

20 THE ARMY'S NEW PISTOL

By Mark Moritz

Here we go again.

Army Times, 28 August 2011: "The Army has a new pistol in its sights. After 25 years of action, the M9 is on its way out as officials are confident they can give soldiers a better pistol at a better price. The goal is to replace all 239,000 M9s and the concealable M11s."

The article goes on to say that the Army is looking at Glock, Colt, SIG, H&K, and a new, improved Beretta.

Even though nobody in charge is going to pay attention to me, that won't stop me from flapping my keyboard.

The US Army has a specific problem: they have thousands and thousands of NDPs – Non-Dedicated Personnel. Those are people who have never fired guns before, and have zero interest in learning how to shoot. (Think Jessica Lynch.) They are mostly good people, and good soldiers, but they are not particularly adept with pistols or interested in learning to be adept. Therefore, in addition to the obvious considerations of power, reliability, cost, etc., there are two special requirements for a general issue pistol: it must be easy for an NDP to use *right* (hit stuff with), and it must be hard for an NDP to use *wrong* (accidental shootings).

The 1911 is and always was a lousy choice to issue to NDPs. I love 1911s. I own a dozen variants. One or another of my 1911s is my daily carry gun. However, I am not an NDP, I am an Enthusiast. I shoot more pistol ammunition in a weekend than most soldiers shoot in their careers. The 1911 is hard for NDPs to use well, for a couple of reasons. NDPs frequently forget to disengage the safety when they are in a hurry and they are excited – like when somebody is trying to kill them. The 1911 is easy for NDPs to have accidents with, because it has a short trigger pull. (It's not about light vs. heavy; it's about short vs. long.) NDPs regularly violate Rule Three; they put their fingers on the triggers. "That's a matter of training!" Empirically, realistically, no, it's not. You can train them until you are blue in the face. You can tell them; you can post signs; you can stamp it on the side of the gun – "Keep your finger off the trigger." They are still going to do it. Training works with Enthusiasts and CBAs (Special Ops folks who take shooting seriously, otherwise known as Certified Bad-Asses), because they are interested in learning. Sadly, it has little effect on NDPs. They are going to put their fingers on the triggers. We need to stop kidding ourselves and just accept that, and design the gun with that

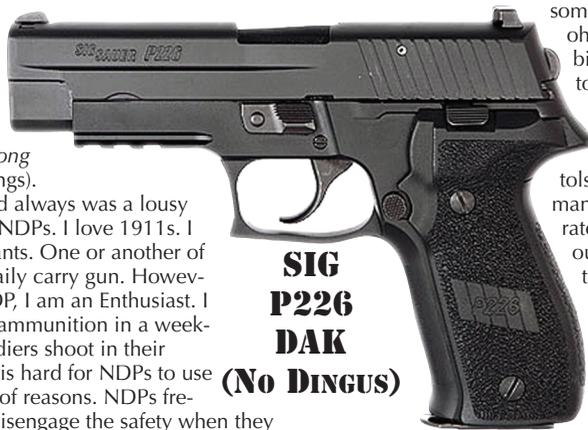
in mind. That doesn't mean we stop training. We still want the Drill Sergeant yelling in their faces – "Keep your booger hook off the trigger, *maggot!*" But, we also need to give them pistols that are less likely to kill them and their companions when they forget, which they will.

The Army adopted the 1911 in, by coincidence, 1911. In about five minutes of Googling, I found a US Army manual from 1913 that required the 1911 to be carried hammer down on a loaded chamber. Gee, why do you suppose that was? I don't know when the doctrine changed, but eventually, the rule became hammer down on an *empty* chamber. And yet, still, there have been thousands of accidents by Army NDPs dropping the hammer on a pistol that was not quite as unloaded as they thought it was. Remember, they are NDPs; training is (nearly) futile, because they don't care. They are in the classroom, but they are not paying attention. In one ear, out the other. I'd bet a box of .45 ACP that a real historian/ researcher would find that, about a month after the 1911 was issued, there was a big stack of acci-

dental shooting reports, and some general said, "Uh-oh – we have made a big mistake, but it is too late; we just ordered a ton of these newfangled Colt Automatic Pistols. Better change the manuals, because at this rate, we'll kill more of our own troops than the Huns do." Remember the scene in "Band Of Brothers," where the guy shot himself in the leg with a Luger and bled out? That was

based on a true story, but while in the movie the pistol was a Luger, in reality, it was a 1911. I'm betting that wasn't the only time a soldier shot himself – or a fellow soldier – with a 1911. I'm betting it happened a lot.

The Glock is worse, probably the worst choice of all for general issue to NDPs. No sooner did police departments (another bastion of NDPs) adopt Glock, then we began to see a sudden increase in accidental shootings, so that "Glock Leg" is now a well-understood term. "But, police had accidental shootings even when they were using revolvers." Yes they did, but not as many, not anywhere near as many. No pistol is foolproof, because fools are infinitely resourceful. What the Army needs is a pistol that is fool-resistant, as opposed to the 1911 and Glock, which are fool-friendly. "Training, training, training!" Dream on;



**SIG
P226
DAK
(No DINGUS)**