



# Casting the Nett Further

Seeking to maximize prudent benefit from both new and mature technologies, the Nett Warrior programme is adopting a new and radical approach to the way it is seeking to modernise the dismounted warfighter

The decisions to radically change Program Executive Office (PEO) Soldier plans for Nett Warrior directly derive from the findings from the Network Integration Evaluation (NIE) 11.2. The findings showed that smart devices connected to tactical communications networks provide acceptable Command and Control/Situational Awareness (C2/SA) capability. The findings reinforced the feedback from the programme's November Limited User Test (LUT) at Fort Riley, Kansas. Major Doug Copeland



The Nett Warrior programme used the NIE 12.1 in November to test new concepts in preparation for an RFP in the New Year. © AJB.

Assistant, Product Manager Ground Soldier said, "Quite frankly what we got back was the same feedback that we had been receiving over the years. We had to reduce size, weight and power (SWaP) and get the cost lower."

"From the soldiers' perspective, they didn't want the size and the cables but they did however love the capability. So, we went back as a team and we looked at the user's requirements. We just got through the process of going through a Configuration Steering Board (CSB) chaired by the Under Secretary of the Army which happened at the end of August. We looked at those requirements and we worked with our user counterparts to determine what it was that we need to concentrate on to reduce SWaP and Cost."

The Nett Warrior team is currently implementing changes based on the CSB and the impact of the use of lighter technologies from an engineering perspective.

The schedule adopted prior to the new configuration for Nett Warrior remains in place. Major Copeland stated, "We are seeking a production decision in the 2Q FY12. Between now and then we are taking some of the newest, latest technology available and inserting it into the Army's Agile [Procurement] process. We want to get the capabilities out there to the user faster in the future. If you are going to field something which with the old model had a five to seven year cycle, you are not able to keep up with the rapid advances in technology; this new process gets new capability to the Soldiers in twelve to eighteen months.

Changes are being pursued through a variety of avenues, not least the Network Integration Evaluation (NIE) series of events. Major Copeland said, "There is testing, there is policy and there are all sorts of things that we are working on getting in line. That all happened at Fort Bliss in the NIE [12.1]. We had seven different platoons that we equipped with our equipment, the JTRS PRC-154 Rifleman Radio as well as a couple of other experimental radios."

The PEO will continue to use these and other sources of data from the NIE as well as the Joint Tactical Radio

System PRC-154 Initial Operational Test and Evaluation to move forward. Major Copeland explained, "We use those sources for data mining to generate enough information and data so that senior leadership can make the right decisions to inform the production decision in 2QFY12." The Army plans to field thirty Brigades with Nett Warrior capabilities.

The process of stopping work on the contracts for all three contractors on Nett Warrior under the previous strategy (General Dynamics C4 Systems, Raytheon and Rockwell Collins) is near completion. The equipment used at NIE was a mixture of Government Furnished Equipment and Commercial Off the Shelf solutions integrated by the Government.

"We have taken all the learning from Nett Warrior and Land Warrior to date but what we are doing now is a completely different look. We have put together some end user devices for NIE, using an Android operating system, coupled with the PRC-154 and some tablet alternatives. The solution set on the software side of the house is actually government software." The use of cellular networks in Nett Warrior was also explored at parallel events to the NIE, the Army Expeditionary Warrior Experiment (AEWE), at Fort Benning, GA and the Joint User Interoperability Communications Exercise (JUICE) at Fort Bliss, TX.

A new Request For Proposals has to be in place before the 2QFY12 production decision. The definitization of the product to be requested is still in process. Major Copeland explained that a definitive answer to this was not possible at this point; "It comes back to how you define what it is we need and how we compete it. We are working through that right now. We are evaluating a lot of different options. We are working to fully evaluate the latest and greatest technology so that when we do go to the production decision, we know exactly what we want and how we are going to procure it." ■