

U.S. M9 Beretta 9mm Pistol

with this fix. Since 1989, civilian Model 92FS pistols have this improved feature also. Manufacture of the M9 was then switched from Italy to Beretta U.S.A., in Accokeek Maryland. No failures of slides made in the U.S. have been reported. In 1987 and 1988, some frame cracks developed during the testing of M9 production pistols. These were only cosmetic in nature, but violated the terms of the M9 contract, resulting in a large lot

ing home asking friends and relatives to send original magazines. This is an issue not yet resolved. And complaints began coming in (predictably) of failure of the 9mm cartridge to stop an opponent. Civilians can use more effective expanding bullets for protection, but the military is committed to using full-metal-jacket "hardball" ammo. Cries went up from some units for the old 1911A1 .45 ACP pistols, and the Marine Corps is now using specially built 1911A1s to a large extent. Also,

many troops complained that the bulky grip of the double-stack M9 was too much for small hands, making for awkward handling. Further, as a side note, I have personally witnessed one mishap with a Beretta 92F. It was a chambering failure traced to lack of lubrication. This happened on a civilian range, but in combat that could have made the difference between life and death.

After more than 20 years of service, the Beretta M9 has given generally good service, with the exceptions noted.

Thankfully, these problems have not been plentiful, and no pistol is perfect. However, there is considerable pressure within the Department of Defense to obtain a new standard service pistol in .45 ACP. In fact, DoD specifications for a new Joint Combat Pistol (postponed in 2006) have called for a .45. Our Special Operations Command requested, and got, an H&K Mk 23 "offensive pistol" so chambered. I'm not aware of any complaints regarding stopping power with it, and the Marines are quite happy with their .45s.

Beretta 92FS pistols are readily available on the civilian market, and these are near duplicates of the M9 pistol, differing mostly in markings. Genuine M9s are harder to get. The pistol illustrated is a true M9. It was briefly available in 1998 as a special issue on the civilian market, and carries full military markings albeit with a distinguishing

serial number prefixed "M9." These are certainly modern classic handguns, currently serving around the world to protect our service men and women in combat.

Editor's Note: Beretta U.S.A. Corporation recently announced receipt of a U.S. Army contract to provide up to 450,000 Beretta Model 92FS pistols. The total value of the contract, if all pistol quantities and associated spare parts are ordered, is \$220 million.



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rejection. Re-designed frames apparently resolved that issue, and 24,000 rejected pistols were fitted with the new frames.

Next came more controversy. The military decided to issue a magazine contract to a new vendor (Beretta and Mec-Gar magazines had been used heretofore). These new magazines were extremely sensitive to sand and dirt, and reports of failures in the "sand boxes" of Iraq and Afghanistan came pouring in. Soldiers began writ-