

# Questions asked about reliability of SA80-A2

- ***MoD team investigates 'failures'***
- ***Batches of rifles damaged in transit***

Ministry of Defence officials are considering a report on the performance of the SA80-A2 during recent operations in Afghanistan. A team flew to Kabul to investigate why Royal Marines had problems with weapons failing to fire.

Armed Forces Minister Adam Ingram confirmed in the House of Commons that three official failure reports had been filed from troops in Afghanistan, the first time the new individual weapon (IW) had been used on operations. All failures must be reported up the chain of command.

Of the three failure reports, two were because the weapons had been damaged in transit. The team has investigated the reasons for the other reported stoppages



and its findings are now being considered.

The reporting team, led by a colonel in the Royal Marines, monitored test firings staged under typical operational conditions and which included helicopter missions, very high temperatures, humidity and severe dust.

The Army's entire stock of SA80 individual weapons is currently being upgraded in a £92m program to improve their reliability following many instances of misfirings and stoppages.

Hecklerand Koch, the weapons manufacturer, carried out a series of modifications which included replacing firing pins, some gas parts and springs, magazines and bolt assemblies.

Following the improvements, stringent tests were carried out before the first weapons were issued in time for British troops flown to Afghanistan in the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks on America.

Those trials included test-firings in the harshest desert, arctic and jungle conditions.



**Finger on the trigger:** A Royal Marine involved in the search for Taliban and al-Qaida forces in Afghanistan's mountains. He is armed with the modified SA80-A2 rifle.

Results were carefully analysed and confirmed the "new" weapon's superior capability ... it fired 500,000 rounds and had only 158 stoppages between the IW and the light support weapon (LSW). The Kuwait trials were conducted in blown sand conditions similar to conditions in Afghanistan.

A spokesman for the MoD said: "We view any reported shortcomings in the SA80 very seriously. In hot and dusty conditions all weapon systems are likely to suffer stoppages." It is understood that when all the claims have been fully investigated and assessed an announcement at ministerial level will be made.

*(Adapted from Soldier Magazine 2002)*