

Air Force Halts Use of M18 Pistols After Fatal Incident at Wyoming Base

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— Categories: Defence & Security



The U.S. Air Force Global Strike Command has suspended the use of the Sig Sauer M18 pistol across its units following the death of a Security Forces airman on July 20 at F.E. Warren Air Force Base in Wyoming. The pause in use comes as the Air Force investigates the circumstances surrounding the incident, which remains under active review by the Air Force Office of Special Investigations and the command's safety office.

The M18, a compact version of the Sig Sauer P320, has been in service with the Air Force since 2019. It was introduced to replace the aging M9 Beretta pistol and is valued for its modular design, enhanced ergonomics, and compatibility with various tactical accessories. However, the platform has faced ongoing scrutiny due to reports of unintentional discharges.

In response to the incident, all Global Strike Command units have been instructed to suspend use of the M18 while a comprehensive safety review is conducted. Security Forces personnel will carry M4 rifles during this period to ensure operational readiness is not affected.

Although this suspension applies specifically to Global Strike Command, the M18 remains in service with other branches of the U.S. military, including the Army and Marine Corps. Defense officials from these branches have reiterated that the M18 met all required safety standards at the time of its adoption and do not plan to suspend its use.

The P320 platform, on which the M18 is based, has been at the center of multiple lawsuits and public concerns over alleged “uncommanded discharges”, claims that the firearm can fire without the trigger being pulled. Sig Sauer has consistently denied any design flaw, attributing such incidents to user error or improper handling. Nonetheless, numerous law enforcement agencies and civilian users have filed legal complaints, with more than 70 cases documented in New Hampshire alone.

The FBI and several state agencies have also examined the weapon’s performance, adding to the debate over its safety. Despite the controversy, the Air Force has issued over 125,000 M18 pistols since the platform was adopted, with the intent of equipping all Security Forces personnel.

As the investigation continues, the Air Force's suspension highlights broader concerns about handgun reliability and the importance of safety in military equipment. The findings may influence future decisions across the Department of Defense regarding procurement and operational standards.