

United States Senate

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The Honorable Mr. Peter Geren
Secretary of the Army
101 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310-0101

Dear Mr. Secretary,

I am concerned with the Army's plans to procure nearly half a million new rifles outside of any competitive procurement process.

I understand that the Army decided to procure M4 Carbines in the early 1990's to fill the gap between the M16 and 9mm pistol. At that time the Army specifically framed the requirement as the "Required Operational Capability (ROC) for the M4 Carbine." M4 is a trademark name owned by Colt. Is it standard practice in Army acquisition to tie a requirement to a trademarked product?

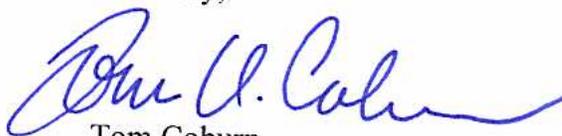
I am certain that we can all agree that America's soldiers should have the best technology in their hands. There is nothing more important to a soldier than their rifle, and there is simply no excuse for not providing our soldiers the best weapon – not just a weapon that is "good enough." Unfortunately, considering the long standing reliability and lethality problems with the M-16 design, of which the M4 is based, I am afraid that our troops in combat might not have the best weapon.

In the years following the Army's last Requirements Document, a number of manufacturers have researched, tested, and fielded weapons which, by all accounts, appear to provide significantly improved reliability. To fail to allow a free and open competition of these operational weapons is unacceptable.

I would like to see the results of the surveys you have conducted in the field in Iraq and Afghanistan. Please include our soldiers' accounts of malfunctions, assessments of M4 reliability and how the Army is addressing those reliability concerns.

I believe the Army needs to rapidly revise its rifle and carbine requirements. Free and open competition will give our troops the best rifle in the world. Thank you for your prompt consideration of this matter, and I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,



Tom Coburn
United States Senator