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Corps' M2C2 transforms battlefield communication

9/28/2009 By Pfc. Daniel Boothe, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton

MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. — Christmas came early for the Corps after prototype-testing officials with the Department of the Navy announced and displayed the first combat-ready Mobile Modular Command and Control vehicle at Camp Pendleton Sept 24.

With on-the-move satellite technology that can transmit vital battlefield information anywhere in the world in seconds, the M2C2 represents never before seen battlefield capabilities.

"Nothing like this has ever been fielded before," said Basil E. Moncrief, M2C2's project officer with Marine Corps Systems Command. "The M2C2 provides and utilizes every lateral and vertical communication asset."

In the past, vital command and control (C2) operations could only be conducted from stationary outposts. Now regimental commanders have the ability to make the most informed decision and give precise orders, while traveling up to 60 mph covering a 600-mile radius.

The M2C2 is essentially a Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle that also has the capability to sync with and aid coalition forces around the world in humanitarian assistance efforts. Natural disasters often destroy communication infrastructure leaving any number of victims stranded in a barren environment.

"If a tsunami were to hit today, we could establish communication and cooperate with coalition forces in ways we couldn't before," said Christine D. Liou, a M2C2 system engineer working for the Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command Pacific, San Diego. "Delivering this very same technology to the frontlines with the M2C2 has that same potential to save lives."

Although primarily designed for combat, the M2C2's ability to mobilize and establish mass communication within moments in any type of environment and operation, only expands the vehicles already limitless potential.

"This has been both the most challenging and exciting project I have ever worked on," Liou said.

The combat-ready M2C2 was completed by design and testing officials at lightening speed, going from blueprints to battle-ready in six months. This unprecedented production speed was also accomplished without using a single civilian contractor and only utilized government personnel and resources.

"From the time we got full funding in May to fielding the system later this month, is light years faster than any typical acquisition process," Moncrief said. "Normally an acquisition program of this complexity takes anywhere from four to 10 years to field."

Special military operations conducted in Afghanistan last year highlighted the already critical need for on-the-move data communication, said Maj. Mathew D. McBroom, communications officer, Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force Afghanistan, and M2C2 focus group chairman.

"We have been constrained by radios and networks in the past, setting them up as we go," McBroom added. "But the operations we conduct today are very dynamic and often require us to move from place to place."

As we move into the digital age of command and control, we need to be able to shoot, move and communicate all at the same time, Moncrief said. Being able to effectively command and control while moving is a huge advantage on the battlefield, an advantage we haven't had until now.

"In comparison, it's like handing someone who is used to drawing with charcoal a brand new brush to paint a picture," McBroom said.



MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP PENDLETON, Calif.-The first Mobile Modular Command and Control vehicle, or M2C2, completes its final rounds of integration testing at the Marine Corps Tactical Systems Support Activity at Camp Pendleton Sept. 23, just days before testing officials announced combat readiness., Pfc. Daniel Boothe, 9/22/2009 6:26 AM

The Corps can expect to see a total of three systems directed by the Marine Corps Oversight Committee with the first one expected to deploy to Afghanistan this fall, according to MARCORSYSCOM officials.

"Knowing that the system will immediately go into the hands of Marine Corps war fighters and make a difference in the war on terror is the greatest accomplishment any of us could ever hope for," Moncrief said.

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