MARINE CORPS SYSTEMS COMMAND
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Robotic Moving Target System demonstrated

In a Marine Corps Systems Command (MCSC) live-fire demonstration June 16 at Range 14f aboard Quantico, Marines demonstrated the Robotic Moving Target System (R-MTS), made by Australia-based Marathon Robotics Corporation, in the final phase of its foreign comparative test and evaluation.

This test was born out of a universal needs statement that identified a requirement for more realistic live-fire training for Marines to engage moving targets. The R-MTS design currently under evaluation has been used by the Australian Defense Force since 2008.

"We're working with a foreign company because we couldn't find anything that met all the attributes we're looking for and we're evaluating this," said Lieutenant Colonel Walt Yates, Assistant Program Manager of Range Training Aids, Devices and Simulators under MCSC's Program Manager for Training Systems. "This is not something that we've made a decision to purchase as a capability for the Marine Corps, but it's under evaluation."

There are two variants of the R-MTS: the T20 and the T40. The T20, built on the Segway Robotic Mobility Platform, has two wheels and weighs 400 pounds while the T40 weighs 520 pounds and has four wheels, making it more suitable for off-road driving. Both systems have armor plating on their chassis that can withstand 5.56mm and 7.62mm bullets. Above the armored chassis are the targets – lifelike, 3D plastic mannequins that can withstand hundreds of shots.

These systems are controlled remotely by computers to create and run training scenarios by controlling motion patterns, speed and hit reactions. They also have internal computers that track if they've been hit, where they were hit from, at what speed they were hit and where on the body they were hit – all while avoiding obstacles in their paths. These computers are also linked to one another so, if one target were to get hit, the others would "run away," just like a human would.

At the June 16 testing, the targets were made to complete several scenarios in an urban setting with cover. First, one target would roll out from behind a wall and the Marines would shoot with a hit being indicated by the mannequin dropping and stopping for three seconds before resetting and going back to cover. Then came sets of two- and three-target scenarios where Marines would have to shoot all the targets before they got behind cover. Lastly, the targets acted out a hostage situation with three hostage-takers escorting a female hostage. The Marines were to shoot the hostage-takers while keeping the hostage safe.

"We need to do better at training Marines to hit moving targets because the enemy very rarely is courteous enough to stand still," Yates said. "This is something we've been working on for a long time but the technology was hard to come by."

By Carden Hedelt, MCSC Corporate Communications

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