

Field Manual  
No. 23-14

HEADQUARTERS  
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
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## M249 LIGHT MACHINE GUN IN THE AUTOMATIC RIFLE ROLE

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## **PREFACE**

This manual provides technical information, training techniques, and guidance on the M249 light machine gun in the automatic rifle role, which was formerly known as the squad automatic weapon (SAW). Since this manual addresses the M249's use in the automatic rifle role as opposed to the light machine gun role, it is referred to in this manual as the M249 AR. Unit leaders and the designated automatic riflemen will find this information invaluable in their efforts to successfully integrate this automatic weapon into their combat operations.

The tactical positions shown in this manual may not be tactically correct, but they were drawn to enhance the reader's understanding of related subject material.

Unless this publication states otherwise, masculine nouns and pronouns do not refer exclusively to men.

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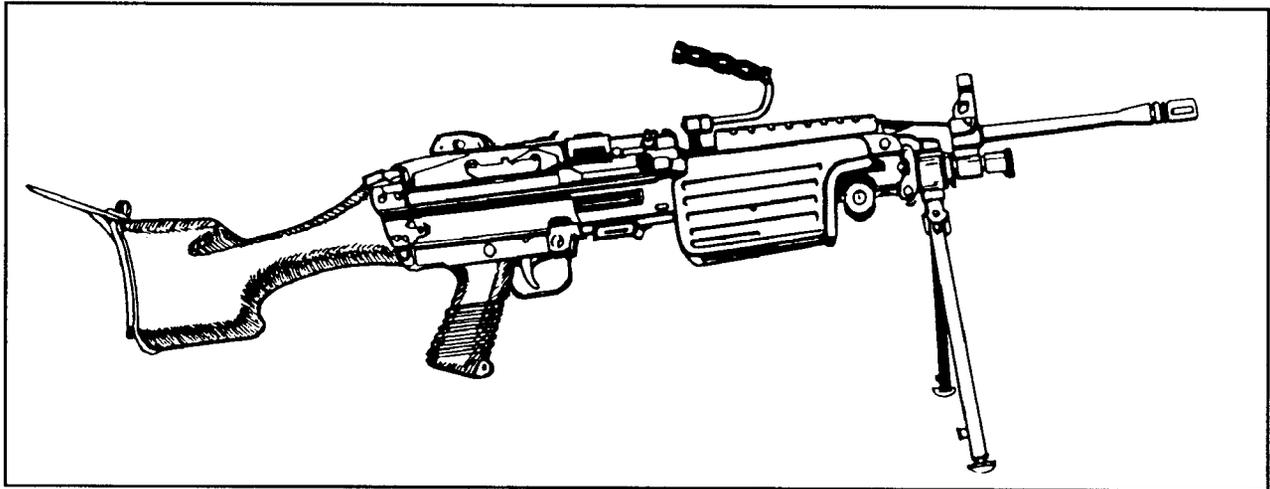
## CHAPTER 1

### DESCRIPTION AND COMPONENTS

*This chapter describes the weapon and the types of ammunition in detail and provides a table of general data.*

#### 1-1. DESCRIPTION

The M249 AR is a gas-operated, air-cooled, belt-and magazine-fed, automatic weapon that fires from the open-bolt position (Figure 1-1). It has a maximum rate of fire of 850 rounds per minute. Primarily, ammunition is fed into the weapon from a 200-round ammunition box containing a disintegrating metallic split-link belt. As an emergency means of feeding, the M249 AR can use a 20- or 30-round M16 rifle magazine, but this will increase the chance of stoppages. Although the M249 AR is primarily used as an automatic rifle, it is also used as a light machine gun. It can be fired from the shoulder, hip, or underarm position; or from the biped-steadied position. When employed as a machine gun, it has a tripod with a T&E mechanism and a spare barrel; however, barrels must not be interchanged with those from other M249s unless the headspace has been set for that weapon by direct support personnel.



**Figure 1-1. M249 automatic rifle.**

#### 1-2. COMPONENTS

The major components of the M249 AR and their purposes are shown in Table 1-1, page 1-2; and Figure 1-2, page 1-3. The sights and safety button are discussed in paragraphs a and b and shown in Figures 1-3 and 1-4, pages 1-5 and 1-6, respectively. See Table 1-2, page 1-4, for general data.