



Jordan's Future Soldier

Jordan works toward identifying the elements of its future soldier system that will be domestically designed and which will be sourced overseas

The Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF) and the KADDB (King Abdullah Design and Development Bureau) are currently working together on Phase 2 of the country's future soldier programme in a process designed to attract domestic and international industrial co-operation to help achieve the goals of the programme.

Covering the topics already addressed in Phase 1 of the programme, Col. Eng. Yousef Al-Aitan, Area Leader for Land systems and responsible for Future Soldier work at KADDB explained, "We focused on deep studies looking at the physical and educational requirements for Jordanian soldiers. These are the two points that we have focused on during the last four year in Phase 1: Who is the soldier that fits with the items of the future soldier? After that we worked altogether with the JAF as a user community. For user requirements we went to the field and we focused on how we are going to do this step by step. We selected the Special Forces [to receive the first equipment] because of their education and that they are very well trained. After that we said the next step may be all infantry units."

Col. Al-Aitan explained that, "We actually have joint venture companies that produce some items for the future soldier systems and we have our own design, development or research projects that we could work together on, involving or including UAVs and UGVs. For example, we are working now on two programmes in this field; a multipurpose UGV as a robot platform and a UAV. We could work together on the development of these two programmes for the future soldier programme."

Col. Al-Aitan identified four areas that KADDB were working with associated companies in joint efforts although in each case with there also being an open invitation to widen participation to provide the capabilities

for the development, manufacture and fielding of the required products. These included NP Composites Jordan, covering items that include ballistic helmets, bullet proof and anti-stab vests, ballistic ceramic plates and bomb suppression blankets. Looking to the near term priorities for development in regards to helmets he commented, "We are looking now for Picatinny mounting for goggles and for the helmets to be lighter and smaller."

Work on modifying in-service small arms is undertaken by Jordan Advanced Machining Co. (JordanAMCO) with current work for the JAF exploring the development and modification of the M4 and M16A2.

Meals Ready to Eat for local tastes have also been developed which have a shelf life of two years and described as being combat proven. Col. Al-Aitan said, "We are dealing with special meals for Arabian tastes to be available in soldiers' hands for participation both in UN missions or participation in operations."

Addressing a common challenge for soldiers has been combat boots with the programme working with the Jordanian Co. for Manufacturing Special Boots who for the past ten years have been developing and fielding boots for local environments. This includes features such as circulation around the foot, ensuring a constant and regulated temperature and a shock absorbent sole.

In the area of C4I, UAVs and UGVs, the programme has worked with JELS (Jordan Electronic Logistics Support) which is a joint venture between KADDB and a number of other small organisations and individuals. In the last five years JELS has been instrumental in supporting UAV and UGV trials together with KADDB, including in support of future soldier activities.

Outside research sponsors have provided the support and guidance needed for the success of the

research. Col. Al-Aitan explained that, "During the last five years I have managed many trials for the Future Soldier programme with Sagem, Selex and many other companies from Europe and the US to select the best systems for our programme. As a future soldier programme manager I am now focusing on the SOFEX event next year to help with the selection of other systems."

Based on the JAF's capability development plans, the focus in the near future is to improve the capabilities of Special Forces, Gendarmerie and Infantry soldiers across all capability areas, particularly addressing improvements to the night fighting capabilities of operational units by procuring night vision goggles, weapon night sights and night observation devices. This equipment will then be integrated in the Soldier System as Phase II.

Col. Al-Aitan concluded, "Based on our capability in the last ten years, we are trying our best in the Middle East to go forward with the future soldier. KADDB are willing to go forward and develop these items and actually work together with the JAF. As a programme manager I always go with the end users at each step, right from having the questionnaire for user requirements, visiting them in the field and involving them step by step in the stages and gates of the project and giving good feedback."

In 2012, the programme intends to have a conference either as part of SOFEX 2012 and or as separate conference to discuss international co-operation and to identify the areas in which international support is needed. ■