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SENATE

{ REPORT
No. 646

EXCHANGE OF DETERIORATED AND UNSERVICEABLE AMMUNITION AND COMPONENTS

APRIL 19 (calendar day, APRIL 21), 1926.—Ordered to be printed

MR. WADSWORTH, from the Committee on Military Affairs, submitted
the following

REPORT

[To accompany S. 3163]

The Committee on Military Affairs, to which was referred the bill (S. 3163) to authorize the Secretary of War to exchange deteriorated and unserviceable ammunition and components, and for other purposes, having considered the same, reports thereon favorably with the recommendation that it pass.

This bill is recommended by the War Department, and the letter of the Secretary, which explains the necessity for the legislation, is appended hereto and made a part of this report, as follows:

FEBRUARY 10, 1926.

HON. JAMES W. WADSWORTH, Jr.,
*Chairman Committee on Military Affairs,
United States Senate.*

MY DEAR SENATOR WADSWORTH: The ammunition now remaining in the hands of the War Department is in general of war manufacture and not in excess of the minimum considered essential for a reserve supply and for current target practice expenditures. The explosive components of this ammunition, especially the smokeless powder propelling charges, are from their nature subject to ultimate deterioration, rendering them unserviceable and dangerous in storage. In certain cases this deterioration has already taken place and further deterioration of the explosive elements in the reserve supply of ammunition at a progressively increasing rate is inevitable.

The money that can be derived from the sale of a round of such deteriorated ammunition is not in excess of 10 per cent of the cost to replace the complete round and usually much less. It is therefore manifestly to the interests of the Government to replace the deteriorated explosive components or to remove them and place the expensive metal components of the round in storage until such time as they may be required for reassembling into a complete round.

There is in general no money available to replace or remove the deteriorated explosive of reserve ammunition and no legal authority to arrange for covering the cost of such operations by exchange of materials. Selling or destroying complete rounds as has been done in the past will hereafter cause a net reduction

in the ammunition reserves considered essential by the War Department and at best result in only a very small return to the Treasury.

There is no existing law applicable to the situation, but a precedent for the proposed legislation will be found in the act approved March 3, 1881 (21 Stat. 468), which contains the following provision:

"And the Secretary of War is hereby authorized, in his discretion, to exchange the unserviceable and unsuitable powder and shot on hand for new powder and projectiles, or to sell the same and purchase similar articles with the proceeds of the sales; and he shall make statement of his action under this provision in his next annual report."

In the event of hearings before your committee, Maj. C. T. Harris, Ordnance Department, has been designated to appear as a witness representing the War Department.

The proposed legislation is in the interest of economy and efficiency, and its enactment into law is urgently recommended.

This proposed legislation has been submitted to the Director of the Bureau of the Budget, who advises that it is not in conflict with the financial program of the President.

A similar letter has been written the chairman Committee on Military Affairs, House of Representatives.

Sincerely yours,

DWIGHT F. DAVIS, *Secretary of War.*

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