

# Endangered Wolverine Gets Limited Funding

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Enough funding has been restored to the Wolverine bridging system to permit fielding of a dozen to the 588th Engineer Battalion, 4th Infantry Division at Fort Hood, Texas in January 2001, just in time to participate in the division's capstone exercise at the National Training Center in March.

While the Army is transforming to become lighter and more transportable, support to the "legacy" maneuver force continues. PM Wolverine, Deputy for Systems Acquisition (DSA), U.S. Army Tank-automotive and Armaments Command (USATACOM), will field 12 Wolverines, the direct result of restored FY 2000 funding for low-rate initial production (LRIP) Increment 3, a congressional plus-up in Fiscal Year 2001 to procure 12 additional Wolverines on the current LRIP contract with General Dynamics Land Systems, and the Wolverines' successful demonstration during the limited user test conducted earlier this year.

Wolverine is a bridging system mounted on an M1 tank chassis that is capable of spanning a 24-meter gap and supporting the 70-ton military load class. Several milestones remain to be crossed to complete the production and fielding of the remaining Wolverines. The system will undergo a follow-on operational test and evaluation next summer at Fort Hood. This test will formally evaluate the entire system, including the soldiers that interact directly with the Wolverine as well as qualitative reliability, availability and maintainability (RAM).

Pending successful completion of this test, the Wolverine program will be scrutinized during the Milestone III decision, currently scheduled for 1QFY01. The Milestone Decision Authority (Deputy for Systems Acquisition, USA-TACOM) will base this decision on several criteria to determine if the program is ready to move on to the next phase of its life cycle, full-rate production. Optimal full production will allow fielding 12 Wolverines per year.

The Wolverine is a one-for-one replacement for the AVLB and is a significant improvement over older existing technology. It brings many new capabilities to the Force XXI engineer, including improved readiness compared to its predecessor, the AVLB, better mobility given its

M1A2 SEP-compatible chassis, and the capability to cross 73 percent of gaps theater-wide, compared to the AVLB, which can only cross 54 percent. The Wolverine's 90 percent compatibility with the M1A2 SEP also significantly reduces logistics support.

The Wolverine's employment in the first digitized division exercise at the National Training Center in March is not a formal test of the system but will help determine how the system will interact with the digitized force.



The Wolverine, mounted on an M1A2 SEP tank chassis, is capable of spanning gaps up to 24 meters wide.

