



Airborne Soldiers Test New Handheld Leader Radios

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Airborne Soldiers with the 1st Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, recently completed almost two weeks testing the Army's newest small leader radio (LR) packages. The Handheld, Manpack and Small (HMS) Form Fit/Tactical Radio variants are two-channel handhelds that are used at the company and platoon levels by squad and team leaders to talk to each other and to aircraft to improve battlefield situational awareness.

MAJ Brian Ramirez, leader radio test officer with the Fort Hood-based U.S. Army Operational Test Command's Mission Command Test Directorate (MCTD), said the LR system is designed as an interoperable family of advanced software-reprogrammable, dual-channel, net-centric reliable communications radio sets.

The Generation 2 Manpack (GEN2 MP) Radio is a two-channel, software defined, multi-waveform, general purpose user (GPU) radio designed to support mounted and dismounted operations. The HMS MP will be fielded primarily to brigade combat team (BCT) battalions, companies, and platoons.

The GEN2 MP is deployed in three configurations: a tactical operations center (TOC) kit for command posts; mounted configurations integrated into the Army's tactical and combat platforms; and a rucksack-held configuration to support Army dismounted operations.

MAJ Ramirez said operational testing of the radios is no different than an improved tank or new weapon system.

"These radio systems are subjected to weather, terrain, and the daily regimen of light Infantrymen in an effort to replicate the actual operational environment to which they will be subjected if selected," he said. "Operational testing helps determine the effectiveness, suitability,

and survivability of operational systems Soldiers can use that works."

The test adjusted its daily operations to cope with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Once cleared into their specific environments, all attempts were made to maintain social distancing between operations and test support functions, reducing interaction between test support personnel and test unit Soldiers.

"Operational testing is about assisting the Army in providing modern software-defined radios with the latest technology for Soldiers," said COL Patrick Curry, director of MCTD. "It is about making sure that the communication systems developed assist the Soldier in their mission and ensuring Soldiers are effective against all enemies in any operational environment."

Rick Michael serves with the Mission Command Test Directorate, U.S. Army Operational Test Command.



Photo by Nicholas Robertson

A team leader with the 1st Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment directs movements of his team using the Harris Leader Radio during an assault on an objective as part of the initial operational test of the Leader Radio Manpack at Fort Bragg, NC.