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# Defense Report

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## **Developing New Military Hardware —A Process Requiring Patience**

There are times when the process for acquiring new military weapons and equipment can be very frustrating. Such is often the case when the reaction to the equipment from the Administration and Congress has been discolored by press reports of problems found during early developmental tests. Fielding military hardware is an iterative process of design, test, fix, test, fix. Since nothing works 100 percent the first time, it is a matter of designing out the flaws revealed in the earliest tests so that eventually the troops will receive the best possible product.

An excellent example of the damning effects of these misinformed press reports is the Army's new multipurpose tactical truck. Called the "Hummer," short for high mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicle, it is adaptable to carry people or weapons, and can be used as a field ambulance. It will replace several aging vehicles, including the longtime workhorse, the jeep.

As often happens, early tests revealed areas in which the prototypes of the new truck did not live up to all the Army's rigid requirements. For example, some of the Hummers developed clogged radiators, air leaks in the fuel system, and excessive tire and electrical system failures. These are typical of the kind of problems normally encountered in the initial field evaluation of test vehicles. None are incorrecable. In fact, changes to remedy them have been identified, incorporated in test vehicles, and verified by the contractor.

To ensure that the vehicles eventually delivered will meet all the Army's requirements, early production models incorporating those changes will be subjected to extensive testing before release to the field. Under his fixed-price contract, the manufacturer is responsible for paying for the changes required to correct deficiencies identified in these tests.

The best we can hope for is that the decision-makers will recognize that glitches found during the first tests of a system are not all line stoppers and that they will have the patience to reserve judgment until they can review the results of production model testing. By so doing, they will better serve the soldiers, the taxpayers and the nation.