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First Stryker MGS Accepted

In late July, I was honored to accept our first Stryker Mobile Gun System (MGS) at a ceremony in Muskegon, Michigan. This weapons system was developed in response to our Army Vision for the 21st century. Our Chief of Staff, General Shinseki said, "we must provide early entry forces that can operate jointly, without access to fixed forward bases, but we still need the power to slug it out and win decisively." The MGS will be an integral part of the Stryker Brigade Combat Team (SBCT). With its 105mm gun, technology upgrades, and rapid deployability, Stryker MGS provides combatant commanders with a much-needed capability.

The rollout of the Stryker MGS is an important event because of the capabilities that it brings to our soldiers and the Stryker Brigade Combat Team, and the options it provides our nation. We sought a ground maneuver platform that provides infantry soldiers with rapid direct fire to punch through walls, destroy enemy bunkers, machine guns, and sniper positions — to provide punch in the close fight. The Stryker MGS also has to be C-130 transportable, giving our Army and combatant commanders the flexibility of rapidly deploying it, with intratheater assets, to the battlefield. Intratheater transportability will make it tougher for an enemy because it opens up too many options for him to template our most likely points of entry.

The Stryker MGS gives our soldiers a vehicle specifically built to provide rapid and accurate direct fire to enable offensive operations in complex and urban terrain. The MGS fills a capabilities gap for the Stryker Brigade, provid-

ing the teeth and claws the SBCT needs to treat 'em rough. It is important to understand the capabilities that the MGS brings to the Stryker Brigade, and therefore, to combatant commanders, the joint force, and our nation. While the Stryker Brigade needs the rapid, direct-fire punch that the MGS will provide, it also needs the digital capability that enables enhanced situational awareness and joint interoperability. Our Army has been working this diligently for almost a decade. That capability must reside in the Stryker Brigade as well to mass lethal joint and coalition precision effects on an adversary. It is the combination of lethality and rapid deployability that makes this system such a valuable contributor to our joint force. The Stryker Brigade provides flexibility to the commander and will be deployable as a fighting force within 96 hours of alert, prepared to fight when it arrives, and capable of delivering firepower and agility to the soldier in the fight where and when he needs it most.

The Interim Force, of which the MGS is a part, is another step on our path to Army Transformation. Combat development work at Fort Knox, Fort Benning, and other places in our Army led to the MGS capability of hosting, and effectively integrating, existing and planned command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (C4ISR) systems.

Our transformation plan to rapidly field 6 Stryker Brigade Combat Teams called for very little time to develop, test, and build such a system — the first purpose-built infantry mobile support weapon since World War II. But our systems managers (the PM and our own sol-

diers helping with development), General Motors Defense, and General Dynamics Land Systems effectively collaborated to develop this first system, which we will now test extensively.

We will also benefit from the contribution that MGS makes designing the Future Combat System (FCS). One member of our FCS family of systems will be a mobile gun system that is network enabled and capable of direct fire; both line of sight and beyond line of sight, and indirect, nonlinear-of-sight fire. The lessons we learn from Stryker MGS development, testing, fielding, and use by soldiers will help design more effective and lethal systems in the near future.

Our Stryker MGS development work isn't finished. I challenge everyone involved in the program to work the remaining issues. We need that fight-off-the-ramp capability, with a basic level of round-defeating protection for our soldiers. I'm confident we'll get there. What has been done so far is truly remarkable. In just over 2 years, the Stryker MGS team progressed from a signed operational requirements document to delivery of the first MGS. This is one of the shortest timelines ever for a developmental vehicle. Further, we plan to field this vehicle by September 2004 to our first Stryker Brigade Combat Teams. By any measure, this is a remarkable achievement for a combat vehicle to go from concept to the battlefield in less than 5 years! Even Ford Motor Company took 45 years to reinvent its new "T-bird two-seater" and it doesn't have to survive the rigors of the battlefield!

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