

M10s to Transform Light Infantry Forces

LTC GARY FLOWERS
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For more than 200 years, from the American Revolution to the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan, the American Infantry has utilized its agility to maneuver through arduous terrain to gain an advantage on its adversary. However, the light infantry, although powerful, has limitations in precision firepower and protection, leading to the natural question of how best to fill that capability gap. Fighting on foreign soil, in a multidomain operational environment, the capability to quickly penetrate fortified areas becomes even more important for the light infantry. The Army's new combat vehicle, the M10 Booker Combat Vehicle, will be the tool that exponentially enhances the light infantry's lethality. With the Booker in the formation, infantry will increase its ability to penetrate an adversary's defenses while retaining offensive freedom of maneuver. Put simply, the introduction of the M10 into the light infantry brings new opportunity as we become the Army of 2040. The M10 was previously known as the Mobile Protected Firepower (MPF), or M10, until named after two heroic Soldiers during an announcement as part of the Army Birthday celebration in June.

Firepower in the Formation

In 1967, the Army addressed the capability gap in light formations by developing and fielding the M551 Sheridan. By the early 1990s, the Sheridan had been utilized by a couple generations of Soldiers, building on lessons learned in the jungles of Vietnam and elsewhere. By the time of the First Gulf War in 1990-91, the Sheridan was an integral part of the fighting power of the light infantry. When the 82nd Airborne Division advanced into Iraq in January 1991, the Sheridan was the ground precision firepower platform supporting the charge. Still, the Sheridan had its limitations, specifically surrounding survivability and reliability. These limitations ultimately led the Army to invest into the M8 Buford Armored Gun System, which was not produced due to cost constraints. Then, in 1997, the Army retired the Sheridan. The departure of the Buford and Sheridan from the scene meant that light forces no longer included an intrinsic long-range precision fire capability. That gap in the light formation has gone unfilled for more than two decades. Until now.



The M10 Booker Combat Vehicle was previously known as the Mobile Protected Firepower.
(U.S. Army photo)

Enter the MPF. An approximately 42-ton tracked armored combat vehicle equipped with a 105mm gun, the M10 will be fielded to our light infantry forces and be able to press the attack, disrupting the enemy's intentions while still providing the speed and agility that have been the hallmark of light infantry since the days of the Marquis de Lafayette's service alongside George Washington in the American Revolution.

As the M10 begins to enter the operating force in Fiscal Year (FY) 2025, the Army will take a key step along the path that will lead to the Army of 2040.

The 82nd Airborne Division will become the first unit equipped when M10s enter Fort Liberty motor pools in late FY25. The 82nd will initially field a battalion of M10s, divided into three companies. The M10s will be controlled as a divisional asset. Commanders will determine, based on mission objectives, which infantry brigade combat teams (IBCTs) will be supported by the M10-equipped battalion. The armored vehicles might be spread out evenly among the division's IBCTs, or two companies might be assigned to a single IBCT with another company held in reserve, or some other combination. As the Army transitions to the division as the tactical unit of action, it will be the division commander who will have the flexibility to configure the force to take advantage of all the division's capabilities — retaining a tactical overmatch to the adversary that can be tailored to a specific battlefield scenario. Ultimately, the Army is set to procure up to 504 M10s, all of which will be allotted to light divisions in the active duty and National Guard.

The Case for the M10

The need for a mobile, protected, precision heavy weapon has been seen throughout the history of modern warfare. Consider the last World War II movie you saw on late night television. A squad of infantry is advancing through the countryside or cautiously moving through an old village of stone houses, churches, and shops. Up ahead, an enemy machine gun, sniper, or mortar operating from a protected position begins taking shots at our heroes, wounding several and stopping their forward progress. The enemy's superior position robs the light infantry of the capability that makes it most lethal — its agility.

One of two things must happen to remove the obstacle and allow the infantry to resume its advance. Either an Audie Murphy-like Soldier must arise, at great potential for personal harm, and somehow flank the opposing position, or the company must stop and call in artillery or aviation assets to support them. In either case, the infantry must pause its advance until one or the other of these assets becomes available and moves into position to support.

As a single platoon on the move, that wait for support may be uncomfortably long. Air power or other assets are likely to be tasked to other larger elements and not immediately available. Meanwhile, opposing forces are equipped with man-carried munitions that can defeat the airpower that the infantry may have called upon for support in the past. In a competition against a peer adversary, air superiority is no longer an option. This makes the need for increasing lethality for the light infantry formation even more pressing.

Currently, light infantry teams carry M72 Light Anti-Armor Weapons (LAW) and/or the FGM-148 Javelin Advanced Anti-Tank Weapon System-Medium (AAWS-M) as its heaviest weapon system. Both are soldier-carried systems that provide no protection for the Soldier who fires the weapon. While the Javelin is an effective anti-tank weapon, the obstacles most likely to impede an infantry formation — bunkers, machine guns, older generation mounted weapons — do not require the expenditure of a precious Javelin.

But... what if the formation had access to its own heavy mobile weapon? What if it had access to longer range, precision firepower that is both mobile and protected? These are the very attributes that gave the M10 its working title of "mobile protected firepower."

The M10 is an armored vehicle crewed by four Soldiers. At a top speed of over 40 miles per hour, the M10 can move quickly to support its infantry. And its 105mm gun has the ability to engage targets at a much greater distance than any weapon now carried by light IBCTs. The M10 can travel in the same environment in which light infantry are able to find and retain cover in a tactical engagement. Dismounted Soldiers remain the strength of an infantry unit, but now they have additional support provided by the M10. Distance fires from the M10 will force the enemy to make decisions before originally intended, creating opportunities for friendly infantry to press their advantage. M10 fires may also serve as a diversion, allowing infantry the freedom of movement to seize a desired terrain objective. The M10 operates in support of infantry, helping to enable infantry to use its tactical advantages to maximum effect.



Equipped with a 105mm gun, the M10 will be fielded to light infantry forces and be able to press the attack, disrupting the enemy's intentions while still providing the speed and agility that have been the hallmark of light infantry. (U.S. Army photo)

Not only can the M10 move quickly under its own power, it offers the potential of faster movement to a contested location. Two M10s can roll-on and roll-off a single Air Force C-17. This means M10s can be included in an airlift package infilling into enemy territory, providing the light infantry options and flexibility — an armor platform to move on the offense or protection to a defensive position as forces infiltrate into a combat theater.

Sustainment and Beyond

By August 1944, the U.S. Army had advanced well beyond the beaches of Normandy following the D-Day invasion of France during World War II. The Third Army, under command of GEN George S. Patton, was in the vanguard. The Third Army's advance ground to a halt, however, when Patton's tanks ran out of fuel. The breakdown in the supply chain stopped Patton's advance. "My men can eat their belts," Patton famously told his superior, GEN Dwight D. Eisenhower, "but my tanks gotta have gas."¹

For five days, Patton's tanks sat idle — a stall that the beleaguered Nazi forces fortunately were not able to fully use to their advantage. Patton could only sit and fume as he waited for the supply to catch up. "Give me 400,000 gallons and I'll go all the way to Berlin," he told Eisenhower.²

While Patton's push into Germany was ultimately achieved, one can easily imagine how a five-day respite may have allowed the opposing force to reconstitute and counterattack to their own advantage.

While the M10 brings new capabilities to light forces, it does also bring new challenges. Fuel is a big one. And so is ammunition. The light infantry does not typically have a sustainment package that requires fuel in such large quantities. While fuel can potentially be scrounged from local sources or captured from the enemy, large-caliber ammunition will be a new requirement and can only come from resupply efforts. Not only do both of these critical resources take up a lot of space, but they are also large and heavy — a full complement of ammo for a single M10 weighs in at above 330 pounds. And these stores are flammable, explosive, and intrinsically dangerous. Introducing these resupply needs will add a new level of battlefield calculus for infantry commanders.

To avoid the frustrations that Patton endured during World War II, today's M10-equipped formation commanders will need a more refined understanding of logistics. Sustainment of the M10 will be critical to success or failure on the battlefield. Commanders will have to be well versed in understanding the likely pace of the fight in determining the when and where of delivering fuel and ammunition. One factor that will help alleviate part of this challenge is that the M10, similar to the Bradley Fighting Vehicle, can operate for approximately 72 hours before requiring refueling.

Introducing a major new capability such as the M10 into the formation will require commanders and NCOs to not only understand the specifics of the vehicle's impact but also to understand how to employ the vehicle to best be able to tap into its full capability. Examples given above suggest how the M10 may allow a unit to gain an advantage during an offensive maneuver, but there are obviously also ways the M10 may be used to strengthen the light infantry's defense as well. The M10 enhances a formation's lethality in all phases of armed conflict.

Conclusion

When an armored vehicle enters the battlefield, there is a psychological impact that is induced. There's an impact on the unit firing the round and certainly an impact on the adversary receiving the round. The challenge before the Army's IBCTs is how to maximize those impacts. Weighing roughly half of what an Abrams main battle tank weighs and less long, wide, and tall than an Abrams, the M10 can go places a main battle tank cannot. All the questions about how to maximize the capability that an M10 brings to the fight have not yet been answered. But several points have become clear: An M10 can be airlifted into battle and speed across open terrain or maneuver in a contested, close-quarters urban environment. Yet, it still packs a punch and provides lethal and precise long-range fires.

Ultimately, the M10 is bringing overmatch to the battlefield. It will provide the necessary capability our light forces can use to gain and sustain the initiative necessary to win our nation's wars in the future.

Notes

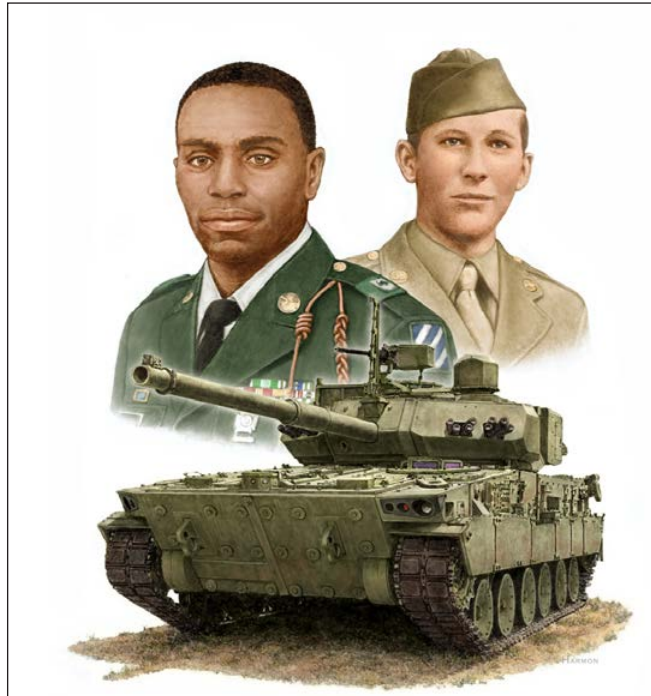
¹ Roberto Guerrero, "4 Reasons Why Fuel Threatens Our Lethality — and What We Can Do About It," *Defense News* (11 November 2019), accessed from <https://www.defensenews.com/opinion/commentary/2019/11/11/4-reasons-why-fuel-threatens-our-lethality-and-what-we-can-do-about-it>.

² Gary Heartsill, "George S. Patton, Jr, General Third Army California Dec. 21, 1945," 28 July 2016, accessed from <http://www.gheart.net/PATTON%20PAPER.pdf>.

LTC Gary Flowers serves as a requirements officer with the Next Generation Combat Vehicles Cross Functional Team (CFT) where he leads the Mobile Protected Firepower and Armored Multi-Purpose Vehicle signature efforts. He received his commission through the Officer Candidate School in October 2005. As a lieutenant, LTC Flowers served as a Bradley platoon leader, a scout platoon leader, and a detachment commander with 2nd Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment, 1st Armored Division. He deployed with Task Force 2-6 Infantry to Salmon Pak, Iraq, from 2008-2009 before transitioning to the Maneuver Captain's Career Course (MCCC). Following MCCC, LTC Flowers reported to Fort Campbell, KY, in May 2010 where he commanded Charlie Company, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). While assigned to the 101st, LTC Flowers deployed to Southern Afghanistan from 2010-2011, commanding his company in support of Operation Dragon Strike. Upon redeployment, he deployed to East Afghanistan as a security force assistance brigade (SFAB) team commander from January to November 2012 in support of the Army's advise and assist mission with the Afghan security forces. At the conclusion of command, LTC Flowers employed his combat experience and leadership as an assistant professor of Military Science for Hampton University Reserve Officer Training Corps before being selected to attend the Command and General Staff Course. He was then assigned as an operations and executive officer for 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division at Fort Bliss, TX. In 2019, LTC Flowers was assigned as the United Nations Command Military Armistice Commission Secretariat's Chief of Operations where he facilitated negotiations, inspections, and the Korean Armistice Agreement enforcement between North and South Korea. LTC Flowers earned a bachelor's degree in organization management and communications from Concordia University (Saint Paul, MN) and a Master of Business Administration from Webster University (Kansas, MO).

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Vehicle Honors 2 Heroes



**The M10 Booker Combat Vehicle is named after SSG Stevon A. Booker and PVT Robert D. Booker .
(Artwork by Jody Harmon)**

The U.S. Army's newest fighting vehicle honors two Americans who gave their lives in service to their nation — and in support of their fellow Soldiers — during two different conflicts.

The M10 Booker Combat Vehicle honors:

SSG Stevon A. Booker, an Armor Soldier and recipient of the Distinguished Service Cross, who was killed in the line of duty on 5 April 2003 in Baghdad, Iraq; and

PVT Robert D. Booker, an Infantry Soldier and Medal of Honor recipient, who was killed in the line of duty on 9 April 1943 in Tunisia, Africa, during World War II.

SSG Booker, the first post-9/11 Soldier for whom a major Army system is named, was born in Apollo, PA. A veteran of the 1991 Gulf War, Booker was serving with the 3rd Infantry Division at Fort Stewart, GA, when his unit was deployed to Iraq.

He was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions while serving as a tank commander with Company A, 1st Battalion, 64th Armored Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division (Mechanized), on 5 April 2003. On this day, SSG Booker's platoon led a task force in a movement to contact along Highway 8 towards Baghdad International Airport. Two kilometers after the line of departure, the platoon came under heavy small arms and rocket-propelled grenade fire from an enemy element. He immediately communicated the situation to his chain of command, encouraged his crew, and returned fire with his tank-mounted machine gun. When both his and his crew's machine guns malfunctioned, SSG Booker, with total disregard for his personal safety, exposed himself by lying in a prone position on top of the tank's turret and accurately engaged the enemy forces with his personal weapon. While exposed, he effectively protected his platoon's flank and delivered accurate information to his command during a critical and vulnerable point of the battle. SSG Booker's fearless attitude and excitement over the communications network inspired his platoon to continue the attack and assured them and leadership that they would defeat the enemy and reach their objective safely. As he remained exposed, SSG Booker identified an enemy troop carrier which was attempting to bypass his tank, but within seconds engaged the enemy vehicle and destroyed it prior to the enemy troops dismounting. Along the 8-kilometer route, he remained exposed and continued to engage the enemy with accurate rifle fire until he was mortally wounded.

PVT Booker was born in Callaway, NE, and joined the Army in June 1942, with World War II already well underway. After basic training, Booker was assigned to the 133rd Infantry Regiment, 34th Infantry Division and was with that unit at the time of his death.

PVT Booker was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions on 9 April 1943 in the vicinity of Fondouk, Tunisia. While engaged in action against the enemy, PVT Booker carried a light machine gun and a box of ammunition over 200 yards of open ground. He continued to advance despite the fact that two enemy machine guns and several mortars were using him as an individual target. Although enemy artillery also began to register on him, upon reaching his objective he immediately commenced firing. After being wounded, he silenced one enemy machine gun and was beginning to fire at the other when he received a second mortal wound. With his last remaining strength, he encouraged the members of his squad and directed their fire. PVT Booker acted without regard for his own safety. His initiative and courage against insurmountable odds are an example of the highest standard of self-sacrifice and fidelity to duty.

The two names recognize both the Armor and Infantry Soldiers who will work together to fight and win on future battlefields.