



LTC Underwood

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
UNITED STATES ARMY MATERIEL COMMAND  
PROJECT MANAGER - RIFLES  
ROCK ISLAND ARSENAL  
ROCK ISLAND, ILLINOIS 61201

[REDACTED]  
**Doiney**  
15 December 1966

IN REPLY REFER TO:  
AMCPM-RS

M16A1

SUBJECT: Liaison Visit to SEA in Reference to the XM16E1 Rifle

TO: Commanding General  
U.S. Army Materiel Command  
ATTN: AMCOR-TP  
Washington, D. C. 20315

1. Reference:

a. Unclassified message AVHGD-MD 29518, 11 Oct 66, Subj: Request for Technical Assistance in Support of Rifle M16.

b. Unclassified message AMCOR-TP 45098, 25 Oct 66, Subj: Liaison Visits to Southeast Asia.

2. At the request of USARV HQS, (reference 1.a), a technical assistance team (inclosure 1) was dispatched to Vietnam on 19 October 1966 to determine the cause and solution for excessive malfunctions being experienced with the XM16E1 Rifle.

3. The team itinerary and persons contacted are shown in inclosure 2.

4. Prior to the team's arrival in Vietnam, LTC Engle of the AMC Customer Assistance Office visited several units who had been experiencing a high rate of malfunctions. He determined that a lack of proper 1st and 2nd echelon maintenance was the probable cause of the trouble. As a result of LTC Engle's findings, it was determined that instruction in 1st, 2d and 3rd echelon maintenance was the solution to the problem and a schedule was established whereby a nucleus of officer and EM instructors would be trained in each Brigade by the technical assistance team. These instructors in turn would instruct other personnel in their unit, thereby disseminating the information to the last man.

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After arrival in Vietnam the Technical Assistance Team was supplemented by two AMC Specialists already in country. With this augmentation the team was then organized into four, two man units. One unit gave a six hour class in 1st and 2d echelon maintenance, and the other three units gave 1st, 2d and 3rd echelon maintenance instruction as required to direct support organizations.

In all classes the students brought their own weapons, magazines, ammunition, cleaning material, and accessories. A detailed inspection of each weapon as well as the ammunition and magazines revealed that with the exception of the 1st Brigade of the 101st Abn Division, the 173rd Abn Brigade, and the 5th Special Forces Group, the weapons were in an unbelievable condition of rust, filth, and lack of repair. The filthy condition ranged from actual dirt, grit, and mud on various components of the weapon and ammunition to a heavy carbon deposit on various components. The most significant trouble spots were the chamber, the outside of the gas tube extension in the upper receiver, and the inside of the carrier key. Questions asked of the students in the 1st and 2d echelon classes revealed (with the exception of the three units mentioned) that the weapons had been issued to the units just before they came to Vietnam or after they were in Vietnam, CONUS replacements had had training in marksmanship only, there was a shortage of technical manuals, there was a shortage of cleaning equipment, there was a shortage of repair parts, and there was a shortage of officers and NCOs who knew anything about maintenance of the rifle.

Questions of the students in the direct support organizations revealed the same lack of knowledge (to a lesser degree) and shortages as were found in the 1st and 2d echelon classes. In addition most of these organizations did not have special tool sets and their ASLs did not reflect a revision based on demand data.

As a result of the team's visit and the emphasis on putting the weapons in 1st class condition large numbers of weapons required repair. Prior to the team's visit, very few weapons had been turned in for repairs.

1st, 2d and 3rd echelon instruction was not given to the combat brigades of the 1st Cav Div. This division stated that they were not having any trouble with the rifle and requested that the instruction be given only to the small arms shop of their maintenance battalion.

The 1st Brigade of the 101st Abn Division, the 173rd Abn Brigade, and the 5th Special Forces Group were the only units who had received training with the rifle for a significant period of time prior to deployment to Vietnam. In these units the maintenance of the rifles was satisfactory to good, even though the original people deployed with these units have for the most part rotated.

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In all units there was a lack of attention to the magazines and ammunition. Both were inspected during the 1st and 2d echelon classes. Approximately 5% of the ammunition was unserviceable due to corrosion and an additional 10% would have given trouble due to being dirty. From 30 to 50% of the magazines appeared to be unserviceable due to bent or spread lips; however, a firing test was not conducted to verify this observation. The highest percentage of unserviceable magazines was in the three units who had had the weapons the longest (1st Bde of the 101st Abn Div, 173rd Abn Brigade, and 5th Special Forces Group).

It appears that in addition to the problems already discussed, there are certain components of the weapon which rust easily in the Vietnam environment and could be improved. Also there has been an undetermined but significant number of damaged weapons in which the powder gases blow out through the rear of the cartridge and damage the bolt, bolt carrier, magazine and receiver. The cause of this type damage has not been determined.

During the period 15-28 November 1966, Colonel Yount the Project Manager for Rifles, visited Vietnam, Okinawa, and Hawaii to contact the commanders of the units previously visited by the technical assistance team. His itinerary and persons contacted are shown in inclosure 3.

5. The instruction given by the team, if properly disseminated and followed up, will alleviate most of the difficulties and the rifles will perform well. The shortages of repair parts, cleaning materials, and technical manuals are basically an internal problem within Vietnam which can be corrected only by command emphasis by USARV and the commanders of the units concerned.

6. It is concluded that the malfunction problem with the XM16E1 Rifle did exist and was the result of insufficient training of the personnel prior to using the weapon; a shortage of technical manuals, repair parts, and cleaning equipment; a lack of knowledgeable officers and NCOs and an apparent lack of CONUS emphasis on maintenance training.

These conclusions are supported by USARV Headquarters as shown in Combat Lessons Bulletin #9 (inclosure 4) and unclassified message HGCADH 37094 (inclosure 5).

7. It is recommended that:

a. AWC contact CONARC in reference to the proper emphasis on maintenance training.

b. That Colt Firearms improve the weapon design wherever possible to prevent corrosion and to reduce the possibility of a failure to extract.

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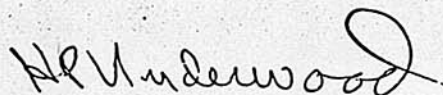
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c. That USARV and the commanders of the units in Vietnam take the necessary action to alleviate the shortage of trained officers and NCOs as well as the shortage of TMs, repair parts, and cleaning material in the hands of troops.

8. The office of the Project Manager, Rifles will follow-up on recommendations a. and b.

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H. P. UNDERWOOD  
Lt Colonel, GS  
Combat Arms Special Assistant

TEAM ITINERARY AND PERSONS CONTACTED

<u>Date</u>	<u>Office/Organization</u>	<u>Person Contacted</u>
21 Oct 66	Customer Assistance Office USARV	COL Zeigler
22 Oct 66	Maintenance Officer, USARV G-4	COL Harding
23 Oct 66	USARV G-4	COL Graf
23 Oct 66	Deputy CG, USARV	LTG Engler
24 Oct 66	185th Maintenance Bn	CPT Burnside
25 Oct 66	2d Bde, 1st Inf Div	LTC Walker
26 Oct 66	1st Bde, 1st Inf Div	MAJ Stovall
27 Oct 66	3rd Bde, 1st Inf Div	COL Marks
28 Oct 66	1st Inf Div, Hqs.	MG Du Puy
30 Oct 66	Support Bn, 173d Abn Bde	CPT McGuire
30 Oct 66	173d Abn Bde, Deputy Commander	COL Shaw
31 Oct 66	2d Bde, 25th Div	LTC Barszcz
1 Nov 66	1st Bde, 25th Div	COL Conaty
2 Nov 66	Support Command, 25th Div	COL Lowe
2 Nov 66	C/S, 25th Div	COL Mellen
6 Nov 66	1st Bde, 4th Div	LTC Lynch
7 Nov 66	2d Bde, 4th Div	MAJ Williams
8 Nov 66	3rd Bde, 25th Div	LTC Callanan
8 Nov 66	Asst G-3, 4th Div	LTC McGuire
9 Nov 66	C/S, 4th Div	COL McDowell
10 Nov 66	196th Lt Inf Bde	COL Murray
10 Nov 66	Support Bn, 196th Lt Inf Bde	LTC Siblee
11 Nov 66	11th ACR	COL Cobb
12 Nov 66	3rd Bde, 4th Div	COL Garth
17 Nov 66	1st Bde, 101st Abn Div	COL McCaid

<u>Date</u>	<u>Organization</u>
13 Nov 66	1st Avn Bde
14 Nov 66	ARVN 80th Maint Bn
16 Nov 66	Australian Forces Vietnam
19 Nov 66	5th Special Forces Group
20 Nov 66	63rd Maint Bn
21 Nov 66	2d Maint Bn

PROJECT MANAGER ITINERARY AND PERSONS CONTACTED

<u>Date</u>	<u>Office/Organization</u>	<u>Person Contacted</u>
15 Nov 66	USAMC Customer Assistance Office, Ch	COL Zeigler
15 Nov 66	1st Log Command, Dir of Maint	COL Holm
16 Nov 66	G4, USARV	COL Graf
16 Nov 66	ECG, USARV	LTG Engler
16 Nov 66	G-3, USARV	COL Brown
17 Nov 66	G-4, USARV, Ammo Officer	COL Snow
18 Nov 66	1st Avn Brigade, CG	EG Seneff
18 Nov 66	Army Concept Team, V, Dep	COL Woods, Jr
18 Nov 66	MACV, CG	GEN Westmoreland
18 Nov 66	MACV, Dep CG	LTG Heintges
19 Nov 66	1st Log Command, CG	MG Eifler
19 Nov 66	25th Inf Div, CG (Acting CG 11FFV)	MG Weyand
20 Nov 66	9th Inf Div, ADC	EG Roseborough
21 Nov 66	I Field Force V, CG	LTG Larson
21 Nov 66	5th Special Forces Gp, CG	COL Kelley
22 Nov 66	III Amphib Force, CG	LTG Walt
22 Nov 66	1st Brigade 101st AB, CG	EG Pearson
23 Nov 66	Div Arty, 1st Cav, CO	COL Braud
23 Nov 66	1st Inf Div, G/S	COL Kitchen, Jr.
25 Nov 66	Inventory Mgmt, Dir of Sup Ops, Ch	COL Daly
25 Nov 66	2d Log Cmd, USAMC Liaison Off	MAJ Eskridge
28 Nov 66	AMC Customer Assistance Office, Hawaii	COL Francis
28 Nov 66	Actg CIC USARPAC (Dep CIC & G/S)	LTG DoLeman



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HEADQUARTERS

U.S. ARMY VIETNAM

# COMBAT LESSONS BULLETIN

NUMBER 9

28 October 1966

## XM-16 EL RIFLE

### CARE AND CLEANING

These "lessons learned" were evolved as the result of a thorough investigation by United States Army Materiel Command (USAMC) weapons specialists after reports of numerous malfunctions of the XM-16 El Rifle.

#### Item 1: Cleaning and Lubrication. (Source: USAMC Weapons Specialists)

Discussion: During the investigation of the malfunctions, the weapons specialists found that many of the weapons, which had seriously malfunctioned, performed flawlessly when properly cleaned and lubricated in accordance with TM 9-1005-249-14. There had been a tendency to use too much oil in the weapon, which caused excessive carbon to be formed in the chamber, the bolt and bolt carrier, and the action spring guide. Some riflemen did not know that they were supposed to separate the bolt and bolt carrier for cleaning after firing, of the need to clean the end of the gas tube, and the need to clean and place one drop of oil on the inside of the bolt carrier key. Chamber brushes were not available in sufficient quantity and some riflemen were not aware of the need to clean the chamber as well as the bore.

Observation: Training and continued supervision of care, cleaning and lubrication, particularly at the company, platoon and squad level, is needed to keep weapons in firing condition. Aggressive action to maintain supplies of cleaning tools and materials is needed to enable proper care and cleaning.

#### Item 2: Replacement of Worn Parts. (Source: USAMC Weapons Specialists)

Discussion: Those weapons which continued to have malfunctions (primarily failure to extract), after thorough cleaning and proper lubrication, were found to have worn parts needing replacement. Most of these parts (largely extractors, extractor springs and extractor pins) are authorized for replacement by unit armorers.

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United States Army, Vietnam, APO San Francisco 96307

Observation: Armorers need to learn how to recognize parts of the XM-16 El Rifle which are worn too much to function properly. The most common defect noted was weak extractor springs. A new extractor, extractor spring and pin should be used whenever anyone of these three parts are excessively worn.

Item 3: Dirty Ammunition. (Source: USAMC Weapons Specialists)

Discussion: During the firing tests at several locations it was noted that little attempt was made by some riflemen to keep ammunition and magazines clean. Some riflemen had wrongly lubricated ammunition and magazines. Oil in the magazine and on ammunition absorbs and holds dirt and grit. Ammunition had been loaded in some magazines so long that considerable corrosion was evident on cartridge cases and the magazine followers were sluggish due to the amount of grit and dirt inside the magazine.

Observation: The ejector port cover should be kept closed, except when firing. Although the XM-16 El Rifle can be expected to fire successfully when accumulating dust during an operation, dust and grit allowed to accumulate in the magazine and on the ammunition can lead to malfunctions. Clean ammunition is better than life insurance.

Item 4: Magazines. (Source: USAMC Weapons Specialists)

Discussion: The XM-16 El Rifle magazines have been designed to hold and to feed 20 rounds. Unless the magazine is deformed (especially the lips at the top) it will successfully feed all 20 rounds to the rifle. Firing tests at several sites verified the foregoing. It is possible to load 21 rounds in most magazines, however, failure to feed the first round is almost inevitable. Eye-balling the top round will generally disclose whether the top round is sloped upward toward the front of the magazine, so as to feed properly.

Observation: To assure that only 20 rounds are loaded, count the rounds first, or load one full box of twenty into each magazine. When refilling a partially empty magazine, fill it, and then remove the top round, unless sure of the count. The supply of magazines is improving. Known defective magazines should be destroyed and discarded. A magazine weapon is no better than the magazine which feeds it.

Item 5: Chambers. (Source: USAMC Weapons Specialists)

Discussion: Chamber cleaning brushes have been in short supply. Sufficient quantities are now being received to provide one to each rifleman. Interviews with riflemen in several combat units revealed that some men did not know that the chamber of the rifle required a distinctly separate cleaning technique from the bore. Consequently, many rifle chambers were found to have such an accumulation of hardened carbon that only a most vigorous scouring effort with chamber brushes,

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bore cleaning compound, and patches would return the chamber to normal dimensions. (Note: M14, M60 or cal .45 bore brushes can substitute if XM-16 M1 chamber brushes are not on hand).

Observation: Frequent cleaning, before hard carbon deposits accumulate, will make cleaning easy.

Item 6: Patches. (Source: USAMC Weapons Specialists)

Discussion: None of the combat units visited had received the new smaller cleaning patch (SWAB, FSN 1005-912-4248) especially designed for this rifle. Some units did not have this item on requisition, and were laboriously cutting M14 patches into quarters or trying to ram the bigger (7.62mm) patch through the 5.56mm bore. The large patch can be pulled through the bore with some exertion, but pushing it through is likely to cause it to jam inside. Damage to the cleaning rod usually results by the time the patch is removed.

Observation: The new smaller patches are available through requisition and should be used for the bore. The larger patches are best for cleaning the chamber.

WEAPONS CLINIC

The 27th Maintenance Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) has been operating a travelling "weapons clinic" for several months. When a combat unit comes off an operation or when a request is made, a team of weapons mechanics, with their tools and parts on a trailer or air transportable container, go out to the unit's location. Riflemen clean their weapons and then present them personally to a small arms mechanic who examines each weapon in the presence of its owner and makes any necessary repairs. Only those requiring shop facilities are evacuated on work order. There are numerous advantages to this contact team (weapons clinic) approach to small arms maintenance.

Item 1: Personal Counselling. (Source: CO, 27th Maintenance Bn)

Discussion: The contact team, in effect, conducts a 100% technical inspection of rifles (and other small arms) in each unit without the admonitions which are often associated with such inspections. While the mechanic is examining the rifleman's weapon, he has an opportunity to point out, as an expert but on a man-to-man basis, any shortcomings in cleaning practices and to provide tips to proper care. Also, the rifleman is present to describe the nature of any difficulties he has had.

Observation: The personalized nature of this service assures that each rifleman gets individual and expert attention concerning his rifle and that fewer deficiencies are overlooked.

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Item 2: Pride in Possession. (Source: CO, 27th Maintenance Bn)

Discussion: By repairing the rifleman's rifle in his presence, the normal reluctance to turn in a weapon for repair for fear of getting an unfamiliar one back is overcome.

Observation: The rifleman is relatively anxious to have his rifle inspected and repaired when he knows that he can get this done on the spot and probably walk away with the same weapon.

Item 3: Elimination of Incipient Failures. (Source: CO, 27th Maintenance Bn)

Discussion: The mechanics are able to discover and replace parts with only marginal life left in them and thereby eliminate incipient failures.

Observation: This technique enables a positive approach to maintenance by eliminating potential causes of malfunctions rather than waiting until a malfunction occurs.

FOR THE COMMANDER:



S. A. MACKENZIE  
Colonel, AGC  
Adjutant General

RICHARD J. SEITZ  
Brigadier General, US Army  
Chief of Staff

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ROUTINE

R230835Z NOV 66

FM CGUSARV TAN SON NHUT VIETNAM

TO RUHLHS/CINCUSARPAC FT SHAFTER HAWAII

INFO RUEPDA/DA

RUEOETA/CGUSCONARC FT MONROE VA

RUEOHFA/CGUSAMCN

RUWPRK/CGUSAWCCM ROCK ISLAND ARSENAL ILL

ZEN/COMUSMACV SGN

ZEN/1ST LOG COMD S

UNCLAS HGCADH 37094 DA FOR DCSLOG AND ACSFOR

SUBJECT: XM16E1 RIFLE

REF: USARV MSG UNCLAS EFTO AVHGD-MD 32138, DTD 27 OCT 66, SUBJECT: RIFLE,  
5.56mm, XM16E1. (NOTAL)

1. THE PURPOSE OF THIS MESSAGE IS TO PROVIDE CERTAIN FINDINGS REGARDING THE MALFUNCTIONING OF THE XM16E1 RIFLE AND TO STATE ACTION TAKEN BY THIS HEADQUARTERS TO ELIMINATE PROBLEM WITH THE RIFLE.

2. AS INDICATED IN PARA 1 OF THE REFERENCED MESSAGE, THE REPORTED MALFUNCTIONS WERE DUE TO IMPROPER CLEANING AND CARE AND SOME WORN PARTS. THIS HAS BEEN VERIFIED BY INSPECTIONS AND FIRING TESTS CONDUCTED BY THE USAWECOM TRAINING TEAM EARLIER THIS MONTH. THERE WERE FIVE MAJOR CLEANING DEFICIENCIES NOTED WHICH CAUSED MOST OF THE MALFUNCTIONS. THESE ARE:

A. EXCESSIVE OIL IN THE WEAPON WHICH CAUSED EXCESS CARBON TO FORM IN THE CHAMBER, THE BOLT AND BOLT CARRIER, AND THE ACTION SPRING.

B. FAILURE TO CLEAN THE END OF THE GAS TUBE; INSIDE OF THE BOLT CARRIER KEY, AND THE CHAMBER.

C. OVERLOADING THE MAGAZINE WITH 21 ROUNDS. THIS SPREADS THE LIPS AND CAUSES A FAILURE TO FEED ON THE SECOND ROUND.

D. OIL AND GRIT INSIDE OF THE MAGAZINE. SOME RIFLEMEN WERE PLACING OIL ON THE AMMUNITION AND IN THE MAGAZINE.

E. FAILURE TO RECOGNIZE AND REPLACE WORN RETRACTOR PARTS. WHICH MAY BE DONE BY UNIT ARMORERS.

3. THE FOL ACTIONS HAVE BEEN TAKEN TO ELIMINATE THE PROBLEM:

A. ON 28 OCT 66, A COMBAT LESSONS BULLETIN ON CARE AND CLEANING WAS PUBLISHED AND DISTRIBUTED DOWN TO COMPANY LEVEL.

BULLETIN FROM USAWECOM DTD 25 OCT 66, SUBJECT: USER CARE OF THE M16 AND XM16E1 RIFLE, WAS REPRODUCED. IT WAS INDORSED BY THIS HEADQUARTERS AND DISTRIBUTED ON 20 NOV 66 DOWN TO COMPANY LEVEL. THE LETTER GAVE THE REASON FOR THE MALFUNCTIONS AND INCLUDES A LIST OF INSTRUCTIONS ENTITLED: "HOW TO REDUCE RETRACTION PROBLEM WITH M16 OR XM16E1 RIFLES". A USARV TRAINING CIRCULAR IS BEING PUBLISHED WHICH DIRECTS USA TO PROVIDE A MINIMUM OF TWO

HOURS TRAINING ON CARE AND CLEANING OF THE RIFLE BEFORE A SOLDIER ARMED WITH THE WEAPON IS COMMITTED TO COMBAT. IN ADDITION; THIS CIRCULAR CONTAINS A COMPLETE PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE INSPECTION CHECK LIST. THE CIRCULAR IS EXPECTED TO BE DISTRIBUTED BY 26 NOV 66.

D. EXTRACTS FROM THIS MAGAZINE WILL BE DISTRIBUTED IN ABOUT SIX WEEKS. THESE EXTRACTS, IN BOOKLET FORM, DEAL SOLELY WITH CARE AND CLEANING OF THE XM16E1 RIFLE.

E. A MAJOR CONTRIBUTION HAS BEEN MADE BY THE USAWECOM TRAINING TEAM WHICH HAS BEEN IN-COUNTRY SINCE MID-OCTOBER. SCHEDULED ORGANIZATIONAL MAINTENANCE TRAINING HAS BEEN CONDUCTED FOR CADRES FROM EACH BATTALION SIZE UNIT, THESE CADRES ARE TO CONDUCT SIMILAR CLASSES FOR ALL PERSONNEL ARMED WITH THE XM16 RIFLE. IN ADDITION, TRAINING WAS CONDUCTED FOR DS AND GS UNITS AND SELECT PERSONNEL FROM MACV AND FVMAF. A FOLLOW-UP TEAM FROM THE 1ST LOG COMD WILL VISIT ALL UNITS TO CHECK ON IMPLEMENTATION AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE MAINTENANCE TRAINING EFFORT.

A. WEAPON INSPECTION AND REPAIR PROGRAMS IMPLEMENTED. PERSONNEL FROM COLT FIREARMS AND WECCM HAVE INSPECTED AND REPAIRED AS REQUIRED OVER 3000 WEAPONS IN THE 1ST AND 25TH DIVISIONS. SIMILAR PROGRAMS ARE IN PROCESS OR BEING ESTABLISHED BY OTHER DIVISIONS AND SEPARATE BRIGADES.

G. SOME UNITS REPORTED SHORTAGES OF CLEANING MATERIAL. IN ORDER TO ENSURE ADEQUATE QUANTITIES, CLEANING RODS, BORE BRUSHES, AND CHAMBER BRUSHES ARE BEING OBTAINED DIRECT FROM MANUFACTURER. ADDITIONAL CLEANING RODS WERE OBTAINED DIRECT FROM JAPAN AND M14 CLEANING RODS WERE MODIFIED AS AN INTERIM MEASURE. REQUISITIONS ARE IN FOR 100,000 PACKAGES OF CLEANING PATCHES. PRESENT BALANCE IS ZERO. HOWEVER, CLEANING PATCHES ARE BEING ISSUED WITH INSTRUCTIONS TO CUT TO SIZE FOR M16 RIFLE. BF

NOTE: REF IS NOT IDENTIFIED  
ACTION: DCSLOG  
DISTR: DCSOPS, ACSFOR, USAMC  
DA IN 639018