

BRADLEY LINEBACKER ROLLS OUT ON TIME AND WITHIN COST

Dale James

REDSTONE ARSENAL, Ala. (Army News Service, Nov. 21, 1997) — Roll out for the M-6 Bradley Linebacker air defense system — the Army's first successful Weapons Rapid Acquisition Program, or WRAP — was scheduled to take place Nov. 18 at York, Pa.

At a time when production delays, cost overruns, and uneven performance in the field have become all too commonplace with today's complex high-tech weapons systems, the M-6 represents a triumph of sorts, according to Maj. Clarence Johnson, assistant project manager.

Under the fast-tracking impetus of WRAP, it took a mere 15 months for the Linebacker to go from WRAP approval in January 1995 to fielding in April 1996.

That compares with the 12 to 18 months to award a contract and the three to five years for engineering development it can take to field a new weapons system under normal development procedures.

The Linebacker, noted Johnson, is "on time, on budget, and on schedule.

"Best of all, he added, "it works." The system passed its Initial Operational Test and Evaluation without a hitch and boasts the first successful engagement of a tactical cruise missile.

Strictly speaking, the M-6 is not a "new" weapons system. Rather, it is a mating of existing technologies aimed at correcting real-world shortcomings in the BSFV-MUA, an unwieldy acronym for the fielded Bradley Stinger Fighting Vehicle Man-Portable Air Defense System Under Armor.

Whew.

The new system was originally dubbed the BSFV-E, for Bradley Stinger Fighting Vehicle — Enhanced. When that, too, proved a bit cumbersome, it was gradually replaced by the much more punchy and satisfying "Linebacker."

Designed to operate in forward combat areas, the Linebacker is capable of shooting down both rotary- and fixed-wing aircraft, as well as cruise missiles.

The M-6 can trace its genesis to Operation Desert Storm. At that time, teams of soldiers armed with MANPADS were

transported by Humvee. The thin-skinned Humvees, however, were never designed as front-line vehicles.

Recalled Johnson, "Back during Desert Storm somebody looked around and said, 'What are all these Humvees doing out here?' Then they got the bright idea, 'Hey, let's put these guys in the back of the Bradleys.'"

The Bradley was outfitted with Stinger missile racks and thus was born the BSFV-MUA. But it proved to be a flawed solution at best. In order to fire, MANPADS teams still had to stop and dismount — exposing themselves to enemy fire and limiting the mobility of the Bradley.

The M-6 resolves those problems by replacing the Bradley's TOW launcher with a four-missile Stinger launcher. This permits the crew to conduct effective Stinger engagements under the protection of armor.

The M-6 also incorporates the FAAD C³I system, which allows Ground Based Sensor to pass air track information even while on the move. The resulting track information, continuously and automatically oriented, is displayed to the commander.

A "slew-to-cue" capability enables the M-6 to automatically slew to an incoming air threat so that the target appears in the gunner's sight field of view.

"This is great stuff," enthused Johnson. "The Bradley is a proven system, it's been proven in Desert Storm. Instead of building a system from the ground up, we piggy-backed on that existing technology and made it better.

"Now, you've got a system that works, and you got it very quickly."

Editor's Note: James works in the Public Affairs Office, Redstone Arsenal, Ala. This information is in the public domain and may be accessed at <http://www.dtic.dla.mil/armylink/news> on the World Wide Web.

