



COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548



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SEP 21 1972

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Dear Senator Proxmire:

In your letter of August 23, 1972, you asked us to respond to an inquiry you had received from Specialist, Fourth Class, Lloyd Rinderer concerning the Army's issuance of items with expired shelf life. 20

We have made a number of reviews in this area in the past, and a copy of our most recent report to the Secretary of Defense on one such matter is enclosed. We pointed out in that report that the Department of Defense had made substantial improvements in managing shelf-life items and that we found no significant instances of needless deterioration and disposal of these types of items.

2 The Department of Defense policy on shelf-life items is for all such items to be (1) rotated and updated to the maximum extent possible and/or economically feasible, (2) tested for possible restoration, (3) considered for potential excess when quantities held exceed the anticipated usage during remaining shelf life, and (4) coded so that the above policies may be accomplished and controlled by the responsible items managers and warehouse personnel. 5

This policy applies to all supply locations holding shelf-life items and should have been in operation at the supply facilities from which Specialist Rinderer received his supplies. His experience may have been an isolated case, or some of the controls over the management of shelf-life items in the Army may have broken down recently.

We plan to survey the management of shelf-life items in 1973. This survey, which will cover each of the military services as well as the General Services Administration, will attempt to determine the extent to which situations such as the one identified by Specialist Rinderer have occurred in the past and how recurrence may be prevented. If we find this to be a significant problem, we will furnish you a copy of our report upon completion of the work.

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