
Defense Report

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The Army's New Multiple Rocket Launcher—A Shining Example of a Weapon That Works

The military forces of the United States and its NATO partners have no hope nor intention of matching the Warsaw Pact gun-for-gun or tank-for-tank. Instead we and our allies plan to rely from the onset of hostilities in Europe on tactics and weapons which would blunt the initial attack and deliver a knockout blow to the Soviet second echelon forces before they could exploit any initial success.

To give our Army the wherewithal to fight a numerically superior foe—and win, we have organized and trained balanced ground fighting forces capable of successful combat against any army in the world. Of equal import, we are providing our soldiers with the weapons and equipment to exhibit a credible deterrence to war—armaments like the M1 Abrams tank and its companion, the Bradley infantry fighting vehicle, the AH-64 Apache attack helicopter and the UH-60 utility helicopter.

In addition the Army is quietly fielding another new system that could provide the firepower edge our soldiers need. That weapon is the Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS), and it is described by the general in charge of Army research and development as “the best piece of equipment that we have fielded for close support of the battlefield since World War II.”

The MLRS is a highly reliable, extremely accurate field artillery rocket system with which three soldiers can deliver the volume of firepower that would normally require nearly a battalion of heavy artillery. Those three soldiers can fire a barrage of a dozen 13-foot rockets to ranges of 18-20 miles, where each of the 350-pound rocket warheads spew their 644 grenade-like charges over an area the size of a football field. One 12-rocket MLRS salvo can be fired in less than a minute and is considered sufficient to destroy an enemy artillery battery.

For the defense of Western Europe, the quick reaction and high volume firepower of MLRS makes it extremely valuable for attacking the vast numbers of artillery batteries and other forces called for in the operational doctrine of Warsaw Pact armies.

In the MLRS the Army has a modern weapon that shoots fast and straight and was brought in on schedule and within cost.