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MRAP Future Discussion Paper

by Ryan T. Kranc

Mine-Resistant, Ambush-Protected Vehicle (MRAP) is a broad term encompassing three main vehicle categories with 28 specific types of vehicle.¹ The vehicle family was procured and acquired in mass as a result of a growing improvised explosive device (IED) threat encountered in Iraq in 2004. Though there is no doubt that the MRAP family of vehicles has saved hundreds, if not thousands, of lives since it was first fielded and placed into operation in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, the MRAP should not be incorporated into the US Army operational structure for a number of reasons. It offers protection against a specific threat type and does not lend well to the higher intensity realm of full spectrum operations. The MRAP incorporation into current brigade combat team structures is as infeasible as it is impractical. Finally, further evaluation and analysis is needed in terms of DOTMLPF² in order to more fully understand the long term impacts of MRAP inclusion and fusion into the force. Until those issues are resolved it would be irresponsible, costly, and infeasible to incorporate the MRAP into the operational structure of the US Army.

The MRAP does not support combined arms operations against a comparable combined arms conventional force in the full spectrum environment. The MRAP is a specialized wheeled personnel carrier. The MRAP does not provide a viable offensive or defensive platform capable of defeating an enemy of combined arms parity in its current state. Lack of an anti-tank variant has potentially catastrophic ramifications against a threat like North Korea or Iran. The high profile and signature of the vehicle system itself does not lend to an effective or stealthy reconnaissance platform. The RG-33 series is 136 inches tall, almost two feet taller than the M2A3 Cavalry Fighting Vehicle that has long been criticized for its cumbersome and high signature for a reconnaissance platform. The Army Operating Concept outlines nine required movement and maneuver capabilities for future Army forces. Of these, future Army forces must be able “to close with and defeat enemy forces while conducting combined arms operations.”³ Additionally, the Army Capstone Concept explains we “must build and train forces capable of conducting effective combined arms, air-ground reconnaissance of the enemy,”⁴ a requirement that the MRAP is ill-suited and poorly designed to accomplish.

Incorporation of the MRAP into the current brigade structures of infantry, heavy, or Stryker brigade structure is impractical and infeasible. Personnel manning within the US Army

¹ Reiser, Frank MAJ. MRAP History/Types/Missions, ILE F100 Information Paper, September 12, 2010

² Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership and Education, Personnel, and Facilities

³ Department of the Army, TRADOC Pam 525-3-1, The United States Army Operating Concept 2016-2028, TRADOC, August 19, 2010. p 51.

⁴ Department of the Army, TRADOC Pam 525-3-0, The Army Capstone Concept Operational Adaptability: Operating Under Conditions of Uncertainty and Complexity in an Era of Persistent Conflict 2016-2028, TRADOC, December 21, 2009, p 38.

is currently mandated by Congress at 547,400⁵ but has been temporarily increased to 569,400 due to operational requirements in both Iraq and Afghanistan in an attempt to drive down dwell time and increase deploying unit manning. Assimilation of the MRAP into any of the three base brigade systems begs a number of practical questions. Will MRAPs augment or replace existing platforms currently in the inventory? What platforms will they replace? Are MRAPs of like or greater capability than the vehicles currently in the brigade? These are pointed questions that must be addressed. At 24 to 29 feet in length and 17 to 40 tons depending on category, two to three MRAPs can be airlifted on a C-17 cargo aircraft, making it inadequate for IBCT or a rapidly deployable brigade to employ as a flexible deterrent option. Use of the MRAP to replace existing vehicles in the brigade construct will severely degrade the capabilities of that brigade and force restructuring within individual battalions and compartmentalize units explicitly in security mission METLs⁶ without the threat of enemy armor or anti-armor capabilities. In essence, incorporating MRAPs into the current Army force structure will optimize the force for security, stability, and counterinsurgency operations without allowing for the diversity of missions required that called for the modular brigade combat team structure to begin with.

The full impacts of DOTMLPF need to be more comprehensively examined, particularly in the realm of education and doctrine, in order to better prepare any potential integration of MRAPs into the operational organization. Currently only 88M and 19-series military occupational specialties are trained in the operation of the MRAP and the Initial Entry Training Centers of Excellence have not been allocated MRAPs to be utilized for training before Soldiers enter the operating force and their first unit.⁷ Due to rapid production side effects no mechanics are currently trained to conduct unit level or depot level maintenance on any of the MRAP variants. This places an undue burden upon an operating force than is required to conduct a host of pre-deployment tasks and certifications prior to deployment to Iraq or Afghanistan. Maintenance facilities currently in CONUS and OCONUS will need to be assessed for feasibility of routine maintenance and upkeep. Also, as stated earlier, doctrinal and tactical impacts of MRAPs on a full spectrum force need to be scrutinized thoroughly before major force modifications to MTOE are implemented.

The MRAP should be incorporated into a strategically pre-positioned contingency mission stock for use in future stability, security, peacekeeping, and peace enforcement missions. As part of a contingency force protection package as part of the Army Prepositioned Stock (APS) system the Army should seek to warehouse and maintain the amount of MRAPs a Heavy Brigade Combat Team (HBCT) has been allocated as an Advise and Assist brigade in Iraq and incorporate into three different APS packages; APS-3 floating stocks, APS-4 geographically oriented to East Asia, and APS-5 geographically oriented to support southwest Asia.⁸ This would allow maximum flexibility for contingency missions and quick arrival for specialized vehicles like the MRAP to engage expeditiously in a theater opening mission for peacekeeping, stability, security, or peace enforcement operations. Additionally, all TRADOC⁹ Centers of

5 U.S. Congress. House. Department of Defense Appropriations Bill, 2010. H.R. 111-230. 111th Cong., 1st sess. (July 24, 2009). http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=111_cong_reports&docid=f:hr230.111.pdf (accessed October 6, 2010).

6 Mission Essential Task List

7 Statement made by BG Edward Donnelly, Jr. (G8, Chief, Joint and Futures) during Futures Day Panel, Eisenhower Auditorium, October 5, 2010, Fort Leavenworth, KS

⁸ Kranc, Ryan T. MAJ., Army Prepositioned Stock, ILE F100 Information Paper, September 12, 2010

⁹ Training and Doctrine Command

Excellence should be allocated two platoon's worth of MRAPs for each training Brigade to incorporate into basic driver's familiarization, and each FORSCOM¹⁰ Army post should be allocated a company's worth of equipment maintained by the post Directorate of Logistics and Transportation Motor Pool. This would also allow units greater flexibility to train contingency missions at home station without effecting unit manning, staffing, or doctrinal vehicular composition.

The MRAP is a capable vehicle for personnel protection in an environment saturated with IEDs like Iraq or Afghanistan. Incorporating MRAPs into the brigade combat team structure is an unreasonable and unrealistic proposition that will pigeonhole brigades into security assistance missions and not equip them to fight and win our nations wars on the full spectrum battlefield. In fact, both the Army Capstone and Army Operating Concept indicate a future enemy that is adaptive, agile, and unpredictable and requires a capable Army that is equipped to operate over a full spectrum of operations with organic equipment and training. Incorporation of the MRAP does not address or adequately compensate for any of these shortcomings. There is a future for the MRAP, however, as part of the APS system of contingency planning and force packaging, within TRADOC, and within FORSCOM in the home station equipment packages for units to better train to their full spectrum capabilities without giving up their current organic equipment.

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10 Forces Command