Army Enhances Protective Equipment Quality Assurance

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE NEWS RELEASE (OCT. 16, 2009)

The Department of the Army announced today that it has established additional quality control measures to further ensure that body armor testing documentation and procurement processes are rigorous, consistent, and use available best practices. To this end, the Army has added several quality control positions to include a senior executive service position as the quality assurance director of personal protective equipment. This new senior-level position will report directly to the Army Acquisition Executive. These changes address issues raised in a Government Accountability Office report entitled "Warfighter Support, Independent Expert Assessment of Army Body Armor Test Results and Procedures Needed Before Fielding."

In addition, the Army will conduct a detailed review of procedures for all personal protective equipment testing and evaluation utilizing external consultants who are experts in best practices for both quality assurance and process audits.

Though the GAO report comments on Army testing procedures, the quality and effectiveness of the body armor has been confirmed by the Department of Defense (DoD) Director, Operational Test & Evaluation (DOT&E), who is the final independent DoD authority on survivability testing of body armor. DOT&E provided oversight during the timeframe GAO observed the Army testing and came to the same conclusion as the Army—the body armor met performance requirements.

As DOT&E noted, our most important objective is fielding body armor that defeats the threat to our soldiers. "In spite of flaws in procedures," they stated, "plates that were fielded have consistently defeated and continue to defeat the threat for which they were designed."

Also noted, "While the GAO report 90-827 points out some weaknesses in procedures and discrepancies in testing recently conducted by ATC (Aberdeen Test Center), it is the DoD's position that these findings have no significant impact on the test results and the subsequent contracting actions taken by the Army."

Even though the Army has every confidence that the body armor is effective, it is important to note that the body armor referenced in this study has not been issued to our soldiers.

There is no higher priority for the Army than the safety of our soldiers. Anything that erodes the confidence soldiers and the American people have in the body armor provided is of the utmost importance to the Army and Army leadership. We are confident our body armor continues to be the best available, and the Army is ready to answer all concerns raised in the GAO report.

Face of Defense: Manager Earns Award Named for Mentor

SPECIAL TO AMERICAN FORCES PRESS SERVICE (OCT. 13, 2009)
Bill Johnson-Miles

QUANTICO, Va.—Earning a first-time Defense Department award is always nice, but when it's named for the leader who mentored your dad, yourself, and your sons, it's extra special.

That's exactly what happened to Paul Mann, joint program manager for the mine-resistant, armor-protected vehicle program at Marine Corps Systems Command. He is the first recipient of the Rear Adm. Wayne E. Meyer Memorial Award, presented at the Pentagon in September.

"No other individual in our department has made a bigger impact for the warfighters in Iraq and Afghanistan than Paul Mann," said Sean Stackley, assistant secretary of the Navy for research, development, and acquisition. "His efforts and the vehicles his team delivers have directly led to the saving of countless lives and our ability to accomplish our objectives in this time of war."

Marine Corps Brig. Gen. Michael Brogan, commander of Marine Corps Systems Command, also commended Mann's work in getting the life-saving MRAPs—designed to deflect the blast from roadside bombs—into the combat theater.

"Paul Mann and the entire MRAP team have done an outstanding job," he said. "That, and Paul's professional relationship with Admiral Meyer, made him the perfect selection for the inaugural presentation of this new award. We are very proud of Paul and his entire team. This is a great honor."

The Meyer Memorial Award, created this year to honor extraordinary members of the acquisition community, is named for the father of the Navy's Aegis weapons system, who died in September. Meyer was a senior advisory group chairman on three major projects Mann led from 1996 to 2005. Mann's last day with the admiral was in Bath, Maine, in October 2008 at the christening of a Navy guided-missile Aegis destroyer named for Meyer. The commissioning of *USS Wayne E. Meyer* took place Oct. 10 at Penn's Landing in Philadelphia.

"Admiral Meyer visited my father in the early 1970s when dad was a master chief fire-control technician in the Navy," said Mann, a resident of Stafford, Va. "Dad and I both served

as civil servants, delivering Aegis ships and training their crews to use their missile systems. Admiral Meyer was, is, and will always be the 'Father of Aegis.' His genius and love for the Navy cannot be overstated."

Mann's program management philosophies mirrored Meyer's in setting the benchmark for an atmosphere of urgency, cooperation, and mutual support. The MRAP program is the Defense Department's highest-priority acquisition program. It started in October 2006, and under Mann's leadership, the program devised and executed a rapid acquisition strategy through competitive prototyping, delivering the first vehicles to the combat theater just months after the program's start.

Since then, the program has delivered more than 16,000 MRAP trucks, along with the support necessary to test, field and sustain the vehicle fleet around the world. Today the MRAP program remains agile as attention shifts from Iraq to Afghanistan and its vastly different terrain. In coordination with the Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command and U.S. Transportation Command, the program delivered the first MRAP all-terrain vehicles to Afghanistan earlier this month.

Retired Navy Adm. Wayne Meyer, left, and protégé Paul Mann pictured at the christening of the Navy ship named for Meyer in Bath, Maine, Oct. 18, 2008. Mann, joint program manager for the military's mine-resistant, ambush-protected vehicles program, is the first recipient of a Defense Department award named for the admiral, who died in September 2009. Courtesy photo

"Admiral Meyer's dedication and commitment to really big outcomes for the Navy are inspirational and contagious for our entire MRAP team," Mann said. "I can honestly say that many of the achievements in the joint MRAP enterprise were enabled by the training and mentorship he generously shared with me, and by extension, our entire Joint MRAP team. I am deeply humbled by this recognition, and will share it with the numerous teammates who continue the mission to keep our warfighters safe."

Johnson-Miles works in Marine Corps Systems Command's communications office. Navy Cmdr. Victor Chen, public affairs officer for the assistant secretary of the Navy for research, development, and acquisition, contributed to this article.

AFMC Group Awarded Department of Defense Award

96th AIR BASE WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS (OCT. 23, 2009)
Lois Walsh

EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE, Fla.—The 708th Armament Systems Group was recently recognized for unprecedented acquisition management success with their selection by the Department of Defense as the winner of a 2009 David Packard Excellence in Acquisition Award. The award singles out the group as the best acquisition team in the Air Force.

The Packard Award follows the organization's outstanding 2008 accomplishments in winning the Air Force Materiel Command's Test and Evaluation Team Award, the Air Force Association's Theodore Von Karman Aerospace Award, and the Secretary of the Air Force's John J. Welch Jr., Award for Acquisition Excellence.

The 708th delivered a new laser-guided version of the Joint Direct Attack Munition to warfighters in 11 months, applying acquisition ingenuity in filling a critical warfighter capability gap to strike high-speed moving targets with air-launched munitions. Additionally, the improved delivery of the Joint Programmable Fuze, or JPF, effectively tripled production to meet warfighter demand for cockpit programmable JDAM detonation capability. The team successfully conducted JDAM integrations on 10 joint aircraft, including the first guided weapon releases, using the new Universal Armament Interface, enabling air-launched weapon integration beyond aircraft operational flight program update schedules.

According to Lt. Col. Mike Kelly, deputy director of the 708th, the group embraced changes in acquisition policy that focused on improving the effectiveness and efficiency of its enterprise-wide acquisition business processes in order to provide warfighters with the best weapon systems and support possible.

"Winning the award is the consequence of having executed the program well and delivering to the warfighter what he/they asked for," Kelly said. "The main thing we did was build on the relationship we had with our industry partners, and also the relationships with our developmental, operational, test and user communities." Kelly said this helped the team establish a clear understanding of what the warfighter was looking for and when the combat commanders needed it.

Kelly said using existing relationships with the stakeholders helped the programs run smoothly. The JDAM team went out on a limb with acquisition reform in the 1990s to try different approaches to how contracts were structured, he added. By bringing the warfighter focus to all levels of the program office and industry team, they knew the importance of getting the product out. Carrying this approach throughout the life span of the program has led to the accomplishments that were recognized with these awards.

"We have a lot of years of experience in working closely and successfully with Boeing to get the baseline program out," the colonel said. "Then we were able to take that relationship and structure a program to get on contract very quickly, get the work started, and work out the details of the contract as work progressed. That allowed the testing units team to have the weapons ready for evaluation very quickly, which let us field weapons in theater within a year."

The colonel said both programs looked at the warfighter feedback received early on, internalized that information, which was then shared with the contractors to improve acquisition performance.

"For example, we brought an operational pilot who used JPF in theater out to the contractor facility and had that individual give a presentation on the differences that JPF capability adds to JDAM capabilities and the way they prosecuted Operation Enduring and Iraqi Freedoms," he said. "That was a tremendous motivator for the prime and sub-contractors—to know what a difference that their product makes to the guys flying the sorties, while protecting America's sons and daughters on the ground in the fight."

The award was presented by Dr. Ashton Carter, Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition, Technology, & Logistics) on Nov. 3.

Walsh writes for 96th Air Base Wing Public Affairs.

Top 5 DoD Program Awards Announced for 2008 (Posted Oct 2009)

SYSTEMS & SOFTWARE ENGINEERING, OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE (ACQUISITION & TECHNOLOGY) (OCTOBER 2009)

The systems engineering directorate within the office of the director, Defense Research and Engineering (ODDR&E) and the systems engineering division of the National Defense Industrial Association announced the selections of the 2008 Top 5 Department of Defense Program Awards. The 2008 Program awardees are:

- Wideband Global SATCOM: U.S. Air Force PM; Boeing Company Space & Intelligence Systems Group
- Joint Light Tactical Vehicle: U.S. Army/USMC PMs; BAE Systems Land & Armaments; General Tactical Vehicles; Lockheed Martin Systems Integration
- STRYKER Modernization: U.S. Army PM; General Dynamics Land Systems
- Broad Area Maritime Surveillance Unmanned Aircraft: U.S. Navy PM; Northrop Grumman Corporation
- Aviation Maintenance Training Continuum System: U.S. Navy PM; Raytheon Company; Paladin Data Systems Corporation.

The awards are presented to both the DoD project office and the industry prime contractor in recognition of total program performance in a DoD/industry team effort. Additional information is available on the NDIA Systems Engineering Web site at <www.ndia.org/Divisions/Divisions/SystemsEngineering/Pages/default.aspx>.

Air Force Invests More Than $14M for 2010 Young Investigators Research Program

AIR FORCE OFFICE OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH REPORT (OCT. 23, 2009)

ARLINGTON, Va.—The Air Force Office of Scientific Research announced it will award approximately 14.6 million in grants to 38 scientists and engineers who submitted winning research proposals through the Air Force's Young Investigator Research Program (YIP).

The YIP is open to scientists and engineers at research institutions across the United States who have received Ph.D. or equivalent degrees in the last five years and show exceptional ability and promise for conducting basic research.

The objective of this program is to foster creative basic research in science and engineering, enhance early career development of outstanding young investigators, and increase opportunities for the young investigators to recognize the Air Force mission and the related challenges in science and engineering.

According to AFOSR officials, competition for the YIP award is intense. This year AFOSR received 202 proposals in response to the AFOSR broad agency announcement solicitation in major areas of interest to the Air Force. The areas of interest include: aerospace, chemical, and material sciences; physics and electronics; and mathematics, information, and life sciences. AFOSR officials select proposals based on the evaluation criteria listed in the broad agency announcement. Those selected will receive the grants over a 3- to 5-year period.

The recipients and their anticipated research areas are listed in full at <www.wpafb.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123173414>.

Army Lab Aims to Lighten Soldiers' Load

SPECIAL TO AMERICAN FORCES PRESS SERVICE (OCT. 23, 2009)
Ian Graham

WASHINGTON—Soldiers carry a heavy load, with basic body armor alone weighing about 45 pounds, not to mention firearms, ammunition, radio equipment, food, and other tools they may need for a mission.

The Army Research Laboratory's electrochemistry branch in the sensors and electron devices directorate is working to lighten their load by creating fuel cells that are lighter and more efficient and durable than existing batteries.

Cynthia Lundgren, chief of the electrochemistry branch at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md., described the benefits of fuel cell technology during an Oct. 21 Web cast of "Armed with Science: Research and Applications for the Modern Military" on Pentagon Web radio.

The new fuel cells will help soldiers by lessening the number of batteries they carry for missions lasting longer than 24 hours, Lundgren explained.

Depending on their role in the battalion, some soldiers may carry up to 35 pounds of batteries with them for a 72-hour mission, she said. She'd like to see that weight reduced to 12 pounds.

"We'd like to reduce the weight a soldier carries by a third to a half," she said.

Fuel cells use a chemical reaction between air and a fuel to create energy, which in turn is harnessed as electricity. Hydrogen is the most commonly used chemical fuel, but because it's very reactive, it can be dangerous to carry around. It's also difficult to create and make available for soldiers' use.

"Hydrogen is a pretty energy-dense fuel, but it's a gas, so it has to be condensed ... and it's not very convenient," Lundgren said. "Logistically, it's not a very friendly fuel. And carrying hydrogen-gas bottles around isn't exactly something soldiers want to do."

Lundgren is trying to find fuel chemicals that will have an efficient electrochemical reaction with as few safety issues as possible for its carriers.

"If a lithium-ion battery is punctured, lithium is incredibly reactive and will react with moisture in the air," she said. "Anybody who's seen or heard of battery fires from laptops will appreciate that. We're trying to make those batteries last longer, be lighter, and be safer."

Lundgren's team has been testing fuel cells using propane and simple alcohols like methanol to act as power sources for mobile, portable equipment. Fuel cells are being built and designed to handle power usage as high as megawatts—the kind of power needed for a large vehicle like a submarine or aircraft carrier—and as low as microwatts.

Their primary focus with higher wattage cells right now is allowing for "silent watch," when a vehicle can be turned off but the electronics can still run at full power. Fuel cells providing this capability generally run from 10 to 40 kilowatts, but the Army requires JP8—a jet fuel—to be used to reduce the logistics burden to supply the fuel.

"Small, portable fuel cells ... run pretty much like a battery [the fuel is prepackaged and can be exchanged like a bat-

tery]," she said. "But once you get over a kilowatt, it becomes harder to sustain logistically.

"Part of our reformation research is how to convert JP8 into a fuel that a fuel cell can use," she continued. "This is mostly geared for auxiliary power units .... The efficiency of [a fuel cell] is much higher than the vehicle using its own fuel in an internal combustion engine, and it allows for silent watch."

Soldiers and researchers are testing new ideas, ideally giving warfighters a lighter load to carry and greater operational capacity in the field, whether it's powering a small navigational tool or allowing them to silently run unmanned vehicles.

Army Continues Advancing Soldier Capabilities

AMERICAN FORCES PRESS SERVICE (OCT. 28, 2009)
Army Sgt. 1st Class Michael J. Carden

WASHINGTON—Since 2002, Program Executive Office Soldier, better known simply as PEO Soldier, has been the Army's dedicated organization in developing, enhancing, and fielding soldier capabilities.

PEO Soldier procures and designs the latest technology to improve anything and everything soldiers carry and wear. The organization focuses on making soldiers more adaptable and effective through lightening their loads, while still making them more effective.

"There's a lot of things happening [in PEO Soldier] to make our soldiers the most lethal, survivable, and able to operate in any environment," Army Brig. Gen. Peter Fuller, who leads that effort, told military reporters in a roundtable discussion at the Pentagon.

PEO Soldier's four primary project managers attended the discussion as well, and showcased some of their products, including body armor plate carriers, machine guns, thermal- and night-vision devices, new camouflage uniforms, and a new oxygen delivery system.

Army Col. Doug Tamilio, project manager soldier weapons, highlighted two new machine guns. The MK48 is now being fielded and weighs 18.5 pounds. It uses 7.62-caliber ammunition at an effective range of 800 meters, giving infantry soldiers operating in Afghanistan lighter and more powerful capabilities in high altitudes, he said.

The MK48 "significantly reduces the weight of our currently fielded [M240B machine gun], which comes in at about 27 pounds," Tamilio said. "We gave them this so they could move quicker and lighter at those high elevations." Each Army infantry brigade combat team eventually will get 159 MK48s.

Tamilio also introduced the M240L machine gun, which weighs 22.5 pounds. It has an option to attach a shorter barrel, dropping an additional 2 pounds. The M240L is reliable and durable, and it can fire 100,000 rounds of .762-caliber ammunition before the barrel or bolt needs to be replaced.

"That's incredible endurance for a weapon system," Tamilio said, adding that the M240L has an effective range of 1,800 meters. He's also working to award a contract for a collapsible buttstock to give riflemen more comfort. The M240L is expected to be fielded by July.

Army Col. Will Riggins, project manager warrior, introduced the Portable Helicopter Oxygen Delivery System, which follows the same trend in lightening soldiers' loads.

The system is small enough to attach to aircrew members' equipment vests and replaces the current system, which is about one-third the size of a conference table, Riggins said. It's composed of the oxygen bottle and a regulatory device, and it automatically senses when aircraft reach certain altitudes that require additional oxygen. It also senses the individual's breathing rhythm, he said.

It allows aircraft such as the CH-47 Chinook and UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters to carry more weight, whether that's additional soldiers, ammunition, or fuel, Riggins said. "It enables more efficient operations and more efficient use of your oxygen," he said.

Army Col. Bill Cole, project manager soldier protection and individual equipment, talked about his program's latest developments in body armor vests and uniforms, which was based on concerns from soldiers in Afghanistan, he said.

The improved outer tactical vest, known by soldiers as the IOTV system, originally was fielded in 2007. But slimmer soldiers, particularly small women, Cole said, complained that the vests were too uncomfortable and compromised their protection.

The original IOTV could be adjusted only by fabric-fastener straps to the front, which moved soldiers' side plates toward their torso. But on the new vest, soldiers can adjust the straps forward, backwards, up and down to maximize comfort and protection.

"We took [the vest] back to the unit that raised the issue, and they loved it," he said, adding that the Army recently began production.

Cole also described the Multi-Cam camouflage uniform and Universal Camouflage Pattern-Delta uniform—two new uniforms Army leadership is considering to make soldiers more adaptable to the terrain in Afghanistan. A decision on the new uniforms has yet to be made.

Army Col. Stephanie Foster, project manager sensors and lasers, said her department is working to combine thermal weapons sights and helmet attachments with low-light, enhanced night-vision capabilities. Both capabilities are fielded, she said, but the next step is to merge the two.

"We're doing all that we can to ensure our soldiers have the visibility for all them to be able to think and engage appropriately," she said.

PEO Soldier officials plan to host a similar media roundtable quarterly to ensure the public and military communities are informed of the latest gear soldiers use as the Army continues its transformation into a more modular force, Fuller said.

AMC Streamlines Procurement Process, Saves Millions

AMC PUBLIC AFFAIRS (NOV. 10, 2009)

REDSTONE ARSENAL, Ala.—A business case designed to overhaul Army Materiel Command's process of procuring industry and military commercial standards, specifications, and parts has resulted in a new contract, streamlined process, and significant savings to the entire command.

A business case written by Tim Edwards, AMC command librarian, uncovered redundancy and waste associated with contracts.

According to Edwards, U.S. standards and specifications were being purchased—although they are free to use. In some instances, there were multiple site licenses issued to the same company.

"We had as many as 35 separate contracts throughout AMC. Each contract [included] a site license with the same company," said Edwards.

The process overhaul results in a savings of $1 million per year for AMC and 30 percent a year at AMC subordinate commands. Current and superseded military standards are also included as part of the latest contract, at no cost to AMC.

"Once we got the business case, they pulled the money from the existing contracts to put together the [new] contract. Next, there was a moratorium on purchasing U.S. government standards from commercial vendors," said Edwards.

Ultimately, IHS Global Inc., was awarded the competitive contract, and their products are now accessible to the entire AMC Enterprise. Among those products: IHS Standards Expert, Haystack Gold, Parts Universe, Fasteners Content, and Catalog Xpress.

Those with access to Army Knowledge Online—AKO—can visit the "AMC Standards and Specifications" page for more information.

Army Program Earns Acquisition Excellence Award and Letterman Award for Medical Excellence

MEDICAL COMMUNICATIONS FOR COMBAT CASUALTY CARE NEWS RELEASE (NOV. 12, 2009)

FORT DETRICK, Md.—Last month, the Army's Medical Communications for Combat Casualty Care (MC4) program earned two awards—an Army Acquisition Excellence Award and the Major Jonathan Letterman Award for Medical Excellence. The program was honored for improving and expanding the use of electronic medical records (EMRs) on the battlefield and to garrison battalion aid stations.

On Oct. 4, the U.S. Army Acquisition Corps credited MC4 for instituting the Army's first tactical EMR quality assurance and best business practice programs throughout Southwest Asia. MC4's ability to fill a gap in medical recording via expanded use to the Air Force and to garrison battalion aid stations demonstrated the program's impact on the military's transition from paper to digital health records.

"MC4's business transformation efforts provide uniformity and stability to system use, training, and support," said MC4 Product Manager Lt. Col. William E. Geesey. "Our commitment to supporting MC4 users with our 'train as you fight' model best prepares units for meeting medical information requirements in the U.S. and abroad."

More than 147 years ago, Major Jonathan Letterman, medical director of the Army of the Potomac, documented the need for detailed medical records for all Soldiers. On October 29, the National Museum of Civil War Medicine honored Letterman's legacy by recognizing MC4 for leading the digitization of patient care on the frontlines, enabling better continuity of care and decision making.

"In the past, gaps in servicemembers' medical histories were a result of incomplete or lost patient records," Geesey said.

"Missing data often led to exploratory surgery, repeated tests, or denial of VA medical benefits. The use of MC4 prevents these issues from recurring."

With 10 years of experience managing the DoD's first and most comprehensive battlefield medical recording system, MC4 has enabled the capture of more than 12 million electronic patient encounters in the combat zone. MC4 has also trained 42,000 deployable medical staff and commanders, and fielded 33,000 systems to 750 units with medical personnel, to include stryker brigades, Army National Guard and Reserves, and all active divisional units throughout 14 countries.

MC4 integrates, fields, and supports a comprehensive medical information system, enabling lifelong electronic medical records, streamlined medical logistics, and enhanced situational awareness for Army tactical forces. The Army's Program Executive Office, Enterprise Information Systems (PEO EIS), Fort Belvoir, Va., oversees the MC4 Product Management Office, headquartered at Fort Detrick, Md.

For more information on MC4, visit <www.mc4.army.mil>.

Gates Gives Pep Talk to M-ATV Production Plant Workers

AMERICAN FORCES PRESS SERVICE (NOV. 12, 2009)
Donna Miles

OSHKOSH, Wis.—Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates got a firsthand look at production of the newest all-terrain vehicles slated for Afghanistan, and praised the modern-day Rosie the Riveters he credited with saving American lives.

Gates toured Oshkosh Corporation's production line for the mine-resistant, ambush-protected vehicle known as the M-ATV, specifically designed for Afghanistan's rugged terrain.

He donned safety glasses and walked along rows of chassis, engines, and other vehicle parts to chat with factory workers amidst the roar of machinery, the thump-thump-thump of power tools, and the beeps and whistles of moving vehicles.

Gates also visited the company's test track facility where he watched a demonstration simulating off-road driving conditions warfighters face in southern Afghanistan.

The M-ATV climbed a 30-degree incline, coming to a full stop before resuming its ascent. It demonstrated the same capability, in reverse, during its descent. From there, it traversed sideways across a 30 percent slope, then sloshed through a muddy, water-covered track.

Gates told the assembly of workers he believes the M-ATVs have the features troops need in Afghanistan, and thanked them for the role they are playing in speeding up the delivery of the life-saving vehicles.

Few other projects have such a direct and immediate impact on warfighters, he told them.

He shared testimonials by soldiers and Marines in Iraq, who told the secretary they believe they're alive because they were in MRAPs.

"With every vehicle you complete, you are saving American lives," he told the workers. "There aren't many places in manufacturing in America where you know the vehicle you are working on today is going to save some soldier's or Marine's life tomorrow."

The Defense Department contracted with Oshkosh in June to produce more than 6,600 M-ATVs, 41 of which have already been delivered to Afghanistan. The first of them arrived by air transport Oct. 22.

Another 841 M-ATVs have been built and are being outfitted at the Navy's Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command integration center in Charleston, S.C., for shipment to Afghanistan.

To meet demand for the new armored vehicles, Oshkosh Corp. moved the assembly line into overdrive, bringing on 750 additional employees to cover two eight-hour shifts, said John Daggett, the company's communications director. As a result, the company went from producing 46 M-ATVs per month in July to more than 660 projected for this month, to a peak of 1,000 in December.

The vehicles are being built here, as well as by JLG Industries, an Oshkosh subsidiary, in McConnellsburg, Pa.

In the event that President Barack Obama decides to send additional troops to Afghanistan, Gates said even more M-ATVs are likely to be needed.

Gates credited private industry for its responsiveness in producing both standard MRAPs being used in Iraq and the M-ATVs for Afghanistan. Never since World War II has a military acquisition program gone from concept to full-scale production in less than a year, he said.

Gates also praised private industry with stepping forward so quickly to overcome the engineering challenges posed in producing M-ATVs.

They're lighter than the MRAPs used in Iraq—about 25,000 pounds compared to as much as 60,000 pounds—but offer about the same level of troop protection.

M-ATVs also feature an independent suspension and shorter wheel base that make them more adaptable to Afghanistan's rocky hills. Their V-shaped hulls protect up to four passengers and a gunner from underbelly blasts.

"All of those features made it a difficult engineering assignment, because we wanted to maintain the same level of protection for the troops in the cab as the MRAPs we have in Iraq, but at the same time, have greater off-road agility," Gates said.

Gates conceded that no vehicle will provide complete protection for U.S. troops. "We know that going in," he said. "But this is a ... significant improvement over what we already have."

RDECOM Earns Superior Unit Award

ARMY NEWS SERVICE (Nov. 16, 2009)
David McNally

ABERDEEN PROVING GROUNDS, Md.—Army officials named the Research, Development, and Engineering Command as winners of the Superior Unit Award. The award is presented by the U.S. Army for service to the nation "beyond what is expected."

"This is an unprecedented award," said Maj. Gen. Paul S. Izzo, RDECOM commanding general. "In the past, this level of recognition was reserved for units in contact with the enemy." Izzo said the award represents a "significant level of recognition by the Army of the value that the civilians and soldiers of RDECOM have contributed to the global war on terrorism."

The winning RDECOM nomination was for service during 2007 when the organization developed nine of the top 10 Army's Greatest Inventions. "The men and women, soldiers and civilians, scientists and leaders of the U.S. Army Research, Development, and Engineering Command displayed an outstanding devotion to the support of the warfighting force, and performed their mission in a superior manner while accomplishing unique and highly complex tasks," read the nomination.

Army officials created the Superior Unit Award in 1984 to recognize "meritorious unit performance of a difficult and challenging mission under extraordinary circumstances."

Jake Jones, left, operations manager, gives Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates a tour of the MRAP-All Terrain Vehicle, M-ATV, production facility in Oshkosk, Wis., Nov. 12, 2009.
DoD photo by Cherie Cullen

Army Materiel Command Commanding Gen. Ann E. Dunwoody will present the unit with a Superior Unit Award streamer in a ceremony in early 2010.

Soldiers assigned to the command will be authorized to wear a ribbon, while civilians may wear a Superior Unit Award lapel pin.

"The entire workforce should be proud of this accomplishment," Izzo said. "It is true that one's impact on operations is not necessarily related to one's proximity to the fight."

McNally is with the Research, Development, and Engineering Command.

Acquisition Pros Serve as Backbone of DLA's Contracting, Buying

DEFENSE LOGISTICS AGENCY NEWS RELEASE (NOV. 17, 2009)
Heather Athey

FORT BELVOIR, Va.—If the Defense Logistics Agency were a private-sector company, its annual sales—$35.8 billion in fiscal 2008—would place it near communications giant Sprint Nextel on *Fortune Magazine's* list of 500 top-performing businesses.

DLA executes more than half a million contract actions annually in support of warfighters' and other customers' requirements courtesy of the 3,000 acquisition professionals working throughout the Agency.

The acquisition management directorate, helmed by Nancy Heimbaugh, is the backbone of DLA's contracting and buying operations. As DLA's senior procurement executive,

Heimbaugh is responsible for developing, applying, and overseeing the acquisition policies that help the agency's staff buy what warfighters need to stay mission-ready.

"The Defense Logistics Agency is proud of its role as America's combat logistics support agency," she said in recent testimony before the House Armed Services Committee. "As large and diverse as our mission is, it continues to evolve and grow in direct response to the needs of the Defense Department and warfighters."

Acquisition is a core competency at DLA and a key contributor to the success of its mission, Heimbaugh said. And stewardship is key to DLA's acquisition strategy—ensuring the agency obtains the best value for every taxpayer dollar spent.

To aid in overseeing its enormous acquisition mission, the agency established a separate acquisition management directorate in 2007 and placed the chief procurement officer as its director to ensure proper emphasis is placed on management and oversight of DLA's acquisition programs. More recently, senior executives were placed into "head of contracting activity" positions at each of the agency's four major buying activities to keep close watch on how effectively DLA buys what customers need.

At the strategic level, Heimbaugh said, her team's goal is to develop a comprehensive portfolio of acquisition solutions that represent the best practices for buying the different types of goods and services DLA acquires for customers.

"In implementing that goal, we work to develop approaches that address our customers' specific needs and the specific challenges they face," she said.

In addition to knowledge sharing among established and new procurement professionals, the acquisition management directorate is heavily invested in the continuing education of its workforce.

Ninety-eight percent of DLA's acquisition workforce is funded by customer purchases, so DLA is very cognizant of the impact its hiring decisions have on the prices its customers pay, said Gabrielle Zimmerman, defense acquisition workforce coordinator in the procurement integrity and pricing division.

"DLA's acquisition workforce strategy is to strengthen the current workforce through developmental opportunities in order to build and maintain the skills necessary for continued outstanding performance," she said. "Our emphasis is on creating efficiencies as an alternative to increasing resources."

Competency assessments pinpoint areas where training will be most beneficial, she said, and the agency monitors its employees' compliance with Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act requirements to ensure they have the training and experience necessary to perform acquisition work. Tracking the continuous learning required by DAWIA also encourages employees to stay sharp and expand their knowledge.

Zimmerman said DLA also has a robust intern program for its largest acquisition fields—contracting and production, quality and manufacturing. Interns participate in a two-year developmental program of training and on-the-job experience that earns them a level II certification in the field.

"For the past several years, we have aggressively hired interns. We currently have 399 contracting interns in place at our buying activities and plan to hire approximately 230 interns in fiscal 2010," Heimbaugh said. "The success of our acquisition program is built on several key enablers, "the first of which is our outstanding and diverse acquisition workforce."

The agency uses the Student Career Enhancement Program to provide work opportunities for college-level students while augmenting its workforce. Successful SCEP graduates are automatically eligible for the intern program in their career field.

"Intern programs replenish the workforce as more seasoned employees retire," Zimmerman said.

Planning for future needs—in terms of warfighter requirements and workforce bench-strength—are part of what Heimbaugh sees as a successful strategy for meeting the challenges ahead, she said.

"Given the size of our acquisition program, we are prepared to face major challenges, "[but] we are confident we will be successful in meeting these challenges and those that will follow," she said.

Air Force Secretary Presents Small Business Achievement Awards

AIR FORCE NEWS SERVICE (NOV. 19, 2009)

ARLINGTON, Va.—The secretary of the Air Force presented the 2008 and 2009 Small Business Programs Special Achievement Awards at the Air Force Office of Small Business Programs Conference Nov. 17.

"Because of their size, these smaller companies have great advantages over their much larger competitors, namely innovation, agility, and efficiency," Air Force Secretary Michael B. Donley said. "Despite recent trends toward supplier consolidation, there is no doubt that a larger and more diverse industrial base yields a greater number of options at decreased expense—a positive outcome for the Air Force and the American taxpayer."

The award recipients demonstrate that the Air Force is reaching "Beyond Goals" to grow and strengthen its ability to deliver small business solutions as the solutions of choice in meeting the Air Force mission in air, space, and cyberspace, said Ronald A. Poussard, the Air Force Office of Small Business Programs director.

The "Beyond Goals" vision realizes the value of small business is truly measured by what small businesses positively contribute to the mission and priorities of the Air Force.

"'Beyond Goals' pushes past percentages to ensure our warfighters have access to a comprehensive set of capabilities," Poussard said. "Small business specialists around the Air Force are aggressively working with customers and contracting officers to create strategies that ensure the innovation, agility, and efficiency of small businesses are readily available for the warfighter."

Recipients of the fiscal 2008 awards are:
- The Small Business Specialist, Full Time winner is Arthur Dinwiddie of the 37th Contracting Squadron from Lackland Air Force Base, Texas.
- The Small Business Specialist, Part Time winner is Judith Croxton of the 20th Contracting Squadron from Shaw AFB, S.C.
- The Activity/Unit with a Full-Time Small Business Specialist winner is the Ogden Air Logistics Center at Hill AFB, Utah, and the 21st Space Wing at Peterson AFB, Colo.
- The Activity/Unit with a Part-Time Small Business Specialist winner is the 437th Contracting Squadron at Charleston AFB, S.C.
- The Team Award goes to the 327th Aircraft Sustainment Wing of the Contract Fields Team Program Office at Tinker AFB, Okla.
- The Contracting Professional is Lance Hardman of the 558th Aircraft Sustainment Group at Hill AFB, Utah.
- The Small Business Champion is Diane Perry of the 30th Space Wing from Vandenberg AFB, Calif.
- The Director of the Office of Small Business Programs Recognition Award goes to Patricia Barber of the Air Education and Training Command Contracting Squadron at Randolph AFB, Texas.

Recipients of the fiscal 2009 awards are:
- The Small Business Specialist, Full Time winner is Reggie Selby of the 21st Space Wing from Peterson AFB, Colo.
- The Small Business Specialist, Part Time winner is Kathy Edenborough of the 437th CS at Charleston AFB.
- The Activity/Unit with a Full-Time Small Business Specialist winner is the 12th Contracting Squadron at Randolph AFB.
- The Activity/Unit with a Part-Time Small Business Specialist is the 2nd Contracting Squadron at Barksdale AFB, La.
- The Team Award goes to the 693rd Armament Systems Squadron, Lethal Suppression of Enemy Air Defense Harm Targeting System Team at Eglin AFB, Fla.
- The Contracting Professional is Douglas Willard of the 6th Contracting Squadron at MacDill AFB, Fla.
- The Small Business Champion is Douglas Poore at the Air Force Research Laboratory at the Rome Lab, N.Y.
- The Director of the Office of Small Business Programs Recognition Award goes to Carol White of Air Force Materiel Command at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio.

The awards were presented in the opening session of the 2009 Air Force Small Business Fall Training Conference. This year's theme was "Beyond Goals for the Air Force Mission."