

regrets that he was unable to accept your invitation to testify today. I am pleased to have the opportunity to respond to your letter of March 20, 1968. I hope that in so doing, my remarks will be helpful to your efforts to protect the American consumer from economic loss or danger to his health and safety.

Before I address the questions raised in your March 20 letter, I would like to spend a few moments in describing the Defense Supply Agency's mission and responsibilities in supporting all the military services with food, clothing, medical, fuel, construction, electronics, industrial, and general supplies.

Also, before answering the questions of your letter, I will touch on several facets of DSA's operations which I believe to be germane to your inquiry. These include specifications for items that we buy; requirements for special packaging and markings; and methods we apply to assuring that items procured meet contract specifications; the control we exercise over rejected items and the procedures we follow in disposal of excess or deteriorated materiel.

The Defense Supply Agency is a wholesale source of supply to all of the military services in the commodity areas I mentioned earlier. In carrying out this responsibility, DSA manages 1.7 million items and procures over \$6 billion worth of these commodities per year.

As a general rule, the specifications governing the items procured by DSA are prepared or controlled by the services. We buy items which meet specified requirements laid down by the service users.

Although a substantial number of the items bought by DSA have counterparts or near counterparts among items used by private consumers, the specifications under which we buy frequently are more stringent than those governing production of consumer items. The reasons for this stringency are generally associated with requirements for the items we buy to perform predictably under varying conditions of transportation, use, climate, and length of time, and environment of storage prior to use. These requirements also result in military items receiving a higher level of packaging, packing, and marking than is common in the consumer market.

Generally, the markings used on the item's immediate container as well as the intermediate package are the item name, name of contractor, special precautionary markings, and the mandatory markings required by law such as ingredient statements and inspection legends. On medical items the Federal stock number is shown and on subsistence items the type, class, or grade of the item may be shown. A distinctive feature of some medical and subsistence items is camouflage nonreflective enamel used on items ordinarily issued to and carried by the individual in combat. On the shipping container the contract number is usually shown along with other identification data.

In most instances markings are applied to the item in a rather permanent fashion; for example, subsistence items may have the marking information lithographed to the body of the can. Certain medical items may have stock numbers or other identifying information etched into the ampule or ceramic-fired into the unit package. Clothing and textile items, particularly uniform type items, will have distinctive labels sewn to the garment.

Inherent in the function of procuring supplies and material for the military services is the responsibility to assure that those supplies and