and Navy because they believe replacing stripped parts would be too costly.

Our inspection and tests of unserviceable pistols were made on a sample basis at the Anniston Army Depot, Anniston, Alabama; the Naval Weapons Repair Center, Crane, Indiana; and the Marine Corps Logistics Base, Albany, Georgia. At each storage location, we selected a random sample of pistols for visual inspection by inspectors assigned by the services. The sample pistols were functionally checked by manually operating their mechanisms but were not test fired. When necessary, pistols were disassembled

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for inspection, and the inspector's remarks, along with our own observations, were recorded for each pistol examined. Additionally, maintenance inspectors tested a small number of condemned pistols for metal fatigue.

Data on rehabilitation of pistols were extracted from repair records by service personnel. We did not examine the unserviceable pistols in storage at the Marine Corps Logistics Base, Barstow, California, or pistols held by the Coast Guard.

Complete pistols being held for rehabilitation are for the most part in good to very good condition and likely can be rehabilitated within the normal overhaul cost ranges (see table IV). In fact, field inspection tags attached to some of these pistols showed that field inspectors considered them serviceable (see photograph on p. 5). Tags on other pistols showed that they had been turned in because parts were not available to repair them in the field (see photograph on p. 6). Our inspections showed that most of these pistols, over 90 percent, are functional (see table I). The pistols' metal finishes ranged from minimally scratched to well worn, and some pistols had minor parts broken, worn, or missing. Inspection indicated that only from 1 to 6 percent are unreparable because of cracked or broken frames. Historically, the condemnation rate during pistol rebuilding programs has averaged about 8 percent (see table III).

About 41,000 pistols held by the Army and Marine Corps have been stripped of their barrels and slides (see photograph on p. 7). In our March 8, 1982, report, 1/ we found that critical shortages of parts have occurred because, since 1978, contractors have repeatedly failed to deliver parts. Consequently, the slides and barrels were stripped from these pistols to support pistol rebuild lines and parts requisitions from field units. Since the slide and barrel are the most expensive replacement parts on a .45 caliber pistol, the cost to rehabilitate these pistols will be above the normal overhaul cost (see table IV).

About 15,200 pistols have been completely stripped and classified as condemned (see photograph on p. 8). Most of these pistols, which are held by the Marine Corps, were classified as condemned because the Marine Corps believed replacing all the stripped parts would be too expensive. Many of the stripped parts were never used and are still available (see photograph on p. 9).

We also found that the Army and the Navy have condemned a small number of pistols for defects which do not affect their

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1/"Proposed Program for New 9-mm. Handguns Should Be Reexamined (PLRD-82-42), App. I, p. 13.

performance. For example, the Army condemned pistols because an extra hole had been bored in the frame, even though the hole did not affect performance and was considered acceptable by quality control guidance. The Navy condemned pistols because their serial numbers were duplicates of those on other pistols. For some pistols, the reason for condemnation could not be determined.

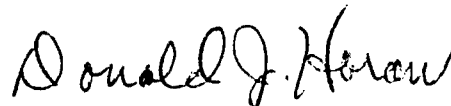
To date, only a small number of pistols has been condemned through questionable inspection criteria. But this number could increase substantially if a large-scale pistol rebuilding program were initiated.

In summary, Defense inventories contain about 109,900 unserviceable pistols, most of which can be rebuilt. About 53,700 unserviceable pistols in the Defense inventory are in basically good condition and can be rebuilt at the service's normal rebuild cost. Because of parts shortages, about 41,000 unserviceable pistols have been stripped of barrels and slides but can still be repaired economically. There are 15,200 pistols that have been stripped of all parts and classified as condemned. These may not be economical to repair and may only have value as spare parts.

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At your request, we did not take the additional time needed to obtain agency comments on the matters discussed in this report. As arranged with your office, we are sending copies of this report to the Secretaries of Defense, Army, Navy, and Air Force. Copies will also be available to other interested parties who request them.

Sincerely yours,



Donald J. Horan  
Director

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TABLE I  
UNSERVICEABLE PISTOLS EXAMINED

<u>Service</u>	<u>CLASSIFIED AS REPARABLE</u>		<u>Total</u>
	<u>Complete</u> <u>(note a)</u>	<u>Stripped</u> <u>(note a)</u>	
Army	12,277	20,000	<u>b/32,277</u>
Navy	32,177	0	<u>c/32,177</u>
Marines	1,646	21,000	<u>d/22,646</u>
Air Force	<u>7,600</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>e/ 7,600</u>
Total	<u>53,700</u>	<u>41,000</u>	<u>94,700</u>

a/Unserviceable pistols are not classified as to extent of disassembly; accordingly, these figures are estimated.

b/We inspected 150 Army pistols classified as reparable, which were drawn at random from storage boxes, and found that 89 percent were mechanically functional, 5 percent were nonfunctional but possibly reparable, and 6 percent were not reparable. Most of the pistols we inspected (69 percent) were in good to very good condition. To support Army pistol overhaul programs, about 20,000 pistols classified as reparable were stripped of their barrels and slides at the depot. We visually inspected the stripped pistols but did not physically examine them.

c/We inspected 100 Navy pistols drawn at random from the universe and found that 99 percent were mechanically functional and 1 percent were not reparable. Most of the Navy pistols (89 percent) were in good to very good condition.

d/We drew a random sample of 65 reparable pistols and found that 95 percent were mechanically functional and 5 percent were nonfunctional. Most of these pistols (75 percent) were also in good to very good condition. About 21,000 of the Marine Corps' reparable pistols had also been stripped of their barrels and slides.

e/Air Force pistols were originally issued to the Navy and an inspection of a sample of these pistols showed they were, like the Navy's unserviceable pistols, in good to very good condition.

TABLE IIUNSERVICEABLE PISTOLS EXAMINEDCLASSIFIED AS CONDEMNED

<u>Service</u>	<u>Total</u>
Army	a/ 1,338
Navy	b/ 1,884
Marines	c/17,712
Air Force	<u>0</u>
Total	<u>20,934</u>

a/Army condemned pistols generally are those that have been altered by such means as etching, nickle plating, or customizing. They may also be altered by wear, resulting in metal cracks or oversized openings. We visually inspected Army-condemned pistols during a prior review and found that some had been condemned for no apparent reason. This matter has been brought to the attention of depot officials.

b/Navy-condemned pistols were classified into three groups: those worn out or altered, those with duplicate or hard to read serial numbers, and those stripped of most or all of their parts. The first group, pistols worn out or altered, is properly coded as condemned. However, pistols falling in the second and third groups, we believe, cannot properly be coded as condemned. However, pistols falling in the second and third groups, we believe, cannot properly be coded as condemned. We submitted 23 condemned pistols to quality inspection and found that 9 were properly coded due to wear or alterations, but 4 had been condemned because serial numbers were hard to read, and 10 had been condemned for no apparent reason. We estimate that about 400 reparable pistols are included in the condemned assets.

c/Most Marine Corps pistols were condemned because, according to Marine Corps officials, they are uneconomical to repair. The Marine Corps received about 25,000 excess Navy pistols, rebuilt about 8,000, and stripped all parts from the remaining pistols. The Marine Corps used some of these parts to support overhaul programs and placed some of them into their supply system for issue to the field. We estimate that about 14,800 reparable pistols are included in these condemned assets.

TABLE III

PISTOLS REHABILITATED BY EACH SERVICE FROM  
FISCAL YEAR 1976 TO FISCAL YEAR 1981

(note a)

<u>Service</u>	<u>1976</u>	<u>1977</u>	<u>1978</u>	<u>1979</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>Total</u>
Army (note b)	17,476	10,550	41,444	0	0	2,257	71,727
Navy	3,009	1,668	2,684	4,066	2,602	953	14,982
Marines	<u>1,000</u>	<u>2,700</u>	<u>3,700</u>	<u>8,000</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1,000</u>	<u>16,400</u>
Total	<u>21,485</u>	<u>14,928</u>	<u>47,828</u>	<u>12,066</u>	<u>2,602</u>	<u>4,210</u>	<u>103,109</u>
Total condemned (all services)							<u>9,130</u>
Percent condemned							8.1

a/The Army and Marine Corps provide depot level maintenance (overhaul) on the .45-caliber pistol. The Navy is authorized to perform only intermediate maintenance on the pistol; however, like the other two services, they produce serviceable pistols in their shop.

b/Army overhaul data was provided only on specific overhaul programs, which often crossed several calendar years. The data as provided shows the number of pistols authorized for overhaul during each fiscal year.

TABLE IVPISTOL OVERHAUL COSTS BY SERVICE

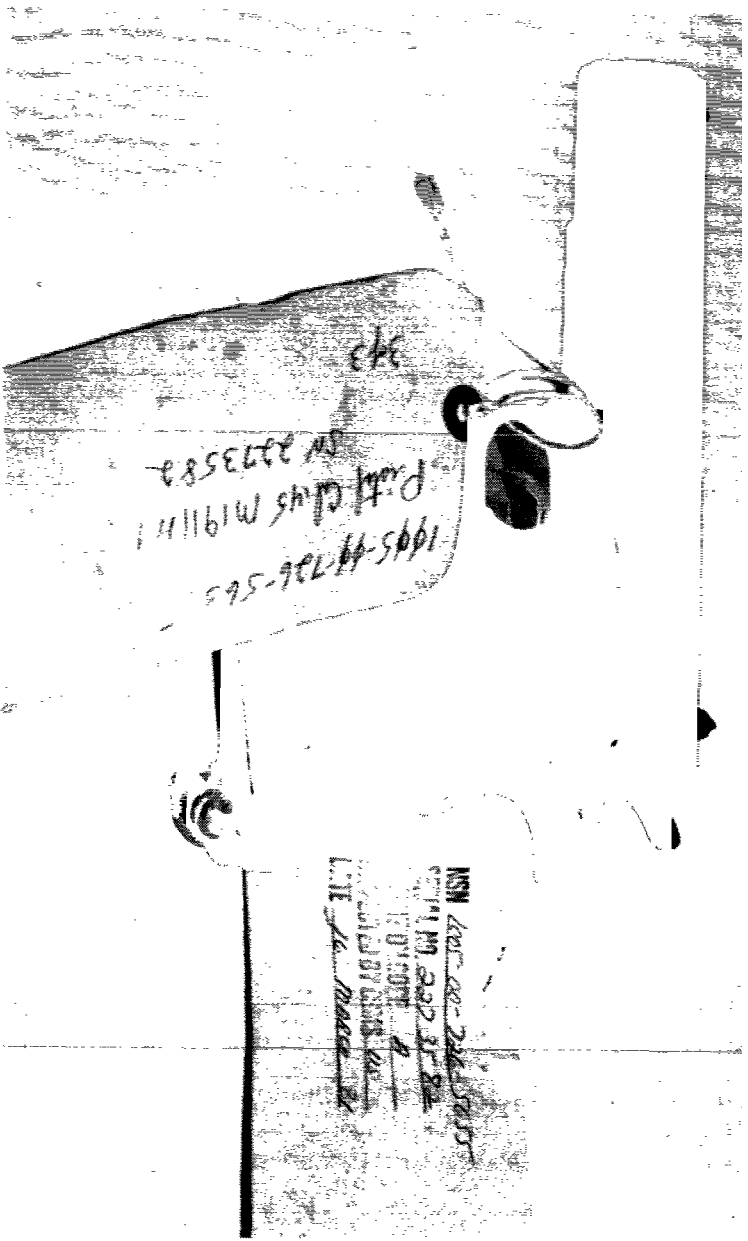
<u>Service</u>	<u>Normal overhaul cost</u>	<u>Manhours</u>	<u>Overhaul including replacing barrels and slides</u>
Army	\$ 82.54	1.47	<u>a/</u> \$158.95
Navy	92.46	2.79	<u>b/</u> 92.46
Marine Corps	144.97	2.20	<u>c/</u> 196.85

a/Army cost includes \$9.60 to replace normal frame assembly parts.

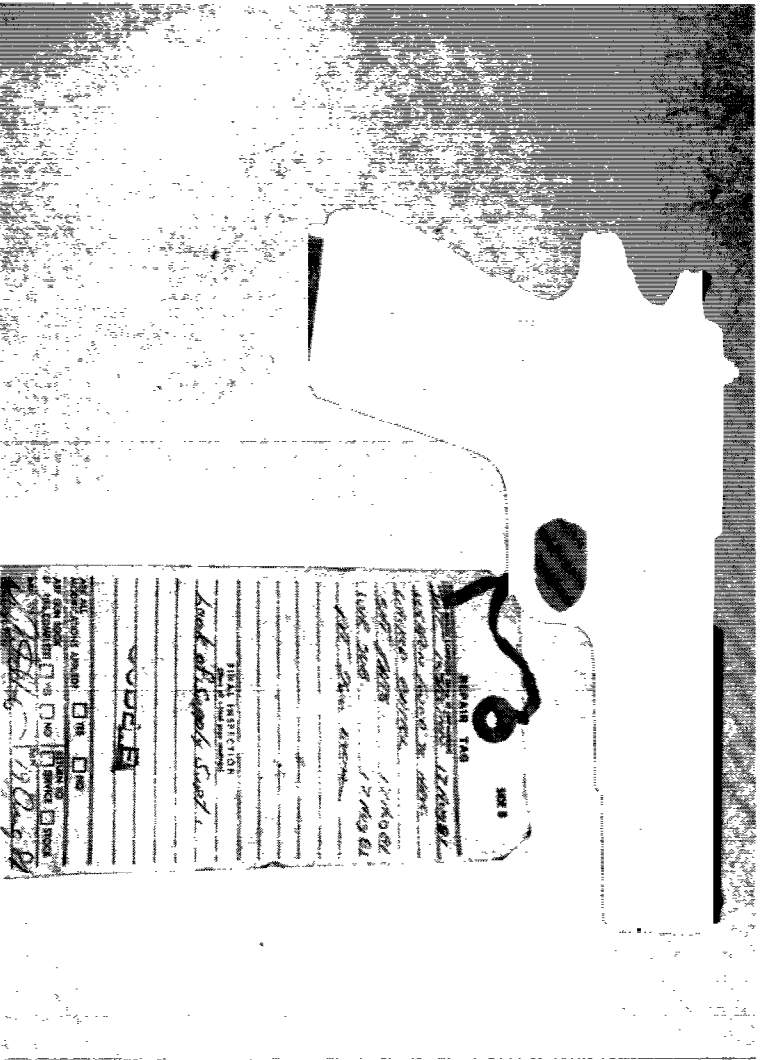
b/Navy cost does not increase because a 2-percent barrel and slide replacement factor is built into their normal overhaul rate. Since the Navy has a large supply of pistols, it has not anticipated rebuilding stripped frames.

c/Marine Corps estimate for replacing all parts to rebuild a completely stripped frame is \$255.97.





UNSERVICEABLE PISTOL IN STORAGE - INSPECTION TURN-IN TAG SHOWING  
CONDITION CODE "A" SERVICEABLE. (OFFICIAL U.S. ARMY PHOTOGRAPH)

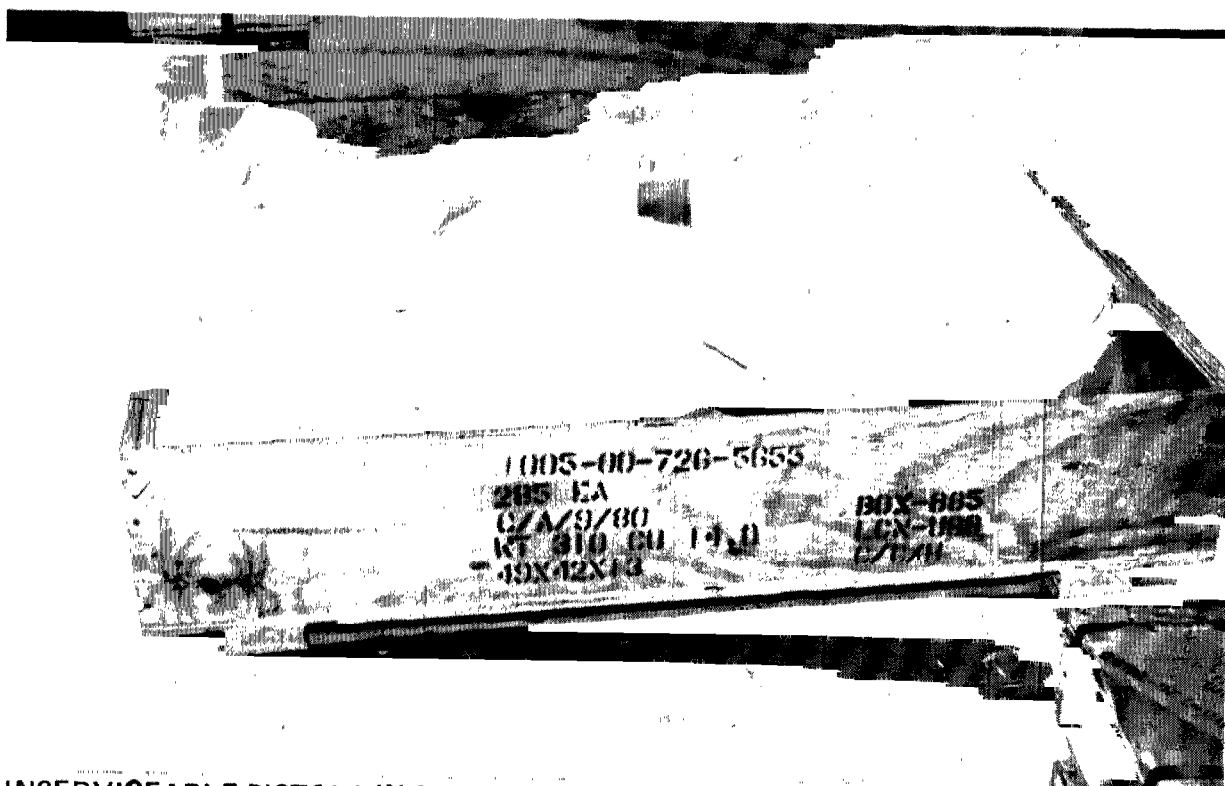


UNSERVICABLE PISTOL IN STORAGE - INSPECTION TAG SHOWING BARREL NEEDS REPLACING - NO SUPPLY SUPPORT. (OFFICIAL U.S. MARINE CORPS PHOTOGRAPH)



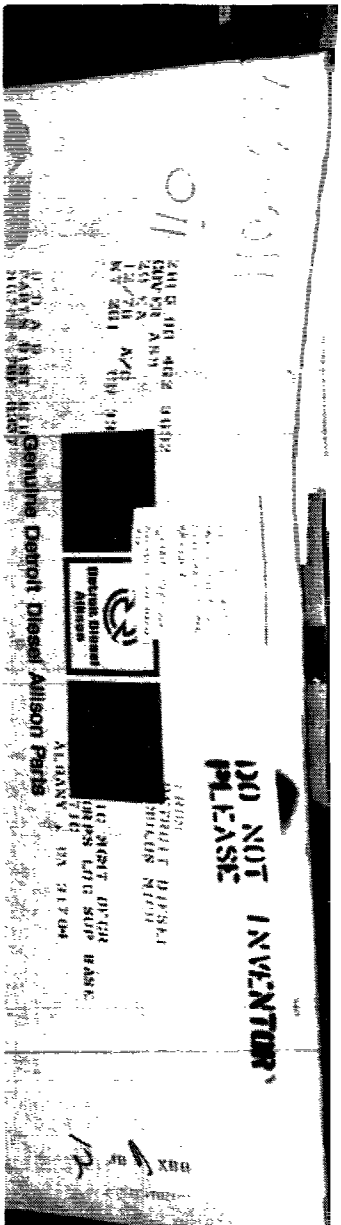
**UNSERVICEABLE PISTOLS IN STORAGE - COMPLETE PISTOL FRAMES ONLY; SMALL PARTS STRIPPED AND HELD WITH PISTOLS IN PLASTIC BAGS.**

(OFFICIAL U.S. ARMY PHOTOGRAPH)



**UNSERVICEABLE PISTOLS IN STORAGE - STRIPPED PISTOL FRAMES CLASSIFIED AS  
CONDEMNED BECAUSE REASSEMBLY COST EXCEEDS REPAIR COST LIMITS.**

(OFFICIAL U.S. MARINE CORPS PHOTOGRAPH)



RESIDUAL PARTS FROM .45-CALIBER PISTOL DISASSEMBLY HELD IN STORAGE, BUT  
NOT ON MASTER INVENTORY FILE. (OFFICIAL U.S. MARINE CORPS PHOTOGRAPH)