



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on January 4, 2022

New Reforms Crack Down on Military Weapons Getting Into Wrong Hands

The U.S. Department of Defense is [updating](#) the way it keeps track of its gun and explosive supplies, while Congress is requiring that the Pentagon provide greater accountability.

These changes come after an investigation by the Associated Press that showed lost or stolen military weapons were finding their way to American streets.

The list of missing weapons includes rifles, machine guns, handguns, armor-piercing grenades, artillery shells, mortars, grenade launchers, and plastic explosives.



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The Pentagon is now obliged to give Capitol Hill an annual report on weapons loss and security under the National Defense Authorization Act, passed by Congress and signed into law last month.

In accordance with the new reporting requirements, the military is modernizing the way it keeps track of millions of firearms and explosives.

“Clearly the accountability on this issue was stopping at too low of a level,” said U.S. Representative Jason Crow (D-Colo.), a U.S. Army veteran and member of the House Armed Services Committee who supported the reforms. With the new requirements, “if there are hundreds of missing weapons in that report, members of Congress are going to see it and they are going to be asked about it publicly and held accountable for it.”

Officials at the Pentagon assert they take weapons security seriously and are able to account for more than 99.9 percent of firearms.

In its overhaul of missing weapons reporting, the Army, the U.S. military’s largest branch, is replacing paper records with digital systems. In addition, a central logistics operation center is collecting and verifying serious incident reports that didn’t always go all the way up the chain of command.

The new system makes use of an existing software known as Vantage, which gives commanders a real-time look at what is unaccounted for.

Other changes involve how the military will respond to law-enforcement investigations.

When a gun is recovered or sought as part of a criminal case, the Defense Department’s Small Arms and Light Weapons Registry is supposed to determine the last known location or unit responsible. But implementing these protocols has been challenged by the inaccuracy of the registry’s information, and responses to law enforcement weren’t timely.

The Army, which runs the registry for the Pentagon, is currently developing an app that would search each service’s property record database.

Under the new law, the defense secretary must report confirmed thefts or recovery of weapons to the



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National Crime Information Center, which is run by the FBI. Whereas military regulations had required the services and units to self-report losses, the burden of doing so will now rest on the Pentagon's highest levels.

Other armed services are also enacting reforms.

The Marine Corps is reportedly developing procedures for better oversight through greater inspection of units. The Navy is now requiring units to notify a higher headquarters during a report of weapons losses. The Air Force, meanwhile, has replaced its munitions property book system with a commercial application.

Over the summer, the Defense Logistics Agency began reporting to the Pentagon losses and thefts of firearms that the military had loaned to civilian agencies in accordance with the Law Enforcement Support Office program. The Pentagon reported that 461 of these firearms had vanished, with 109 later recovered.

AP reports:

The number of missing, lost or stolen firearms was "approximately 1,540" from 2010 through this summer, according to LTC Uriah Orland, a spokesman for the Office of the Secretary of Defense. The majority have been recovered, he said. That total compares to the at least 2,000 firearms that AP had reported for 2010 through 2020, a tally was based on the military's own data, internal memoranda, criminal investigation case files and other sources.

There are several reasons for the discrepancy. In conducting their analyses, each service used different standards and systems. Despite the detailed data search by each service, AP found lost or stolen items that were not in their official accounting.

Missing weapons that wind up in the wrong hands have long been a pervasive problem in the United States. Barack Obama notoriously oversaw the Fast and Furious scandal, in which the government [armed Mexican drug cartels](#) with American weapons.

The arsenal of ISIS fighters has also [included weapons](#) that were originally purchased by the U.S. government.



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