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# Defense Report

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## **The Army's Infantry Fighting Vehicle — It's Not Just a Battlefield Taxi**

The U.S. Army intends to produce large numbers of its M2 Bradley infantry fighting vehicle as a battlefield companion to its new M1 Abrams tank. Unfortunately, the Bradley is being subjected to the same sort of misinformed criticism which the Abrams has successfully weathered by demonstrating its superior qualities to Congress, the press and the soldiers who will fight in it.

Criticism of the Bradley seems to center around a lack of understanding of the role it will play on the battlefield. It is *not* a replacement for the M113 armored personnel carrier, which is designed to do little more than provide some degree of protection while transporting an infantry squad to the point where it leaves the carrier to fight on foot with fire support provided by other units. It is a "battlefield taxi" whose sole weapon is an externally mounted .50-caliber machine gun exposed to enemy fire.

The M2 Bradley is a fighting machine from which a nine-man squad can bring fire to bear on enemy troops and armored vehicles from within the vehicle. The Bradley carries a tank-killing TOW missile launcher, a lethal 25-mm automatic cannon in a stabilized turret, a 7.62-mm machine gun and six firing port weapons with which the squad can deliver suppressive fires. When the Bradley reaches its objective, three members of the squad remain on board to provide a base of fire while the other six dismount to maneuver against and close with the enemy. It is an integrated fighting package.

The Bradley's critics say it costs too much in comparison to the M113. They overlook the fact that the M113 has been in production for over 20 years while Bradley production has just begun. More importantly, they also overlook the fact that the Bradley adds a whole new element to the fighting power of U.S. soldiers on the battlefield.

There are some who say the M113 can be made into a fighting vehicle by incorporating major modifications. And so it probably could, given time and money, but those modifications would really result in a totally new vehicle that would still lack the inherent advantages designed into the Bradley. The Army must be permitted to continue to move ahead swiftly with this new vehicle for the modern battlefield.