

# Up-Armored HMMWVs: *The Answer For Peacekeeping Operations*

by First Lieutenant Jonathan C. Byrom - Apache Troop, 1-1 Cavalry

The 1st Squadron, 1st United States Cavalry deployed to Bosnia-Herzegovina in December 1995 with 39 M3A2 Bradley Fighting Vehicles, 12 M1A1 Abrams main battle tanks, and mortar and logistical support. The squadron provided security for engineers as they bridged the swelled waters of the Sava River. With the completion of the bridge, Apache Troop, 1-1 CAV brought in the new year by crossing the Sava River and establishing the first checkpoint in Bosnia. The combat vehicles of the squadron ran countless patrols in northern Bosnia, clearing the way for the rest of the 1st Armored Division's combat and support elements. As the OPTEMPO of the squadron increased in the first six months of the deployment, the deployed units realized that the thousands of miles of patrols would greatly increase wear and tear on their tracked vehicles. Thus, the Army hurriedly fielded the XM1114 experimental up-armored HMMWVs to supplement the Bradleys on their countless patrols. The integration of this experimental HMMWV in Bosnia allowed the squadron to continue its peacekeeping mission and remain within the financial constraints imposed by the budget for U.S. IFOR forces.

As a platoon leader in Apache Troop, 1-1 Cavalry, I often maneuvered through Checkpoint A2 in the Posavina Corridor of Bosnia-Herzegovina with my XM1114 HMMWV platoon. It never ceased to amaze me how the M1A1 Abrams tanks of 2nd Platoon, Apache Troop dwarfed my vehicles. Their overwhelming bulk and firepower conveyed an aura of invincibility to both my platoon and thousands of Muslims and Serbians in Apache Troop's area of operations. After receiving the non-standard HMMWVs, though, and running thousands of miles of patrols, including factional weapon



The author and SSG Mike Shelton, with their Serbian interpreter, patrol in the 1-1 Cav area of operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

storage site verifications and inspections, identification of election polling sites, and diplomatic missions to maintain communication with local officials, I realized the value of the XM1114 HMMWV platoon to the troop's peacekeeping mission. The greatest strength of an XM1114 up-armored HMMWV platoon is the versatility it provides through a combination of its fuel efficiency, its mobility, its low "wear and tear" on roads, and its survivability and force protection capabilities.

The XM1114 uses significantly less fuel than both Bradleys and M1A1 tanks. My platoon was able to patrol for an entire day and use less than 30 gallons of fuel per vehicle, compared with the hundreds of gallons needed for Bradleys and tanks during the same patrol duration. The use of fuel is a serious logistical consideration during an extended operation. By running daily patrols with up-armored HMMWVs, and occasional patrols with Bradleys and M1A1s, a unit can save considerable dollars, reduce the stress on the unit's fuel requirements, maintain a show of force, and minimize OPTEMPO on tracked vehicles.

Another strength of the up-armored HMMWV is its mobility. It can traverse some terrain that a tank or Bradley cannot, particularly tight spaces in villages and on wooded trails. On multiple patrols conducted by my platoon, collecting political, economic, and demographic intelligence for the September 1996 national Bosnian elections, we traveled on many narrow trails which an M1A1 tank would have found impossible to traverse and rolled over bridges which an M1A1 would have crushed. Also, in crowded and busy villages, the up-armored HMMWVs could slip among buildings, parked cars, and moving ve-

hicles much easier than a Bradley or M1A1. I have heard numerous horror stories of tanks accidentally peeling off the sides of cars in a variety of exercises. My skilled drivers, though, drove 10,000+ miles through busy towns accident-free for the duration of the deployment to Bosnia-Herzegovina. Thus, using the experimental HMMWVs, the unit possessed the mobility to efficiently reach Serbian and Muslim leaders' headquarters for meetings in crowded villages which lacked maneuver space for tracked vehicles.

The XM1114 equipped platoon is also effective because the vehicles preserve the roads, unlike tracked vehicles. The infrastructure in Bosnia is devastated from the years of war which destroyed bridges, electrical towers, and most importantly, roads. This infrastructure damage, compounded by the lack of mobility resulting from unmarked minefields, makes road travel difficult. Because of the condition of these roads, logistical convoys encountered difficult conditions during supply runs. When Bradleys or M1A1s make sharp turns or pivot steer, they tear up both paved and dirt roads, compounding the problem and making

travel less efficient for both civilian traffic and these logistical convoys. HMMWVs, though, are able to run countless miles on these roads without damage. This lack of destruction to the infrastructure can save the United States Army significant money in maneuver damage compensation to host countries during a peacekeeping operation, and can promote efficient military movement.

In addition to preservation of the infrastructure, up-armored HMMWVs also provide soldiers adequate protection and survivability. The armor of the XM1114 protects against projectiles 7.62mm and smaller, against shrapnel from 155mm artillery and smaller, and against land mines. In addition, its tires can continue rolling even when they become flat from enemy fire or rough terrain. The XM1114 HMMWV is also equipped with combat locks on each door which allow it to function effectively in the riot situations that soldiers often encounter in tense peacekeeping or peace-enforcing operations. Therefore, against most third world threats encountered in operations other than war, the up-armored HMMWVs protect the crew from sniper fire, riots, and terrorist attacks.

Although an up-armored HMMWV platoon is excellent in military operations other than war, it does have limitations. The primary one, is that the unit does not project the image of brutal and overwhelming force that a Bradley or M1A1 platoon does. An up-armored HMMWV platoon does not have a 25mm or 120mm direct fire weapon, but carries a mounted .50 caliber machine-gun or a Mark-19 automatic grenade launcher. These smaller weapons allow the XM1114 platoon to protect itself and suppress most threats in a peacekeeping operation such as Operation Joint Endeavor, but do not give it the firepower to destroy enemy armor. Therefore, a combination of up-armored HMMWVs, Bradleys, and M1A1 tanks is necessary to protect our soldiers and react to any potential enemy threat.

One other weakness of the XM1114 platoon is that 19K and 19D soldiers lack training with HMMWVs. The U.S. Army maintains its edge in military operations primarily due to the versatility and intelligence of its soldiers. Hence, units must train their soldiers on various vehicles and weapons systems. My up-armored HMMWV platoon in Bosnia was made up of 19K tankers who had not trained on HMMWVs. Because of this lack of experience, the soldiers needed a crash course on maintaining and operating the new vehicle. Because



While conducting a patrol, 4th Platoon, Apache Troop, 1-1 Cav, exchanges information with 1st Platoon and Serbian police just prior to national elections in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

of the quality of these soldiers, they adapted and performed excellently. Units, though, can prepare in advance by licensing and certifying their tracked vehicle drivers on the user-level-maintenance of other vehicles, such as HMMWVs and 5-ton trucks, because many of them will need to temporarily transition to one of these vehicles when deployed. Therefore, 1-1 Cavalry has adapted its predeployment preparation and instituted an aggressive user-level-maintenance program on various vehicles and weapons systems, which will contribute to the versatility of its soldiers in the future.

The XM1114 up-armored HMMWV platoon has a limited number of weaknesses, but they are far outweighed by its strengths. The up-armored HMMWV is versatile and flexible, as noted, with its fuel efficiency, its mobility, and its survivability. With these attributes, it can effectively perform in a variety of roles. Thus, with the aid of a small heavily armored force, the up-armored HMMWV platoon should be the mainstay of mili-

tary operations other than war. American forces in Operation Joint Endeavor have tested this mix of XM1114 platoons and heavy armor platoons and have shown it to be effective. The United States Army should continue to develop these experimental HMMWVs to confront future threats.

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