

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONVENTIONAL AMMUNITION MAINTENANCE

7-1. CONCEPT

A unit going into battle must have serviceable ammunition. A round that fails to chamber at a critical time may result in the death of a rifleman or the loss of a tank and its crew. The purpose of ammunition maintenance is to make sure that ammunition is serviceable when needed.

7-2. GUIDANCE

Using units rely upon the division ammunition officer (DAO) for guidance on the level of maintenance they can perform. This is limited to preservation and packaging operations; however, it may include cleaning, removal of minor rust and corrosion, repair and replacement of boxes, and restencilling of containers.

Using unit maintenance is performed by organizational personnel and is limited to care and preservation actions. Ammunition technical manuals contain detailed instructions on the care, handling, preservation, storage, and maintenance of ammunition.

Personnel must read and follow the warnings contained in the manuals. For example:

WARNING

Handle explosive ammunition and components containing explosives with utmost care at all times. Do not drop, drag,

throw, tumble, or otherwise strike boxes containing ammunition or related components. Explosive elements in primers and fuzes are particularly sensitive to shock and temperature extremes.

Ammunition is packed to withstand normal field conditions and handling. The majority of ammunition maintenance requirements involve ammunition which, for various reasons, has been removed from protective containers or packaging. There is a direct relationship between how the ammunition is stored and handled and how much maintenance has to be performed. Thus proper ammunition storage and handling are critical to ammunition maintenance.

Maintenance actions beyond preservation and packaging will be performed by the supporting conventional ammunition company.

The division or COSCOM missile support unit performs inspections, electrical tests, and verification on selected rocket and missile systems, Unit TOE indicates which conventional ammunition or missile unit has tools, skills, test equipment, and repair parts to perform DS maintenance on a Class V item or Class V training item. Using units may call on supporting ammunition companies to furnish technical advice and assistance when preparing to perform care and preservation on ammunition.

**ALL AMMUNITION MUST BE PROTECTED
FROM FIRE AND SPARKS.
AN EFFECTIVE FIREFIGHTING PLAN
IS AN IMPORTANT
PART OF ANY STORAGE PLAN.**

7-3. STORAGE, HANDLING, AND SAFETY

Personnel who handle ammunition must recognize unsafe conditions. Improper, rough, and careless ammunition handling may result not only in malfunctioning, but may cause accidents that kill or injure personnel and cause extensive property damage.

All ammunition should be unloaded before conducting maintenance operations. BDR manuals discuss risks associated with maintenance of uploaded weapon systems. During combat, however, the commander may consider these risks acceptable under certain conditions.

All ammunition must be protected from fire and sparks. An effective firefighting plan is an important part of any storage plan.

7-4. CARE AND PRESERVATION

Major commands publish regulations for inspection of basic load ammunition in the theater of operations. These regulations may be supplemented by letters of instruction from division headquarters and external SOPS from units which operate the ammunition supply points (ASP). These documents contain detailed information on care and preservation as well as specific inspection requirements for basic load ammunition. They also provide information on procedures for periodic rotation of the basic load by turning portions in to the supporting ASP or expending it during training. Some ammunition may be unsatisfactory for retention as basic load, but can still be fired. Specific procedures for unit maintenance of ammunition are contained in TM 9-1300-250.

When correct storage and handling procedures are followed, the care and preservation requirements are relatively small. One important care and preservation element involves support of firing exercises. Ammunition that is drawn from the ASP is often returned in an unserviceable condition.

Storage locations must be set up so that personnel can perform preservation and packaging maintenance. While it may be necessary to evacuate stocks for maintenance, a program based totally on evacuation is usually not feasible.

Unused ammunition should be repacked in original containers and returned to the supporting ASP to keep it from being used by the enemy. Ammunition returned to the ASP with original containers not opened (seals and binding intact) will be only sample-inspected for condition unless damage is suspected or obvious. All ammunition with original containers opened (seals or banding broken) must be

100 percent inspected for condition. Inspection for every round is a time-consuming process, and the customer unit must furnish personnel to unload, unpack, and reload (for movement to storage location) the inspected ammunition.

7-5. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SUPPORT

Using units may request technical assistance for ammunition from its supporting ASP. Ammunition specialists and military ammunition inspectors are assigned to ammunition battalions and work at the ASP, one of their duties is to give technical assistance to supported units. Since they are experts in storage and handling, they can provide ideas on how the unit can improve their operations. Ammunition inspections are usually made on an annual basis to

see that the basic load is stored IAW theater regulations, and unit commanders are notified of the results. When unusable ammunition stocks are identified, a follow-up inspection is normally conducted within 60 to 90 days after the initial inspection. This ensures that the necessary turn-in has been made and the serviceable replacement has been made.

7-6. AMMUNITION FAILURES.

Theater regulations state reasons and requirements for notifying the local ammunition officer at the ASP or the supporting ordnance battalion of failures. A quality assurance specialist will normally come to the scene of the failure and assist in the investigation and preparation of reports.