

Chapter 4

Weapons Handling and Reloading Procedures

Weapons handling procedures provide a consistent and standardized way for a Marine to handle, operate, and employ the rifle safely. These procedures address safety rules; weapons conditions, commands, carries and transports; immediate and remedial action; and reloading procedures. Proper weapons handling procedures ensure the safety of Marines by reducing negligent discharges, reinforcing positive identification of targets before engagement, and laying the foundation for combat mindset. Weapons handling procedures apply at all levels of training and during combat.

4001. Safety

Combat environments increase the chances of a Marine using unsafe weapons handling procedures. Safe handling of the rifle is critical. If safe weapons handling procedures are not used, a Marine risks his safety and the safety of his fellow Marines. During combat, a Marine must react quickly, safely, and be mentally prepared to engage targets. To ensure that only the intended target is engaged, a Marine must apply the following safety rules at all times:

Rule 1—Treat every weapon as if it were loaded.

Rule 2—Never point a weapon at anything you do not intend to shoot.

Rule 3—Keep your finger straight and off the trigger until you are ready to fire.

Rule 4—Keep the weapon on *SAFE* until you intend to fire.

4002. Weapons Condition

A weapon's readiness/safety status is described by one of four conditions. The steps in the loading and unloading process take the rifle through four specific conditions of readiness for live fire.

Condition 1—Magazine inserted, round in chamber, bolt forward, safety on, ejection port cover closed.

Condition 2—Not applicable to the M16A2 rifle.

Condition 3—Magazine inserted, chamber empty, bolt forward, safety on, ejection port cover closed.

Condition 4—Magazine removed, chamber empty, bolt forward, safety on, ejection port cover closed.

4003. Weapons Commands

Weapons commands dictate the specific steps required to load and unload the rifle safely. Six commands are used in weapons handling:

Load the This command is used to take weapon from **condition 4** to **condition 3**.

Make ready the This command is used to take weapon from **condition 3** to **condition 1**.

Fire This command is used to specify when a Marine may engage targets.

Cease fire This command is used to specify when a Marine must stop target engagement.

Unload This command is used to take the the weapon from any condition to **condition 4**.

Unload, show clear This command is used when a second individual must check the weapon to verify that no ammunition is present before the rifle is placed in **condition 4**.

- Move the head and the eyes with the muzzle as it moves.

4004. Weapons Carries

Weapons carries provide a safe and effective way to handle the rifle while remaining alert to enemy engagement.

a. **Tactical Carry.** A Marine uses the tactical carry if no immediate threat is present. The tactical carry permits control of the rifle while a Marine is moving, yet it still allows quick engagement of the enemy. See figure 4-1. A Marine performs the following steps to assume the tactical carry:

- Place the left hand on the handguard, the right hand around the pistol grip, the trigger finger straight along the receiver, and the right thumb on top of the selector lever.

————— **Note** —————

A left-handed Marine places his left thumb on the top of the selector lever.

- Place the buttstock along the side of the body at approximately hip level.
- Angle the muzzle upward about 45 degrees in the general direction of the enemy.
- Position the muzzle in front of the eyes, slightly below eye level.

Figure 4-1. Tactical Carry.

b. **Alert Carry.** A Marine uses the alert carry if enemy contact is likely. A Marine can engage the enemy faster from the alert carry than from the tactical carry. However, the alert is more tiring than the tactical carry and its use can be physically demanding. See figure 4-2. A Marine performs the following steps to assume the alert carry:

- Place the left hand on the handguard, the right hand around the pistol grip, the trigger finger straight along the receiver, and the right thumb on top of the selector lever.

————— **Note** —————

A left-handed Marine places his left thumb on top of the selector lever.

- Place the buttstock in the shoulder.
- Angle the muzzle downward about 45 degrees and point it in the general direction of the enemy.

been identified.

Figure 4-2. The Alert Carry.

c. **Ready Carry.** A Marine uses the ready carry if contact with the enemy is imminent. The ready carry allows immediate target engagement, but it is very tiring to maintain over a long period of time. See figure 4-3. A Marine performs the following steps to assume the ready carry:

- Place the left hand on the handguard, the right hand around the pistol grip, the trigger finger straight along the receiver, and the right thumb on top of the selector lever.

————— **Note** —————

A left-handed Marine places his left thumb on top of the selector lever.

- Place the buttstock in the shoulder.
- Point the muzzle in the direction of the enemy.
- Lower the sights to just below eye level so that a clear field of view is maintained until a target has

4005. Weapons Transports

Weapons transports are used to carry the rifle over the back or shoulders. Weapons transports are used if no immediate threat is present. They are useful when moving for long periods, and they provide a more relaxed position for walking. They are also used whenever both hands are needed for other work.

a. **Strong Side Sling Arms (Muzzle Up) Transport** . To assume the strong side sling arms (muzzle up) transport from the tactical carry, a Marine performs the following steps:

- Release the hold on the pistol grip.
- Lower the buttstock and bring the rifle to a vertical position.
- Grasp the sling above the left forearm with the right hand.

Figure 4-3. The Ready Carry.

- Guide the rifle around the right shoulder with the left hand and extend the right arm through the sling.
- Place the sling on the right shoulder and apply downward pressure on the sling with the right hand. This stabilizes the rifle on the shoulder.

See figure 4-4.

- Release the hold on the pistol grip.
- Lower the buttstock and bring the rifle to a vertical position.
- Rotate the rifle outboard until the pistol grip is pointing toward the body.
- Reach over the left forearm and grasp the sling with the right hand.
- Rotate the muzzle down with the left hand while sliding the right hand up the sling.
- Place the sling on the left shoulder.

See figure 4-5.

Figure 4-4. Strong Side Sling Arms (Muzzle Up) Transport.

b. **Weak Side Sling Arms (Muzzle Down) Transport.** The weak side sling arms (muzzle down) transport can be used in inclement weather to keep moisture out of the rifle's bore. To assume this transport from the tactical carry, a Marine performs the following steps:

Figure 4-5. Weak Side Sling Arms (Muzzle Down) Transport.

c. **Cross Body Sling Arms Transport.** A Marine uses the cross body sling arms transport if he

requires **S**th hands for work. The rifle is slung across the back with the muzzle up or down. Normally, the **P**rifle is carried with the muzzle down to prevent pointing the muzzle in an unsafe direction. See figure 4-6.

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Figure 4-6. Cross Body Sling Arms Transport.

Note

Ensure the muzzle of the rifle is maintained in a safe direction when assuming this transport.

4006. Transferring the Rifle

Proper weapons handling is required every time a Marine passes a rifle to or receives a rifle from another Marine. Safety is paramount. A Marine handing off a rifle must—

- Ensure the rifle is on *SAFE*.
- Remove the magazine if it is present.
- Lock the bolt to the rear.
- Inspect the chamber visually to ensure there is no ammunition.
- Leave the bolt locked to the rear and hand off the rifle.

A Marine receiving a rifle must—

- Ensure the rifle is on *SAFE*.
- Inspect the chamber to ensure there is no ammunition.
- Release the bolt catch and observe the bolt going forward on an empty chamber.
- Close the ejection port cover.

4007. Immediate Action

WARNING

If a "pop" or reduced recoil is experienced during firing, immediately cease firing. Do not apply immediate action. Perform the following steps.

- **Place the rifle in condition 4.**
- **Remove the bolt carrier group.**
- **Inspect the bore for an obstruction from the chamber end.**
- **Insert a cleaning rod into the bore from the chamber end and clear any obstruction.**

Once the obstruction is removed, the rifle can be reloaded and fired.

Immediate action is performed if the rifle fails to fire when the trigger is pulled. Immediate action is the unhesitating response to clear a stoppage without investigating the cause. It is performed in the following sequence:

Tap—Slap the bottom of the magazine.

Rack—Pull the charging handle to the rear and release.

Bang—Sight and attempt to fire.

4008. Remedial Action

If the rifle fails to fire after performing immediate action, a Marine performs remedial action in two steps.

Caution

Riding the bolt home can cause the bolt not to fully chamber the first round.

step I Seek cover if the tactical situation permits.
 Pull up the charging handle all the way to the rear and attempt to lock the bolt to the rear.
 Observe if a round or brass was ejected.

————— **Note** —————
 If a round was ejected from the rifle, proceed with step II.

step II Release the bolt by depressing the bolt catch.
 Tap the forward assist.
 Sight and attempt to fire.

A Marine can use the term SPORTS to remember the steps of remedial action.

Upon the completion of step I, most stoppages have been cleared and the rifle can be brought back into service. If a round was not ejected, a Marine takes the appropriate action to clear the rifle and proceeds with step II of remedial action. Once the stoppage has been cleared, a Marine completes step II in order to place the rifle back into service.

4009. Combat Reload

Quick and efficient reloading is important if engaging the enemy during combat. The battlefield situation and how it affects a Marine's opportunity to reload must be considered. A Marine should take cover before reloading or reload before leaving cover to take advantage of the protection provided by the cover. Every effort should be made not to reload on the move.

The first priority of reloading is to get the rifle reloaded and back into action as quickly as possible. During reloading, a Marine should focus only on reloading.

The second priority of reloading is to retain control of the magazine. When a Marine moves, he should have his magazines (empty and filled) with him. If

the combat situation permits, a Marine should secure his magazines on his person (e.g., in the magazine pouch, flak jacket, cargo pocket). However, the combat situation may dictate that a Marine drop his empty magazines to the deck during reloading. This practice is acceptable if a Marine retrieves his empty magazines before moving to another location.

————— **Note** —————
 Dirty or damaged magazines can cause a stoppage. Therefore, a Marine should avoid dropping his empty magazines on the deck if at all possible.

To change a magazine, a Marine should draw the rifle in close to his body so the magazine well is directly in front of his face. See figure 4-7. This facilitates better control of the rifle and allows for a more effective reload. If reloading an empty rifle, the bolt is locked to the rear. Slamming the magazine into the rifle can cause a round to partially pop out of the magazine causing a double feed and a Marine must then perform remedial action to correct the double feed.

Do not wait until the magazine is completely empty to replace it. If there is a lull in the action, a Marine should place a filled magazine in the rifle. Refill empty magazines as soon as possible so they are available for future use. If reloading from a position other than the prone position, a Marine should use the magazine from the left magazine pouch. This leaves filled magazines in the right magazine pouch for reloading during the prone position.

a. **Condition 1 Reload.** A **condition 1** reload is performed by replacing the magazine before it runs out of ammunition. **Condition 1** reload is performed while the rifle is in **condition 1**. To perform a **condition 1** reload, a Marine performs the following steps:

- Remove the partially used magazine and secure it on your person.

Note

The partially used magazine should be stored in the magazine pouch with the rounds facing up and projectiles facing away from your body. This allows for immediate identification of filled or partially filled magazines.

- Withdraw a filled magazine from the magazine pouch.
- Fully insert the magazine into the magazine well and tug downward on the magazine to ensure it is seated.
- Fasten the magazine pouch.

Figure 4-7. Positioning the Rifle for Reloading.

b. **Dry Reload.** A dry reload is required once the magazine has been emptied and the bolt is locked to the rear. Since the bolt is locked to the rear, a Marine must be careful not to jam the magazine into the rifle so that a round protrudes from the magazine. This action can cause a double feed and will require remedial action. To perform a dry reload, a Marine performs the following steps:

- Press the magazine release button.
- Remove the empty magazine and secure it on your person.
- Insert a filled magazine into the rifle and tug downward on the magazine to ensure it is seated.
- Press the bolt catch to allow the bolt carrier to move forward or pull the charging handle fully to the rear and release.