



MRAP

UPDATE

by Eric Ebeling

Force Protection, the company that invented the MRAP category and pioneered its first variants long before there was an identified need or request, will submit its Cheetah vehicle in response to this solicitation. Like the first MRAPs—Cougar and Buffalo—the Cheetah was developed with a forward vision of the warfighter's safety and survivability needs long before that need was identified or a specific request was issued. Force Protection actually envisioned the need for an "MRAP-lite" and designed its Cheetah vehicle to meet precisely the requirement outlined in this solicitation. As such, the company can meet the aggressive testing and delivery schedule. In fact, the Cheetah has already completed and passed MRAP-level blast testing at Aberdeen, demonstrating that the Chee-

In December 2008 the Pentagon issued a solicitation for a significant number of new "light-weight mine resistant ambush protected vehicles (MRAPs)", or MRAP-All-Terrain Vehicles (M-ATVs) "that require MRAP threshold survivability and off-road mobility." This is significant because as the operating theatre transitions from Iraq to Afghanistan, where the roads are in much worse condition but the threat from IEDs, EFPs, and other attacks is equally strong, the military is proactively soliciting vehicles that "maximize both protection levels and off-road mobility attributes."

tah provides MRAP-level survivability at less than half of the vehicle weight. Additionally, Force Protection has created a Cougar-RT vehicle that also meets the requirements in the Pentagon solicitation.

ARC MIDDLE EAST SERVICE CARRIES 3000TH MRAP

With the sailing of the American Roll-on/Roll-off Carrier (ARC) vessel M/V Re-

solve ex Charleston, SC, on 4 December 2008, ARC has achieved the milestone of loading 3000 MRAP vehicles in calendar year 2008, destined for the CENTCOM area of operations (AOR). These vehicles employ the latest life-saving armor and systems to help protect deployed US forces in theater from improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and other battlefield hazards. To date, ARC has carried nearly



MRAPs in Rota, Spain, after discharge from M/V COURAGE

When the MRAP I program wraps production in the first quarter of 2009, there will be approximately 15,000 MRAPs in the CENTCOM AOR.



MRAP loaded on to M/V HONOR in Charleston, SC

3200 MRAPs overall on its Middle East service, currently made up of 4 modern pure car/truck carrier (PCTC) Ro-Ro vessels operating with a 17-day frequency. This achievement was the result of the tremendous private/public sector partnership with the US Transportation Command (TRANSCOM) and the hard work and dedication of all involved.

During the initial phases of the MRAP buildup starting in mid-2007, TRANSCOM flew all MRAPs to theater aboard heavy-lift aircraft, including organic assets such as C-17s and via leased Antonov assets. However, it quickly became apparent that sealift was the more cost-effective and efficient solution, as one Ro-Ro vessel can carry the equivalent of more than a month's worth of airlift missions at one-tenth the cost of airlift. In fall

2007, TRANSCOM implemented transformation priorities, including an MRAP end-to-end distribution team, to work with the US-flag carrier industry in order to fully leverage all transportation modes in a way that most effectively met the priority requirements of CENTCOM.

The effectiveness of the use of US-flag commercial sealift assets is demonstrated by the huge surge in volumes over the past year. By the end of 2007, using mostly airlift, there were only 1500 MRAPs in theater. Use of sealift began in earnest in early 2008, and a key turning point came in March 2008 when carriage of MRAPs by sealift first exceeded that by airlift. By April 2008, there were more than 5000 MRAPs in theater. By September, that number had climbed to 10,000. When

the MRAP I program wraps production in the first quarter of 2009, there will be approximately 15,000 MRAPs in the CENTCOM AOR.

To date, approximately 3300 MRAPs have been carried by TRANSCOM-managed strategic airlift, while more than 9600 MRAPs have been carried by sealift. The vast majority of the 9600 sealift units were carried by US-flag commercial carriers via their international commercial fleet. ARC has lifted fully one-third of the total number of MRAPs moved by sealift, and approximately one-quarter of the total number of MRAPs moved to the CENTCOM AOR.

Most recently, ARC carried out a proof of principle carriage of MRAPs by sea to Rota, Spain, where the units were trans-loaded to organic TRANSCOM-managed airframes for onward carriage for OEF operations. Rota is now a regularly scheduled port of call for ARC. This successful air-sea combination is yet further proof of the enduring successful nature of the partnership between TRANSCOM and its component commands and the US-flag commercial fleet. DTJ

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