Safe Weapons Handling Procedures

1. **Unintentional discharges are preventable!** Always keep weapons pointed in a safe direction. At no time should any part of the human body be in the likely path of a bullet. This requires constant awareness of muzzle orientation and frequent repositioning and adjusting of the weapon. Muzzle orientation needs to be enforced at all times, and weapons should always be unloaded and treated as if they are on SAFE. It is critical that Soldiers learn muzzle orientation as a life skill that becomes second nature and a personal responsibility. Soldiers also have a responsibility to avoid placing themselves in the path of another Soldier’s muzzle.

2. **Keep weapons safe at all times!** When engaging a target or another Soldier’s muzzle. When clearing weapons on ranges, orientate the weapon downrange and out of the range. A 36-inch safety zone immediately surrounding the barrel will be marked on the ground or floor area with a red 4-inch line. Paint, plastic, or any material may be used to reinforce it against muzzle blast. The barrel opening will have an aiming point in the center of the front lid at least 4 inches from the muzzle. Leaders should supervise weapons clearing at all times whether ammunition is present or not. Leaders need to remain involved to ensure ammunition has not inadvertently been left in the weapon or placed in the weapon in a manner that can result in unintentional discharge. Leader enforcement of muzzle orientation is particularly important during weapons clearing procedures.

3. **Clearing procedures!** When clearing weapons on ranges, orientate the weapon downrange and out of range. Clear before moving off the range and before installing or removing weapons from the mount. Leaders or vehicle commanders will ensure weapons systems are checked out for the role and mission, both at the beginning of and before leaving the mission. The commander will ensure the RSO is qualified on the weapons systems to be fired. Leaders should supervise weapons clearing at all times whether ammunition is present or not. Leaders need to remain involved to ensure ammunition has not inadvertently been left in the weapon or placed in the weapon in a manner that can result in unintentional discharge. Leader enforcement of muzzle orientation is particularly important during weapons clearing procedures.

4. **Keep fingers off of the trigger until firing the weapon is intended.** There have been numerous unintentional discharges resulting from Soldiers being bumped while the weapon safety selector was placed on SAFE and their finger was on the trigger. Commanders at all levels are mandated to ensure a range safety program is in place. The range safety program will cover OIC and RSO duties as outlined in AR 385-63 and DA Pam 385-63. The commander will ensure the RSO is qualified on the weapons systems to be fired. Leaders should supervise weapons clearing at all times whether ammunition is present or not. Leaders need to remain involved to ensure ammunition has not inadvertently been left in the weapon or placed in the weapon in a manner that can result in unintentional discharge. Leader enforcement of muzzle orientation is particularly important during weapons clearing procedures.

5. **Weapons issue and turn-in procedures:** When clearing weapons on ranges, orientate the weapon downrange and out of range. Clear before moving off the range and before installing or removing weapons from the mount. Leaders or vehicle commanders will ensure weapons systems are checked out for the role and mission, both at the beginning of and before leaving the mission. The commander will ensure the RSO is qualified on the weapons systems to be fired. Leaders should supervise weapons clearing at all times whether ammunition is present or not. Leaders need to remain involved to ensure ammunition has not inadvertently been left in the weapon or placed in the weapon in a manner that can result in unintentional discharge. Leader enforcement of muzzle orientation is particularly important during weapons clearing procedures.

6. **Armorer responsibilities include:** When clearing weapons on ranges, orientate the weapon downrange and out of range. Clear before moving off the range and before installing or removing weapons from the mount. Leaders or vehicle commanders will ensure weapons systems are checked out for the role and mission, both at the beginning of and before leaving the mission. The commander will ensure the RSO is qualified on the weapons systems to be fired. Leaders should supervise weapons clearing at all times whether ammunition is present or not. Leaders need to remain involved to ensure ammunition has not inadvertently been left in the weapon or placed in the weapon in a manner that can result in unintentional discharge. Leader enforcement of muzzle orientation is particularly important during weapons clearing procedures.

7. **Muzzle orientation is key!** When clearing weapons on ranges, orientate the weapon downrange and out of range. Clear before moving off the range and before installing or removing weapons from the mount. Leaders or vehicle commanders will ensure weapons systems are checked out for the role and mission, both at the beginning of and before leaving the mission. The commander will ensure the RSO is qualified on the weapons systems to be fired. Leaders should supervise weapons clearing at all times whether ammunition is present or not. Leaders need to remain involved to ensure ammunition has not inadvertently been left in the weapon or placed in the weapon in a manner that can result in unintentional discharge. Leader enforcement of muzzle orientation is particularly important during weapons clearing procedures.

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9. **Leaders should supervise weapons clearing at all times!** When clearing weapons on ranges, orientate the weapon downrange and out of range. Clear before moving off the range and before installing or removing weapons from the mount. Leaders or vehicle commanders will ensure weapons systems are checked out for the role and mission, both at the beginning of and before leaving the mission. The commander will ensure the RSO is qualified on the weapons systems to be fired. Leaders should supervise weapons clearing at all times whether ammunition is present or not. Leaders need to remain involved to ensure ammunition has not inadvertently been left in the weapon or placed in the weapon in a manner that can result in unintentional discharge. Leader enforcement of muzzle orientation is particularly important during weapons clearing procedures.

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M16 SERIES RIFLE/ M4 SERIES CARBINE
Unloading and clearing procedures
1. Place the weapon in a safe direction.
2. Place the weapon selector lever on SAFE.
   *(NOTE: If the weapon is not cocked, the lever cannot be pointed toward SAFE.)* Remove magazine by depressing magazine catch button and pulling the magazine down.
3. Lock the bolt open.
   (1) Pull the charging handle to the rear.
   (2) Press and hold the bottom of the bolt catch.
   (3) Allow the bolt to move forward until it engages the bolt catch.
   (4) Return the charging handle to the forward position.
   (5) Ensure the selector is on SAFE.
4. Visually inspect the chamber to ensure it contains no ammunition.
5. Release the slide by pushing the slide catch lever. Thumb down the no ammunition.
   4. Grasp the slide serrations and fully retract the slide to remove the no ammunition.
   3. Remove the magazine by pressing the magazine catch button and pulling the magazine down.
   2. Thumb down the decocking lever.
   1. Point the weapon in a safe direction.

M2/M2A1 (.50 CAL) MACHINE GUN
Unloading and clearing procedures
1. Point the weapon in a safe direction.
2. Place the safety or trigger block on SAFE.
3. Place the weapon in the single-shot mode. Unlock the bolt latch release.
4. Look in a safe direction then raise the cover.
5. Lift the cartridge extractor and remove the ammunition belt from the feedway.

WARNING: DO NOT INSTALL OR REMOVE A LOADED WEAPON FROM A MOUNTING BRACKET.

M9 SEMIAUTOMATIC PISTOL
Unloading and clearing procedures
1. Point the weapon in a safe direction.
2. Place the magazine in the magazine well.
3. Grasp the slide serrations and fully retract the slide to remove the chambered cartridge. Lock the slide to the rear by pushing the slide stop up. Check the receiver and chamber to ensure these areas contain no ammunition.
4. Release the slide by pushing the slide stop down. Ensure the decocking/safety lever is in the SAFE position.

M11 SEMIAUTOMATIC PISTOL
Unloading and clearing procedures
1. Point the weapon in a safe direction.
2. Thumb down the decocking lever.
3. Remove the magazine by pressing the magazine catch button and pulling the magazine down.
4. Grasp the slide serrations and fully retract the slide to remove the chambered cartridge. Lock the slide to the rear by pushing up the slide stop. Check the receiver and chamber to ensure these areas contain no ammunition.
5. Release the slide by pushing the slide stop down. Ensure the decocking/safety lever is in the SAFE position.

M240 SERIES MACHINE GUNS
Unloading and clearing procedures
WARNING: Under no circumstances should the safety be engaged with the bolt in the forward position. Always ensure the safety is in the FIRE (F) position before charging the weapon; otherwise, the weapon may malfunction when charged with the safety in the SAFE position.

1. Point the weapon in a safe direction.
2. Move the safety to FIRE position (red ring showing) by pushing it to the left. With the right hand pull, pump the cocking handle completely to the rear, ensuring the bolt locks to the rear. While still holding the cocking handle, move the safety to the SAFE position (red ring hidden) by pushing it to the right. Return the cocking handle assembly to the fully forward and locked position.
3. Prior to raising the feed tray cover, look in a safe direction.
   a. Belt-fed. Raise the feed tray cover and remove any ammunition or links from the feed tray.
   b. Magazine-fed. Push down on the magazine release tab and pull the magazine out. Then, raise the cover.
   c. Conduct a five-point safety check for brass, links or ammunition.
      (1) Check the feed pawl assembly under the cover.
      (2) Check the feed tray.
      (3) Lift the feed tray and inspect the chamber.
      (4) Check magazine well.
      (5) Check the space between the face of the bolt and the chamber, as well as the space under the bolt and operating rod assembly.
4. Lower the feed tray and close the feed cover, making sure it locks shut. Move the safety to the FIRE position (red ring showing) by pushing it to the left. With the right hand pump, pull the cocking handle to the rear. While fully depressing the trigger with the left hand, ease the bolt forward to close and lock. Release the trigger. The safety must not be able to be moved to SAFE.
   *(NOTE: Be sure the bolt is forward with the safety on FIRE when the weapon is not in use.)*

M203 GRENADE LAUNCHER
Unloading and clearing procedures
1. Point the weapon in a safe direction. *(NOTE: Prior to clearing the M203, the M16 or M4 must be cleared first.)*
2. Push in the barrel release lever and slide the barrel forward. Watch to see if a round extracts.
3. Move the safety lever to SAFE position. Insppect the barrel to ensure ammunition is not present.
   a. If ammunition is present, grasp the rim of the cartridge and pull it rearward out of the barrel.
   b. Pull the barrel rearward until it locks in the closed position. Visually ensure the safety lever is in the SAFE position.

M249 MACHINE GUN
Unloading and clearing procedures
WARNING: Under no circumstances should the safety be engaged with the bolt in the forward position. Always ensure the safety is in the FIRE position before charging the weapon, otherwise, the weapon may malfunction when charged with the safety in the SAFE position.

1. Point the weapon in a safe direction.
2. Move the safety to FIRE position (red ring showing) by pushing it to the left. With the right hand pull, pump the cocking handle completely to the rear, ensuring the bolt locks to the rear. While still holding the cocking handle, move the safety to the SAFE position (red ring hidden) by pushing it to the right. Return the cocking handle assembly to the fully forward and locked position.
3. Prior to raising the feed tray cover, look in a safe direction.
   a. Belt-fed. Raise the feed tray cover and remove any ammunition or links from the feed tray.
   b. Magazine-fed. Push down on the magazine release tab and pull the magazine out. Then, raise the cover.
   c. Conduct a five-point safety check for brass, links or ammunition.
      (1) Check the feed pawl assembly under the cover.
      (2) Check the feed tray.
      (3) Lift the feed tray and inspect the chamber.
      (4) Check magazine well.
      (5) Check the space between the face of the bolt and the chamber, as well as the space under the bolt and operating rod assembly.
4. Lower the feed tray and close the feed cover, making sure it locks shut. Move the safety to the FIRE position (red ring showing) by pushing it to the left. With the right hand pump, pull the cocking handle to the rear. While fully depressing the trigger with the left hand, ease the bolt forward to close and lock. Release the trigger. The safety must not be able to be moved to SAFE.
   *(NOTE: Be sure the bolt is forward with the safety on FIRE when the weapon is not in use.)*

MK19 GRENADE MACHINE GUN
Unloading and clearing procedures
1. Point the weapon in a safe direction.
2. Ensure the safety switch is to the left, showing S (SAFE).
3. Open the cover assembly. If opening the cover after firing, look away for 3-5 seconds while opening the cover assembly.
4. If the bolt is locked to the rear, lower one charging handle and pull it to the rear. Observe the bolt face for ammunition or cartridges, then proceed to step 6.
5. If the bolt is not locked to the rear, pull both charging handles to the rear, locking the bolt. Return only one of the charging handles to the forward, upright and locked position, leaving the other charging handle to the rear. Observe for any ammunition or spent cartridges that are still attached to the face of the bolt or chamber.
6. Remove any ammunition from the feed tray by reaching beneath the feed tray and pressing up on the primary and secondary positioning pawls. While depressing the pawls, slide the linked round out of the feed tray and feed throat.
7. Remove any ammunition from the bolt face by inserting a section of a cleaning rod through the left side of the receiver rail. Place it on top of the live round or cartridge case, as close to the bolt face as possible, and push up on the cleaning rod. This action will force the round or cartridge down and out of the bottom of the MK19. *(NOTE: Ensure you position a hand to catch the ejected round.)*

WARNING: Do not use a bayonet to remove a cartridge case or live ammo from the bolt face. Damage could be caused to the vertical cam and the bolt face.

8. Visually observe the face of the bolt and chamber to ensure the weapon is clear of ammunition and cartridges.
9. Move the safety switch to the right, showing F (FIRE).
10. Maintain rearward pressure on the rear charging handle and depress the trigger, riding the bolt forward. Return the charging handle to the upright and locked position.
11. Move the safety switch back to the left, showing S (SAFE).
12. Close the cover assembly, ensuring the secondary drive lever is to the right. DO NOT SLAM THE COVER!

M230 GRENADE LAUNCHER
Unloading and clearing procedures
1. Point the weapon in a safe direction.
2. Move the safety lever to the SAFE (S) position.
3. Press the barrel release and allow the barrel to swing out to the left side of the receiver.
4. Inspect the barrel to ensure ammunition is not present.
   a. If ammunition is present, grasp the rim of the cartridge and pull it rearward out of the barrel.
   b. Pivot the barrel into the receiver until it locks in the closed position. Visually ensure the safety lever is in the SAFE (S) position.