

# Armcor's reply to Postscript column of Federico D. Pascual, Jr. : The real story

In reply to columnist Federico Pascual's January 8 commentary, "PNP wants cheapest, or most reliable, gun?", allow us to make the following clarification regarding the PNP Technical Working Group testing of our Tanfoglio Force 99 pistol.

The DILG/PNP Technical Working Group started testing the Tanfoglio Force 99 polymer pistol last 20 Dec 2011, with our competitors also present, and their technicians sitting right beside our technician. Each proponent presented 10 pistols, and the TWG selected two at random.

On the first day, the Tanfoglio pistol passed the following tests:

1. Pre-Firing and Dimensional Test—15 rounds fired per pistol.
2. Accuracy Test—15 rounds fired per pistol from 25 meters with mean radius of not more than 6 inches.
3. Interchangeability Test—two guns were disassembled, parts switched, then assembled and fired with 15 rounds.
4. Maintainability Test—guns were completely disassembled to its basic parts, including removal of ambidextrous safety, then ambidextrous safety was transferred to opposite side and tested and fired with 15 rounds each.
5. Adverse condition SAND Test—3 kg of sand was poured on the gun, to immerse it in sand, then the gun was fired. The requirement was 3 rounds, but 15 rounds fired.
6. Adverse Condition MUD Test—pistol immersed in mud then fired with 15 rounds.
7. Water Immersion Test—loaded pistol immersed in water for one minute, then fired.
8. Weapon Drop and Safety Test—from 5 feet to concrete floor, with loaded magazine, resulting in no dents, cracked or bent parts, and pistol fired 15 rounds each.
9. Magazine Drop Test – fully loaded magazines dropped from 5 feet high to concrete floor in two different positions, then pistol fired 15 rounds.

The second day was the start of the endurance test after the gun passed each of the tests above. The endurance test was meant to find out if the pistol can fire 20,000 rounds in four days. Since it was not an accuracy test, even if the sight fell off, the testing could continue, as long as the gun could still fire, and the missing/broken part noted on the report.

The firers were rookie cops, mostly women. Shooting was timed at maximum of 10 seconds of rapid fire per magazine, alternating with slow firing of maximum of 15 seconds per magazine. Then the gun was cleaned using a compressor, periodically, with the competitors very closely watching and monitoring to make sure we did NOT bring in any new parts, to replace the existing parts.

Aside from the man-to-man guarding, our competitors insisted that the gun be taped up like a mummy at the end of each day, and they all signed on the taped gun. Then the mummified gun was placed in the gun case that was taped up and signed by all parties again. The gun remains in the custody of the police.

For the test scorecard, 15 minor defects equal one major defect. Eight major defects equal one critical defect. Also, 120 minor defects equals a critical defect.

By the end of the first 5000 rounds, only 2 minor defects were recorded. By the end of the second 5000 rounds, only a cumulative total of 7 minors were detected, mostly stove pipes attributable to the firer. At around the 14,600, the first stoppage occurred. The PNP TWG declared that it had been their previous practice to disassemble the gun to determine what went wrong. They added that after checking and putting the gun back together, if the pistol can fire, then the endurance test would continue. The pistol continued to fire until the rounds set aside for the day were consumed. A stoppage is not a failure.

In the past, only 5000 rounds were required by the PNP to attain a passing score on the endurance test. This is the very first time in the Philippines that a pistol is tested for more than 5000 rounds. The requirement of 20,000 rounds is four times the requirement, and probably the highest number of rounds required for testing worldwide.

By the fourth day of the endurance test, after firing around 600 rounds, the gun stopped for the second time. Following previous rulings, the gun was disassembled and checked and tweaked before re-assembling to make it ready for firing. After a few more rounds, the pistol stopped, and the same procedure was applied. It was at this point that the right ambidextrous pin was discovered as missing. The missing pin holds the right thumb safety lever on the gun. Even if it is missing, the left side thumb safety still works. Besides, this particular test was the endurance test. The PNP TWG decided to elevate to the BAC the decision on whether to allow the gun to be fired or not.

We believe, that based on the previous rulings for the endurance test, we should be allowed to fire the gun to determine whether it can finish 20,000 rounds without replacing or changing any part—not even a pin or spring. There is no certainty that the defect is critical, as the pistol was not yet fired. The “failed to fire, load, extract and eject attributable to the weapon” as a critical defect was purely speculative at this stage.

Our scorecard reflected 3 major defects from the 3 stoppages, and 12 minor defects, which is still a long way from being declared "gun failure" or “fatal failure” as Mr. Pascual described in his column. Competitors worried that the Tanfoglio pistol may actually finish the 20,000 endurance test. The performance of the pistol has, so far, exceeded the expectations of the police. This also shows the serviceability of the pistol without having to resort to using new parts.

But to our dismay, whilst the issue was being argued, we were informed that the 2010

budget had expired. So now, any further tests are moot and academic, since the bid has been cancelled. Considerable expense had been spent on this testing in terms of money, time and manpower.

If a car stops in an endurance test, it is not automatically declared a failure. The driver can try to restart the car or go for a pit stop to check what is wrong and what can be corrected. If the screw of the door handle falls off, it will have no function on the capability of the car to finish an endurance test, and reach its destination.

By the same token, the stoppage of the Tanfoglio after an unprecedented 15,000 rounds fired could not have been declared a “gun failure” as the parameters to declare a gun failure were not yet present—the gun was not fired after checking and reassembly.

In reality, a policeman will not fire 20,000 rounds over the lifetime of his gun. Also, springs and other small parts are changed periodically. Even well-known brands have to change their springs every 3000 rounds. The other competitors have not yet been tested for the 20,000-round endurance test, so there still is a possibility that none of the other pistols could pass the 20,000 rounds requirement.

As to the post-qualification of documents, additional documents were requested which were not required in the bid documents, based on allegations of competitors. They were proven wrong when Armscor was able to present documentation authenticated by the Philippine Consulate abroad. However, it should really be the responsibility of the accusers to support their allegations, and not give the burden of proof to the accused. Otherwise, anyone can fabricate allegations.

Mr. Pascual also alleged in his column that Armscor refused to put the safety back on. The fact is that the safety was always on, and on both sides of the gun. The DILG lawyer was called and consulted, and his advice to the TWG was not to touch the gun, but to secure it, and raise the issue to the BAC for decision.

Also, after a BAC resolution received on 29 December 2011, the proponent is allowed 3 calendar days to submit its motion for reconsideration. This was duly submitted on 2 January 2012, since Dec 30, 31 and January 01 were holidays; however, no action was made by the BAC on the Motion for Reconsideration, as the funds expired, bidding cancelled and all other action on the testing considered moot and academic. With the bid cancelled, there is absolutely no possibility of reinstating any bidder.

The Tanfoglio pistol has shown its reliability and serviceability under extreme testing conditions. It is still alive and kicking and ready to continue the endurance test. The icing on the cake is the very reasonable price for the PNP, as well as the employment of many Filipinos to assemble and eventually manufacture the pistols in the Philippines.

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