

# SHOOTING TIMES

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# The Sad Story of the M-14

## Editorial

TIME WAS WHEN a topkick could stand before his outfit and tell them, in his own inimitable way, that each one of them was carrying the finest blinkety-blank military shoulder weapon in the world. And time was when every one of that topkick's men would brim with confidence and pride, in the absolute conviction that their boss was speaking the well-known truth. This is what good, fighting soldiers are made of — the kind of soldiers we want ours to be. Unfortunately, because of a lot of hogwash, sprinkled with little bits of out-of-context truth, the time that was does not exist today.

Today, we have over a quarter-million American fighting men carrying arms in the Vietnamese war. Unfortunately, many of them have little faith in the arms they are carrying as they march behind the flag of the strongest country in the world. Their lives, the lives of their companions, and our eventual victory depend on their ability to create fast, accurate fire. But most of them have been given a weapon known as the M-14. And, no matter what the topkick says, they have been given to understand that the weapon their country has given them is inferior.

All of which brings us to a question that has long been irritating raw nerves. How great a disservice was done our fighting man so short a time ago when a most popular endeavor with various journalists was to condemn and blaspheme the rifles with which we have armed our troops? One need go back very little to read all sorts of attacks on the M-14. One noted commentator stated categorically that the rifle "is unreliable," another that "the bolt breaks in two," another that rifles in the hands of troops "blow up" on the range, another that "it is uncontrollable," and so on, ad nauseum.

The rifle is the basic arm of all combat forces. So we wonder just how such hogwash affected the recruit who now finds himself sweating through the jungle with M-14 in hand. How do his friends and family feel, having been repeatedly told by alleged authorities that his equipment is inferior, even dangerous? We wonder, too, how those writers feel, knowing that their respected

words may well have contributed to a lack of confidence and aggressiveness that could well be fatal.

We can find little justification for the determined efforts made by many less-than-disinterested people to destroy the M-14 rifle by turning the uninformed public against it. The same goal was sought by many others when they extolled non-existent virtues of other arms which they wished to push for one reason or another. It even seemed at a point or two that, possibly, private arms developers had a thing or two to do with planting some stories derogatory to the M-14. The motive? Profit, of course, either personal for the writer who can sell a few more columns, or corporate for the firms that hope fervently that their pet development will replace, or at least supplant, the standard arms developed by the government arsenals.

Yet, at the same time, we must point out that three complete, tested production facilities for the M-14 exist, and it is a dependable, accurate, hard-hitting weapon of which any doughboy can be proud and confident. The production capability of these existing facilities is enormous, yet idle. One of these existing plants could, for example, be producing at its previous rate of ONE THOUSAND M-14s per day in a relatively short period of time. The other two plants have like capabilities and could also be in operation long before other facilities for other weapons could even be built and tooled.

As this is written, it is interesting to note that a single producer has vast contracts for small-caliber lightweight arms which have been highly praised by some "authorities." From past performance, it would seem that delivery of these arms will take years.

We feel that the massive effort by individuals and organizations to discredit the M-14 rifle had a great deal to do with the political decision to mothball those production facilities and to let large contracts to other suppliers. In this manner we believe that a great disservice has been done to the country as a whole and specifically to those brave men who today face death, feeling that they have not the finest equipment in the world.

JUNE, 1966

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