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Air Force Suspends M18 Sidearm After Wyoming Airman's Death

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The United States Air Force has suspended the use of the Sig Sauer M18 pistol following the death of an airman stationed at F.E. Warren Air Force Base in Wyoming. The incident, which occurred on July 20, 2025, has raised serious concerns about the safety of the M18, a standard-issue sidearm across the U.S. military, and led to a service-wide reevaluation of its operational use.

The airman, a member of the 90th Security Forces Squadron responsible for guarding nuclear missile sites, was killed while on duty. Although the exact cause of death has not been publicly disclosed, the Air Force Global Strike Command (AFGSC) confirmed in a memo dated July 21 that the M18 would be pulled from both training and operational use until further notice. In its place, units have been directed to use M-4 rifles.

The Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI) is leading the inquiry into the circumstances of the incident. Meanwhile, all M18 pistols assigned to the 90th Missile Wing are undergoing mandatory inspection by Combat Arms personnel, signaling the seriousness of the concerns surrounding the weapon.

Originally adopted in 2017, the M18, derived from the Sig Sauer P320 platform, was selected to replace the Beretta M9 as the military's primary sidearm due to its compact size and modular features. However, the M18 and its P320 variants have been under fire over the past several years due to claims of unintended discharges. These claims have prompted lawsuits and led some law enforcement agencies, including U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the Dallas Police Department, to ban the pistol from use.

In a statement issued in March, Sig Sauer responded to these allegations by stating, "The P320 CANNOT discharge without a trigger pull that is a fact." The company has consistently denied claims of a design flaw and suggested that many complaints are driven by litigation interests rather than technical evidence.

Nonetheless, the growing list of agencies distancing themselves from the P320 and M18 models has added pressure on military decision-makers. ICE issued a directive earlier this month replacing all P320 models with the Glock 19 Modular Optic System (MOS), while other departments, including the Milwaukee Police and certain training centers in Washington State, have taken similar steps.

According to AFGSC spokesperson Charles Hoffman, the temporary removal of the M18 is a "precautionary measure," emphasizing the need to "ensure the safety and security of our personnel." The suspension will remain in effect as investigations continue.

F.E. Warren Air Force Base plays a critical role in U.S. nuclear deterrence, housing Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). Given the base's strategic importance, the decision to withdraw the M18 underscores how seriously the Air Force is

treating any potential reliability issues. The military community now awaits the results of the investigation, which may determine the future of the M18 within the armed forces.