

WDGS 7435

30 October 1943.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE CHIEF OF STAFF:

Subject: Development of the Jeep in the Army.

The statements contained in the attached copy of Memorandum for General Surles from General Marshall, dated 27 October 1943, have been verified and found to be substantially correct with one exception. The original contract to buy vehicles from the Eastern Car Company was for seventy-two (72) vehicles instead of forty (40) vehicles. These statements were verified from records on file in the Office of the Chief, Wheeled Vehicle Division, Automotive Branch, The Proving Center, Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, and files of The Adjutant General. If further information is desired, a complete documentary record of the development of the Jeep is available in the Supply Division.

R. L. MAXWELL;
Major General,
Assistant Chief of Staff, G-4.

Incls.
Memo fr Sec GS
27 Oct 1943
w incls.

M. F. BESS,
Colonel, General Staff Corps
Executive

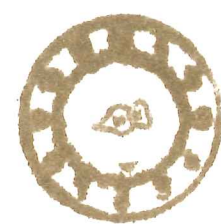
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*Orig. to
Gen. Surles
W.T.S.*



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CHIEF OF STAFF

(copy of 1943 12-10-43)

War Department
Office of the Chief of Staff

WDCSA/451.1 (27 Oct 43)

27 October 1943

MEMORANDUM FOR The A. C. of S., G-4:

General Marshall wishes to have the facts in this memorandum checked, so far as possible, from your records, some of which may now be in the Army Service Forces. See copy of letter from Gen. W. B. Smith, attached.

3-17-43



W.T. Sexton,
Colonel, General Staff,
Secretary, General Staff.

Incl.

M. for Gen. Surles re the
jeep, fr. CS 10/27/43
Gen. Smith's ltr to CS 7/29/43 (cpy)

27 October 1943

MEMORANDUM FOR GENERAL SMITH:

In connection with the letter from A. Wade Wells regarding the jeep, the following is General Sedell Smith's outline of what occurred in the development of this car:

"During the latter months of Mr. Woodring's administration as Secretary of War, General Smith (then a Major) was informed by an assistant of Mr. Woodring's that an automobile salesman had seen Mr. Woodring at some party and had asked for an appointment. The individual was turned over to Smith. He was a representative of the Bantam Motor Car Company, manufacturers of the American type Austin. His company had developed a small, low silhouette truck, light enough to be man-handled by its passengers, capable of carrying four or five men. He had been unable to get encouragement from the various Army departments concerned with such vehicles. He was requesting that representatives of these departments accompany him to the Bantam Car factory and look at pilot models and make suggestions as to future development.

"Having recently been a heavy weapons instructor at the Infantry School, Smith thought the vehicle in question was the answer to the Infantry's prayer for a light, low silhouette weapons and ammunition carrier for front line units. Flash inquiry confirmed that the Infantry and Cavalry would be interested. The Quartermaster Department was directed to have a representative accompany a group to the Bantam factory. A party of five accompanied the Bantam representative.

"First reports were noncommittal or at least unenthusiastic on the part of some representatives; others were keenly interested. Smith then set about getting the funds, which were released by General Marshall from his personal Contingent Fund as Chief of Staff, to buy 40 of these vehicles from the Bantam Car Company. 40 were produced and sent out for service tests. Enthusiastic reports immediately followed and an immediate order was placed for 1500. Before this order was completed it became apparent that much larger numbers were needed so procurement production was turned over to the Office of the Secretary of War. Production was concentrated with the Ford and Willis - Overland companies."

G.C.M. vTS

This copy goes to S-4, then to OCS
from file
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ALLIED FORCE HEADQUARTERS
Office of the Chief of Staff

29 July, 1943

Dear General:

In accordance with your letter of July 19th, the following are the facts in the development of the Jeep in the Army:

During the latter months of Mr. Woodring's administration, I received a telephone call from his office with the request that I dispose of a very importunate automobile salesman whom Mr. Woodring, at some party, had agreed to see and for whom he had no time at the moment. I sent for the man and found he was the representative of the Bantam Motor Car Company, manufacturers of the American type Austin. His company had developed a small, low silhouette truck, light enough to be man-handled by its passenger carrying capacity of four or five men, which he thought should have a place in the Army. He had received no encouragement from the Motor Transport Division of the Quartermaster Department or from G-4 as the Army had standardized the ton and a half truck as its light transport vehicle. He requested only that representatives of possible using services accompany him to the Bantam Car Factory and look at pilot models of the light vehicle in order to make suggestions for its development and to determine whether or not it could be used by the Army.

Having recently been a heavy weapons instructor in the Infantry School, it seemed to me that the vehicle in question was the answer to the Infantry's prayer for a light, low silhouette weapons and ammunition carrier for front line units which had great strategic and considerable tactical mobility. Flash inquiry confirmed that the Infantry and Cavalry would both be interested. However, it took an order from the Chief of Staff's office to induce representatives of G-4 and the Quartermaster to go to the Bantam factory for a demonstration.

This order was forthcoming and a party of 5 accompanied the Bantam representative. First reports were non-committal or unenthusiastic from the representatives of the Motor Transport Division of the Quartermaster Corps and G-4. The Infantry and Cavalry representatives were most interested. Since the G-4 Division was reluctant to authorize funds for the production of a limited number of Jeeps for service test, the Chief of

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Staff authorized and provided the money from his own experimental fund to buy forty of these vehicles from the Bantam Car Company.

These forty were produced and sent out for service tests. Enthusiastic reports followed and a first order was placed for fifteen hundred. Before this order was complete, it became apparent that very large quantities were needed so the procurement and production were handled by the office of the Under Secretary of War. As you will recall, the procurement program decided upon finally eliminated the Bantam Car Company as a producer and centralized production with Ford and Willis-Overland.

Faithfully,

(sgd.) Smith
W. B. SMITH

The above is subject to check as to numbers and sequence of orders, but it is correct as I remember it.

General George C. Marshall,
Chief of Staff,
The War Department,
Washington, D. C.

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