

# Initial Brigade to Receive German, Italian “Loaners”

by Jim Caldwell, TRADOC PAO

Two more countries are loaning the U.S. Army some examples of their own army's wheeled armored vehicles for collective training of the first of the new Initial Brigade Combat Teams at Fort Lewis, Wash. Germany is sending examples of its Fox and Lynx, wheeled infantry carriers and reconnaissance vehicles, and Italy is sending examples of the Centauro, the eight-wheeled armored car carrying the same NATO-standard 105mm cannon that was mounted on the early models of the M1 tank.

According to the Training and Doctrine Command, the vehicles were to have arrived in September and would be used as “surrogates” for the vehicles that will eventually be selected and acquired for the new units. Until these Interim Armored Vehicles (IAVs) are acquired, the foreign vehicles, along with 32 Canadian Light Armored Vehicle III (LAV IIIs), also on loan, will allow soldiers in the new unit to begin collective training.

Army leadership had expected to make its choice by the end of September, but the decision has now been postponed until October.

“The loaners enable IBCT soldiers to start working on doctrine and tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) so they can transition smoothly to IAVs,” said CPT Alfred Jackson, a project officer who helped develop the loan agreements. Jackson is also an IAV team staff officer for the Training and Doctrine Command System Manager for IAV and Future Combat System. The “loaner” agreements for the German and Italian vehicles will expire in the spring of 2002, and for the Canadian LAVs in January of that year.

An Army source selection process has been underway to find suitable Interim Armored Vehicles, to include infantry carriers, large caliber mobile gun systems, reconnaissance vehicles, and carriers for an antitank guided missile system. The process began last winter when manufacturers sent their candidates to Fort Knox for demonstrations,

but the Lynx reconnaissance vehicle and the Centauro were not among the 39 vehicles on demonstration. The Centauro was recently selected for acquisition by the Spanish army. (See related story in this issue. —Ed.)

The Centauros will act as surrogates for the mobile gun system (MGS) and the anti-tank vehicles, the Lynx will act as surrogate in the reconnaissance vehicle role, and the LAV IIIs and Foxes will be used as infantry carriers and command and control vehicles. The Lynx and Fox mount 20mm cannons, the LAV IIIs are armed with 25mm Chain Guns.

Before the vehicles arrived at Fort Lewis, they were safety-tested at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md., and eight of the Foxes, two Centauros, and 21 LAVs were equipped with a digital communications system called Force XXI Battle Command Brigade and Below.

The IBCT currently has 16 LAV IIIs and was scheduled to receive another 16 in September to be surrogates for infantry carriers and command and control vehicles.

Some current U.S. Army vehicles will also serve as surrogates, according to Jackson. “The IBCT will be using some of the M113 tracked vehicles they have at Fort Lewis, plus some HMMWVs and trucks, as surrogates,” he said.

“The Army's plan is that, as the first IBCT receives IAVs off the production line, the loaner surrogates will be transferred to the second IBCT so it can begin the transformation process,” Jackson said.

The first IBCT (3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division) is scheduled to be operationally capable by the end of 2001. The second (1st Brigade, 25th Infantry Division) will begin reorganization in 2001.

Whatever armored vehicles are finally selected, they will be lighter than armored vehicles in today's mechanized units. The concept is aimed at making

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the new brigade combat team more maneuverable and agile while it retains great lethality. The weight reduction, it is hoped, will enable a brigade to be deployed anywhere in the world within 96 hours, then operate and win in a range of missions from small-scale contingencies to a major theater war as part of division operations. The requirement that the vehicles be transportable in a C-130 will ensure that the brigade can be flown in close to the expected area of operations, if there are no suitable airports.

Still over the horizon is the Future Combat System (FCS), now being studied by Army scientists who hope to provide the same crew survivability and lethality of today's Abrams tanks and Bradley Fighting Vehicle-equipped units in a smaller, lighter vehicle. The scientists think FCS capabilities will be demonstrated by early 2006, which will keep the Army on schedule to transform to the objective force between 2008 and 2012.



Among the vehicles being used to train the new medium brigades at Fort Lewis are these European systems on loan from their respective armies. The Italian Centauro, top, will act as surrogate for the force's mobile gun system. The German Fox, center, will stand in as an infantry carrier, and the Lynx, bottom, will serve as a reconnaissance vehicle.