

STUDY GUIDE/WORKBOOK  
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TECHNICAL TRAINING

**COLT MODEL 1911**

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San Angelo, Texas

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## UNIT 1 ORIENTATION

### *OBJECTIVE*

#### *Orientation*

### *INTRODUCTION*

Medal of Honor Recipient Col John J. McGinty (see Figure 1-1) said, “Let me tell you one thing, if it weren’t for that Colt 1911, I’d be dead right now.” (Ingersoll 2012) The Colt Model 1911 (M1911) has been around for 104 years and it remains a popular and reliable sidearm since its conception in both war and other than war. To understand its usefulness and popularity, the background of the M1911s first design is considered. Furthermore, an examination of the military use of the M1911 proves the importance of the design. Likewise, an exploration into the use of the M1911 in other than war, compounds its importance.



**Figure 1-1, Medal of Honor Recipient Col John J. McGinty** *Reprinted with permission from Congressional Medal of Honor Society*

## UNIT 2 COLT MODEL 1911

### ***OBJECTIVE***

2a. With references, identify basic facts about the Colt Model 1911 pistol to a minimum of 80% accuracy.

### **Prior to 1911**

***Before the M1911 design.*** The United States Army was employing a .38 Long Colt revolver in the Philippine-American War from 1899-1902. (McNab 2014) The .38 Long Colt revolver is double-action, which accomplishes firing a bullet in two different ways depending on the handler's preference. The first method is when pulling the trigger; the hammer mechanically pulls back with the trigger until a point and then it releases immediately to strike the cartridge. With the second method, squeezing the trigger after cocking the hammer releases the hammer to strike the cartridge. The resulting action releases the hammer to strike the cartridge.

***The Need for a New Design.*** After the Philippine-American War, the Army realized that the .38 Long Colt was not able to overpower the Filipino's armor, despite the revolver's reliability and double-action. In addition to the Filipino's armor, they were using pain-dulling narcotics to last longer during combat. The .38 caliber did not provide enough stopping power against the drugged up Filipinos. Accordingly, to examine the problems with the .38 Long Colt, the Army established an Army Ordnance Board (AOB). (Bennett 2012)

***Design Challenge.*** The AOB held evaluations between the .38 caliber and the .45 caliber. This evaluation examined the effects of both calibers against pigs and human cadavers. The evaluation failed to produce sufficient results. After which, a report was issued that the .45 caliber was needed despite not having any of their findings to substantiate their claim. The Army proceeded and sent out a design request to multiple manufacturers in 1906 to include some of the following well-known manufactures: Colt, Luger, Savage, and Smith & Wesson. (Bennett 2012) Yet, there were only seven submissions by 1907 with different designs and weights. (Ordnance Department 1907) (See Table 2-1)

### **Birth of 1911**

***Enter the Browning.*** John Moses Browning was a well-known firearm designer, who designed multiple firearm designs since the 1870s and would sell them to manufactures. His fame started with a single shot rifle that he sold to Winchester. Since that time, he eventually would

<b>Table 2-1, 1907 Pistol Trial Weights.</b>		
Weapon	Weight when empty and with magazine	
	Lbs.	oz.
Colt	2	2.5
Luger	2	8
Savage	2	3
Knoble single action	2	11.5
Knoble double action	2	10.5
Bergmann	2	3.5
White-Merrill	2	6.5

sell his rifle designs to Winchester and his pistol designs to Colt per the companies' agreement. In 1889, he began to design auto loaders based on the design of Hiram S. Maxim's machine gun, which utilized the physics needed for auto loaders. (Bennett 2012)

***Browning's Submission.*** Mr. Browning was already working on a .38 semiautomatic pistol at the time the AOB sent out the design request. He changed his design for the .45 caliber and made his submission in 1906. (Bennett 2012) According to an article in Outdoor Life (Wilson 2011), his submission included the following design elements:

- short-recoil
- 5-inch barrel
- 7-shot magazine
- thumb safety
- grip safety

At the same time, other manufactures mentioned earlier were submitting their designs. Now that the AOB had a handful of designs to pick from, they began testing the pistols.

***Testing.*** The AOB began their first round of testing of the submitted designs from the various manufactures. At the second round of testing, the AOB only considered the Savage (see Figure 2-1) and the Colt Model. Between 1907 and 1911, the AOB requested refinements for both designs to meet the AOBs needs. The final round of testing occurred on 3 March 1911 that included firing 6,000 rounds and multiple scenarios such as cartridge flaws and subjected to acid and salt water. At the end of the test, Mr. Browning's design had zero malfunctions whereas the Salvage had 37 malfunctions. On 29 March 1911, Mr. Browning's design became the United States Armed Forces sidearm and designated as M1911. (Bennett 2012).



**Figure 2-1, Savage Model 1907** Reprinted with permission from National Firearms Museum

### **Military Application**

***Prelude to First Combat Action.*** Colt began solely producing the M1911 for the Army until 1913. This is when the United States Navy and Marine Corps began utilizing the M1911. (McNab 2014) Colt realized that they could not keep up with the orders and they reached an agreement with Springfield Armory to help meet the requested orders.

***M1911s use in World War I (WWI).*** In 1914, WWI began in Europe and the United States Government requested more M1911s in preparation for possible war. As such, other manufactures began to produce the M1911 to fill the influx of the government's orders. The United States of America did not enter WWI until 1917 and the orders for M1911 increased to 2.7 million. For two years, service members utilized the M1911 until the end of WWI in 1919.

(Bennett 2012) Alvin Cullum York (see Figure 2-2) received the Medal of Honor in 1918 during a battle in France that led to capturing 132 Germans. It was during this battle that Alvin York used his M1911 instead of his rifle to gain victory. (Mastriano 2014)

**After WWI.** At the end of WWI, the United States Government requested changes to the M1911. After the making the changes, it was re-designated to M1911A1. The United States utilized the M1911A1s in various wars, both big and small. Including the Vietnam conflict where Col John J. McGinty stated that the Colt Model 1911 saved his life. (Ingersoll 2012) Service members continued to train with the M1911A1 until 1985. (see Figure 2-3)

**74 Years Later.** In 1985, the Colt Model 1911 officially ended its service as the United States sidearm and the 9mm Beretta (M9) replaced it. This was due in part because the government believed that the .45 caliber was too big for use. (McNab 2014) Despite the end of its official use, it is still the standard issue for Special Forces units. In 2012, the M45A1 Close Quarter Battle Pistol (CQBP) based its design on the M1911 and the Marine Corps special operators currently use it. (Ingersoll 2012)

### Other than War

**Law Enforcement.** The use of a semi-automatic pistol did not become popular for law enforcement until after the sixties. Most departments required the use of a double-action revolver because of a misunderstanding of semi-automatic pistols; however, some officers understood the effectiveness of a semi-automatic. If the law enforcement departments allowed the use of a semi-automatic, some officers choose a M1911. (Wilson 2011) It also became the unofficial sidearm for the Texas Rangers because of its popularity. (Wilson 2011) In 2012, it became the official sidearm of the Texas Department of Public Safety Special Operations Group because of its agility and preciseness proven in a rigorous test. (NRA Staff 2012)

**Civilian.** Civilians have utilized the M1911 since its conception for personal reasons such as home defense. Professional occupations also use it in shooting competitions. The M1911s



**Figure 2-2, Medal of Honor Recipient Alvin C. York.** Reprinted with permission from *New World Encyclopedia contributors*



**Figure 2-3, M1911 Training at Daniel Field, July 1943.** Reprinted with permission from *Library of Congress*.

design, versatility, reliability and the .45 caliber stopping power is why civilians chose it. The design of the M1911 has become adaptable to chamber multiple calibers for those who feel the .45 caliber is too big, including .38 and .22. Multiple companies are also currently manufacturing it to fulfill the needs of the public such as Remington, SIG Sauer, and Les Baer. (Wilson 2011)

### **Summary**

In brief, the Colt Model 1911 has uses in war and other than war. Its use first started as a design for military use after the American-Philippine war. Then the design went through a series of tests to prove its reliability that eventually culminated to zero malfunctions. After the tests, the M1911 adopted as the official sidearm of the United States Armed Forces. Subsequently, the M1911 served in multiple wars starting with WWI. Finally, special operators, law enforcement officers, and civilians use the M1911 after the military switched to M9s. Col John J. McGinty credits the Colt Model 1911 for saving his life and it has the probability of doing so in the future



## APPRAISAL 2-1

Answer the following questions. To pass, you must get 8 out of 10 questions right.

1. How many malfunctions did the Salvage have during the final test in 1911?
  - a. 10
  - b. 16
  - c. 30
  - d. 37
  
2. What Long Colt revolver caliber was the Army using during the Philippine-American War?
  - a. .22
  - b. .38
  - c. .45
  - d. 9 mm
  
3. True or False:  
The United States Navy and Marines never utilized the M1911.
  - a. True
  - b. False
  
4. True or False:  
The Army Ordnance Board used human cadavers for testing the .38 and .45 caliber effects.
  - a. True
  - b. False
  
5. Who designed the Colt Model 1911?
  - a. Army
  - b. John J. McGinty
  - c. John Moses Browning
  - d. National Rifle Association
  
6. Who received the Medal of Honor during a battle in France that led to the capture of 132 Germans?
  - a. Al Gore
  - b. Alvin C. York
  - c. John J. McGinty
  - d. John Moses Browning
  
7. How many rounds did the Army Ordnance Board fire during the final test of pistols?
  - a. 1,000
  - b. 3,000
  - c. 4,000
  - d. 6,000

8. Which organization adopted the Colt Model 1911 as its official sidearm in 2012?
  - a. Texas Rangers
  - b. United States Government
  - c. Goodfellow Air Force Base Faculty Development
  - d. Texas Department of Public Safety Special Operations Group
  
9. What year did the M9 replace the M1911 by the United States Armed Forces?
  - a. 1906
  - b. 1907
  - c. 1911
  - d. 1985
  
10. True or False:  
Alvin C. York chose his M1911 over his rifle during a battle in WWI.
  - a. True
  - b. False

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**ATTACHMENT 2**  
**APPRAISAL ANSWER KEY**

**APPRAISAL 2-1**

1. d, 37
2. b, .38
3. b, False
4. a, True
5. c, John Moses Browning
6. b, Alvin C. York
7. d, 6,000
8. d, Texas Department of Public Safety Special Operations Group
9. d, 1985
10. a, True