

SASC TESTIMONY: AIRLAND SUBCOMMITTEE – 17 MAY 2017

STATEMENT OF RECORD: LTG (R) JOHN M. BEDNAREK

Mr Chairman: Thanks to you and all the Members for the opportunity to provide a few insights on our Armed Forces small arms weapon systems. As stated, the purpose of today's hearing is to discuss a current assessment of US military small arms requirements, our known threat environment, and to share thoughts on potential options to better equip our Infantry units with the most effective small arms available, including emerging technologies. From a broader perspective, this committee has a tremendous opportunity. That opportunity is to reinforce a higher priority in our DoD budget and procurement activities to directly influence the needed increased lethality across our Infantry formations. Clearly one challenge is the delicate balance to improve our capability, increase our battlefield lethality, while watching our government costs.

Our Nation's ground forces, with their weapons and enablers, remain the most formidable ally on the planet. Our troops and their individual weapons, are a system of systems designed with one purpose: to close with and defeat our adversaries. They **MUST** be lethal. Lethality is the primary factor that guides capability development for all our combat troops to fight and win in all operating environments. It's all about readiness. It's all about effects to kill the enemy. Our Services – and our collective energies – must continue to research, develop, and provide the very best capabilities available for the future fights we know will come. We don't want "near-peer competitors". Our Nation expects our ground combat troops to be the best equipped force on earth. We want overmatch. I'm not looking for a fair fight anywhere.

The current M4 Carbine family of weapons has served our Army and Marine Infantry forces well for the past decade plus. Product improvements have provided our Soldiers and Marines the best available 5.56 caliber weapon available. I have trained with, and been in firefights with – the M4 Carbine across Iraq over the past 9 years. It has performed well. However, as this Committee has heard, and multiple studies have shown, it is time to upgrade to a higher, more lethal caliber weapon system for our Infantry ground troops – regardless of Service or component. It's time to modernize our Infantry weapon capabilities. It's my opinion that our Service Chief's fully recognize this – CSA GEN Mark Milley & CMC Bob Neller – and they are moving out to get what they need.

I'd to highlight three key factors for the Committee's consideration and assessment:

1. **THREAT ENVIRONMENT & OUR ADVERSARIES** – At the start of our current named operations (OIF / OEF, etc), we were shooting enemy combatants wearing T-shirts and baggy pants – a LOT of them. They're still wearing T-shirts and baggy pants, but now with near level II & III body armor. Our capability to eliminate this threat at medium to long range distance is almost gone. We must have small arms systems that can stop and penetrate this increased enemy protection.

2. **PROCUREMENT** – All our Service Chiefs, especially GEN Mark Milley, are on public record on the current challenges and excessive bureaucracy in our current DoD processes. While I’m not a procurement nor contracting expert, I do not want to look another Soldier in the eyes and tell him or her that our leaders have not provided them the best weapon system available because it’s tied up in acquisition masking tape. A 5-7 year acquisition cycle to procure weapons and equipment that our warfighters needed yesterday is unconscionable.
3. **SYSTEMS APPROACH** – While the discussion today is principally focused on small arms weapons, we must remember that our Services strategic approach that gives US combat forces the decisive edge is the holistic systems approach. It is NOT just our weapons. It’s not just a higher caliber bullet, caseless or polymer munitions. It’s about the “system”. It is our "human dimension". The training and leader development we provide our Infantry Soldiers (and others) that make them the best close combat formations on the planet. It’s the term of “Mission Command”. Trust and decentralization - the fact that we train our small units to operate without specific instructions and then trust them to execute based on commander's intent. This approach includes our Soldiers and Marines fighting together as teams. It includes sights, optics, embedded laser range finders, night vision, radios to communicate with fellow troops to provide over-watching fires. It’s about supporting capabilities of mortars, artillery, helicopter gun-ships, close air support, USAF fighter aircraft. It’s about training our combined arms teams that gives us the overmatch. Sustained emphasis on this “systems approach” to our military capability must not be overlooked.

Ongoing Service Actions:

Current and future capabilities include continuing the “pure-fleeting” the Total Force with our current M4A1 carbine. Recent purchases of the new SIG SAUER pistol (modular system) starts fielding with the 101st AASLT DIV in several months.

U.S. Special Operations Command, in coordination with the U.S. Marine Corps, is looking into sources for a brand new lightweight machine gun from defense contractors, one that can bridge the gap in distance and lethality between the 7.62-mm light machine gun and the .50 caliber M2. Other activities include:

- a. **Squad Designated Marksman Rifle (SDM)**. We must have increased caliber weapon systems in our baseline formations. The Army is buying a variant of the Heckler and Koch 417, 7.62 mm Rifle to be fielded as a SDM Rifle. Each Brigade Combat Team (BCT) rifle squad will be provided with a SDM Rifle to increase reach and lethality. Since this is a modified “COTS” commercial solution, fielding begins in 18 months.
- b. **Precision Sniper Rifle (PSR)**. The PSR will replace the M110, M107, and M2010 Sniper rifles and provide increased range and lethality against individual targets and light vehicles. This rifle will give our snipers the punch and reach that they have in the .50 sniper rifle in a much lighter package. Army-wide fielding is scheduled to start in FY20.

c. M3 Carl Gustaf 84mm Recoilless Rifle. The Carl Gustaf is currently being fielded to Army Infantry Brigade Combat Teams (IBCT) Rifle platoons to provide increased capability. The M3/M3E1 enables rifle platoons to engage area targets with a manual air-bursting capability and point targets. Light armor targets can also be engaged. Lightweight Carl Gustaf fielding begins in FY20.

d. Next Generation Soldier Weapons (NGSW). The NGSW family of small arms will replace current squad (rifle/carbine, squad automatic weapon, and sub-compact) weapons. Production is slated to start in FY23. Informed by the Small Arms Ammunition Caliber Study (final report is expected this month), the NGSW will provide the increased range and lethality to maintain overmatch.

e. Small Arms Fire Control (SA-FC). SA-FC is under development for Precision (sniper) rifles, Crew Served weapons, and Squad/Individual weapons. SA-FC will provide a modular integrated set of systems (including determination of range, meteorological data, target acquisition, ballistic solution and display of adjusted aiming point) that when combined will increase the probability of hit and decrease the time to engage target sets. These solutions will leverage equivalent Family of Weapon Sights to provide day, night, and obscured battlefield environments capability. (Examples include the M901 7.62 rifle, interchangeable upper receiver conversion kits; .338 Norma Magnum machinegun; etc)

We must not wait to react to current or future threats. We must continue to leverage our wide and diverse intelligence activities and study our potential adversaries to gain and maintain Soldier equipment - including improved small arms - superiority.

LTG(R) MICK BEDNAREK

Former Chief, Office of Security Cooperation – Iraq (2013-2015)