



# Boots on the Ground

**A**nyone familiar with the military knows the term “boots on the ground,” but did you ever stop to think how important those boots actually are? The US Program PEO Soldier has. In a recent Press Release, Col. Robert F. Mortlock, Project Manager for Soldier Protection and Individual Equipment, PEO Soldier, said in designing a boot, the Army aims for “comfort, fit, price, protection from harm and durability.”

As the US Army begins to move from desert theaters such as Iran and Afghanistan, and looks again towards more possible jungle action in the Pacific, it is in the process of developing a new jungle boot. Testing of some vendor-supplied prototypes could begin this summer, according to Mortlock.

A good jungle boot, he explained, “should be able to shed water, meaning it can dry out fast after submersion. It also would be lightweight and breathable to minimize the effects of high temperatures and humidity. The [tread] on the outsole would also be able to trek through mud with minimal slipping. Also, the leather should not dry out and crack from repeated wetting and drying cycles.”

One of the biggest recent improvements in boot design is “direct-attach outsoles,” which are soles that are glued, not stitched, to the bottoms of boots. Mortlock explains this can “make some pairs of Army Combat Boots up to 1 pound lighter. The direct-attach outsoles are also less apt to separate after long, rough usage.”

But as far as PEO Soldier is concerned, the most important factor in designing a jungle boot, or any boot



M2A1, Courtesy US Army.

for that matter, is the comfort and safety of the warfighter. “These direct attach soles have reduced lower leg injuries to soldiers because they reduce the shock transferred to the foot and leg,” says Mortlock.

## Other News

In other news coming out of PEO Soldier, The US Army is in the process of upgrading its M2 .50 Caliber Machine Guns to the new M2A1 configuration. The upgraded weapon system offers soldiers increased performance as well as new features and design improvements. They include fixed headspace and timing, a quick change barrel with removable carrying handle, a new flash hider that reduces the weapon’s nighttime signature by 95 percent, and a trigger block safety.

The M2 “Ma Deuce” is a belt-fed, heavy machine gun that mounts on most aircraft and vehicles, and can be fired from the new M205 tripod. The system is highly effective against light armored vehicles, low- and slow-flying aircraft, boats and enemy personnel. The Army developed the M2A1 to increase the warfighter’s lethality and survivability on the battlefield by providing system upgrades to the M2. The M2A1 includes design improvements that make it easier and safer to use.

“The M2A1 builds upon the legend of a phenomenal weapon system,” said Lt. Col. Thomas Ryan, Product Manager Crew Served Weapons. “Soldiers already rank the M2 among the most effective weapon systems in their arsenal. The upgrades we’ve incorporated will keep this weapon relevant well into the future. We’re looking forward to working with our sister services to put this capability in the hands of even more warfighters across the Department of Defense.” ■



Soldiers try on new uniforms, Courtesy US Army.