



EDA: Soldier Modernisation Perspectives on 2015

Erich Weissenböck, Project Officer Engagement, European Defence Agency (EDA) Capability Directorate discusses the EDA's support for national Soldier Modernisation efforts

Q: What is the goal of the Project Team 21st Century Soldier System (PT 21st CSS)? How would you differentiate it from the activities of NATO and national programmes and what has been happening in the EU-NATO Capability Group?

A: The PT 21st CSS is a platform for the European Defence Agency's participating Member States to exchange information as well as for coordination and synchronisation of activities which are contributing to soldier modernisation. There, the Agency facilitates concrete projects with a clear aim to improve capabilities in a specific area. Cooperation within the project Combat Equipment Dismounted Soldier System (CEDS) is a very good example for cooperation in soldier modernisation. It proves that Member States appreciate the opportunity to work together on concrete solutions in a European framework. The projects enable contributing Member States to refine their ongoing national programmes towards cooperation and, by doing so, ensure interoperability and to produce a system which is affordable. Of course, NATO is also involved in capability improvement. We carefully check with each other that activities are complementary and mutually-reinforcing. In that sense, soldier modernisation activities are on the agenda of the EU-NATO Capability Group.

Q: As I understand it, the central core of the EDA's activities in soldier modernisation are based around the Combat Equipment Dismounted Soldier (CEDS), Soldier Centric Identification System (SCIS) and the Joint Investment Programme - Force Protection (JIP FP) MUSAS, EPIDARM, AHEAD and WOLF. Could you give me a quick update on the status of these three programmes and recent outputs etc?

A: Indeed the projects Combat Equipment Dismounted Soldier (CEDS) and Soldier Centric Identification for Dismounted Soldier (SCIS) are the projects with direct links

to soldier modernisation. In CEDS, we are finalising the definition of capability requirements of core and common modules as well as developing a Research and Technology (R&T) master plan. SCIS is finalising the description of requirements and starting to connect it to technical solutions. A demonstrator of one technical solution will be available next year. R&T activities, especially within the Joint Investment Programme on Force Protection (JIP-FP), will produce technology demonstrators and study results in the next two years – the first output will be available by mid 2010. Enhanced protective equipment for the soldier, innovative solutions for a wireless robust link for urban operations, possibilities for sensor fusion or on sniper detection represent some products which will contribute to improving modules in soldiers' equipment. We established a direct link between the study contractors and representatives in the projects to get synchronised and tailored study results.

Q: Beyond these projects has the EDA begun or is planning to begin other projects in this field that feed into PT 21st CSS?

A: Solutions for the recovery of persons in isolated locations in a theatre of operations, covering civilian and military activities, are developed in the Personnel Recovery project. The aim is to establish an interoperable capability connecting available national technical solutions as well as to harmonise long-term requirements. I would expect a good solution to be integrated in future soldier equipment.

Q: Combat ID has been and continues to be difficult to achieve. What benefits can the EDA's SCIS project bring both to the debate and the final solution?

A: The aim of the project is to detail the operational requirements for an interoperable Soldier Identification System in order to reduce fratricide to the individual

dismounted soldier and platform, thereby increasing the combat effectiveness of the individual dismounted soldier and the platform. The main requirement of Member States, who are contributing, is to get a fast shoot / don't shoot decision possibility. The main challenge for a good solution is of course the acceptance of more than a small number of users on the battlefield. A demonstrator, which will be available in a conceivable timeframe, will have to face this challenge and to convince potential users of its benefits. The initiative has the potential of dual use in operations where a variety of actors are cooperating.

Q: Thus far there hasn't been much apparent activity (at least to me) on power issues by the EDA which is a little surprising. What is the EDA doing in this area?

A: In general, the power issue is tackled in a project which aims to provide solutions for standardisation of energy sources and their supply procedures in future EU military/civilian operations. R&T activities already delivered a forecast on fuel cell technologies as well as electrical energy generation and storage requirements specifically of the dismounted soldier. In the CEDS project itself, we are just now finalising the definition of the power system. In case we recognise specific requirements for further exploration, we are in the position to go to detailed work.

Q: Is participation in these programmes increasing – I believe that CEDS had seven national participants when it began. Has this increased for example?

A: Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Sweden initiated this cooperation. Austria and Romania got in later. The group is very capable in finding the best solutions for the boots on the ground based on expertise from current national programmes.

Q: In presentations by the EDA it is only from 2015 and beyond that the EDA believes its outputs will ▶

play a role in procurement. Can you outline EDA's potential supporting role?

A: The EDA's European Armaments Co-operation Strategy reflects the core goal of a more effective European armaments co-operation. The aims are to generate, promote and facilitate cooperative programmes, based on capability requirements stemming from the Agency's Capability Development Plan and linked to both the European Defence Research & Technology Strategy as well as to the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base Strategy. Definition of capability requirements leads to a business case for R&T investment, when needed, and/or to a procurement programme. The business case will provide the necessary information allowing the participating Member States to decide if they want to join a collaborative procurement programme. The process is described in the Guide to the Conduct of a Programme Preparation Phase, which is now already in use for some specific activities.

Q: 2015 is still a little way off. Can you point to findings and outputs that you have been able to pass into today's soldier modernisation programmes and how that has affected those programmes?

A: The clear aim of our activities is to have interoperable solutions operational in 2015. Ongoing information

exchange and cooperative work on the definition of capability requirements as well as information exchange on national technology studies are already providing added value to national activities.

Q: What is happening in the EDA's Materiel Standardisation Group and what progress has been made with EDSIS in support of soldier modernisation?

A: In recognition of the importance of standardisation to enhance interoperability, reduce acquisition costs and improve technological competitiveness the EDA's Steering Board in April approved an updated standardisation policy and formalised the Materiel Standardization Group (MSG). The European Defence Standardization Information System (EDSIS), which can be found at www.eda.europa.eu/edsisweb is being further developed into a single portal for European defence standardisation. The MSG and the EDSIS are tools to assist with standardisation issues as and when they are identified in CEDS, SCIS or any other Agency project.

Q: You have been collecting proposals from industry from the European Land Defense Industry Group and other avenues to move forward with. I'm particularly interested in the Soldier Prime Contractor Team.

How are you engaging with industry?

A: In general, earlier proposals for R&T activities of the Soldier Prime Contractor Team are reflected in the JIP-PP and results will be of high value for national or multinational soldier modernisation programmes.

Member States contributing to the CEDS programme decided to establish an early link to national industries. National industrial focal points are nominated. They are already being informed regularly on the current status of work. In a later stage, the feedback of industry will be integrated. But at first, capability requirements are to be finalised in detail and conclusions on R&T requirements are to be drawn.

Q: To obtain the collective move forward on European procurement of soldier systems will there have to be a convergence of concepts of operation?

A: Interoperability is a fundamental requirement for joint, multinational operations. It requires harmonised concepts and procedures at all levels, technical standards and equipment synergy as well as a willingness to cooperate and commit resources in the development phases. The capability-driven approach of the Agency contributes to the fulfillment of these requirements. Consequently, common concepts are required and they are already developed as long as there are no NATO documents available. ■



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