

New SMET Will Take Load Off Infantry Soldiers

C. TODD LOPEZ

Infantry Soldiers often carry an array of supplies and gear that together can weigh anywhere from 60 to 120 pounds, said CPT Erika Hanson, the assistant product manager for the Squad Multipurpose Equipment Transport (SMET).

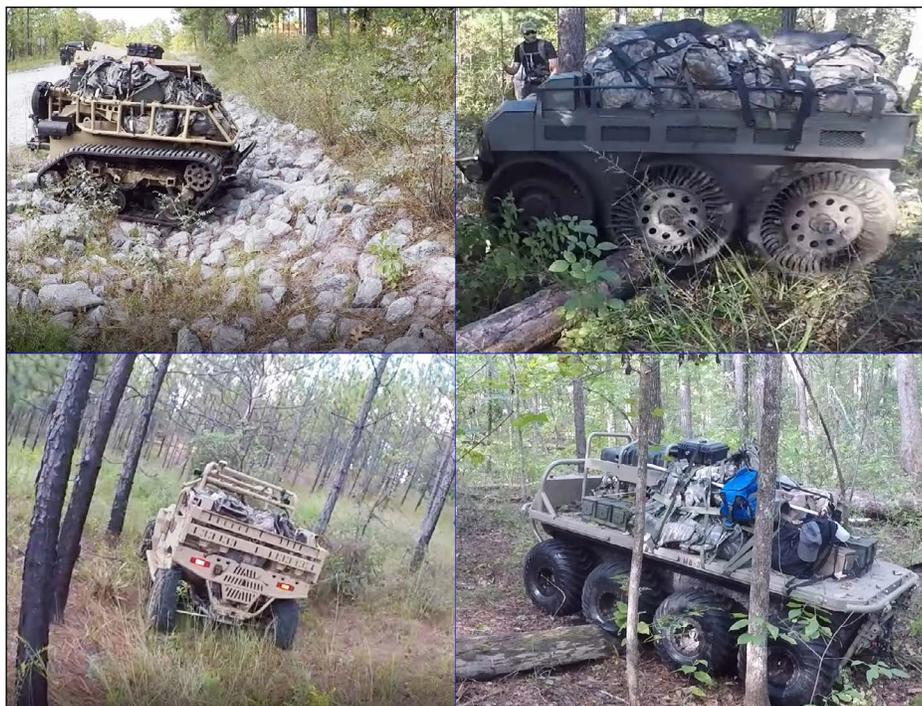
But the SMET vehicle, which the Army expects to field in just under three years, “is designed to take the load off the Soldier,” Hanson said. “Our directed requirement is to carry 1,000 pounds of the Soldier load.”

That 1,000 pounds is not just for one Soldier, of course, but for an entire Infantry squad — typically about nine Soldiers.

The contenders for the Army’s SMET program are four small vehicles, each designed to follow along behind a squad of Infantry Soldiers and carry most or all their gear for them, so they can move to where they need to be without being exhausted upon arrival.

“I’m not an Infantry Soldier,” Hanson said. “But I’ve carried a rucksack — and I can tell you I can move a lot faster without a rucksack on my back. Not having to carry this load will make the Soldier more mobile and more lethal in a deployed environment.”

The four contender vehicles are the MRZR-X system from Polaris Industries Inc., Applied Research Associates Inc. and Neya Systems LLC; the Multi-Utility Tactical Transport from General Dynamics Land Systems; the Hunter Wolf from HDT Global; and the RS2-H1 system from Howe and Howe Technologies. Each was loaded down with gear representative of what they would be expected to carry when one of them is actually fielded to the Army.



The RS2-H1 system from Howe and Howe Technologies, top left; the Hunter Wolf system from HDT Global, top right; the MRZR-X system from Polaris Industries Inc., Applied Research Associates Inc., and Neya Systems LLC, bottom left; and the Multi-Utility Tactical Transport, or MUTT, from General Dynamics Land Systems, bottom right, are all vehicles the Army is considering to fill the role of the Squad Multipurpose Equipment Transport. (U.S. Army photos)

“Nine ruck sacks, six boxes of MREs, and four water cans,” Hanson said. “This is about the equivalent of what a long-range mission for a light Infantry unit would need to carry.”

Hanson said that for actual testing and evaluation purposes, the simulated combat load also includes fuel cans and ammo cans as well.

These small vehicles, Hanson said, are expected to follow a squad of Soldiers as they walk to wherever it is they have been directed to go. The requirement for the vehicles is that they be able to travel up to 60 miles over the course of 72 hours, she said.

Three of the vehicles are “pivot steered,” Hanson said, to make it easier for them to maneuver in off-road environments, so that they can follow Soldiers even when there isn’t a trail.

One of the contenders for SMET has a steering wheel, with both a driver’s seat and a passenger seat. So if a Soldier wanted to drive that vehicle, he could, Hanson said. Still, the Army requirement is that the SMET be able to operate unmanned, and all four vehicles provide that unmanned capability.

Read more at: https://www.army.mil/article/206619/new_smet_will_take_the_load_off_infantry_soldiers.

(C. Todd Lopez writes for the Army News Service.)