Corps, DoD Test Office Differ on Effectiveness of New JLTV

The Marine Corps is beginning to field its new Joint Light Tactical Vehicle and, after improved training and some physical adjustments, the Corps believes JLTVs are "operationally suitable and effective," the program's manager said Feb. 27.

That conclusion is quite different than the findings released last week by the Defense Department's Operational Test and Evaluation office (DOT&E), which said all four variants of the JLTV were "not operationally suitable because of deficiencies in reliability, maintainability, training, manuals, crew situational awareness and safety" and that the close combat weapons carrier was "not operationally effective for use in combat and tactical missions."

The DOT&E findings were "directly lifted from data" collected during joint Army and Marine Corps operational testing done a year ago and "does not take into account the effort and work that's been done since then," said Andrew Rodgers, program manager for Light Tactical Vehicles at Marine Corps Systems Command.

"As we are fielding, we have shown that they are operationally suitable and effective. As we push forward with our training, we will be able to validate that," Rodgers said.

His responses to the DOT&E report came during a telephone conference call with reporters to announce the fielding of the first JLTVs to the Marines' School of Infantry, West, at Camp Pendleton, Calif., the next day.

The JLTV is intended to replace most of the 1980s-era High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle, or Humvee, to provide greater crew protection, tactical mobility and high-tech

communications. Oshkosh Defense will produce 49,099 of the vehicles for the Army, 9,091 for the Marine Corps and 80 for the Air Force.

Rodgers said the problems cited in the DOT&E report had been identified by the Army and the Marines during their testing and most of them reflected decisions made early in the program's development to delay creation of training programs and manuals until the production contract was awarded to Oshkosh Defense in 2015.

"We were very aware that our training material was not mature enough," he said.

After rushing to make up for the late start, the Marine Corps produced a 40-hour maintenance training package but quickly realized that "we were not imparting enough information to the maintainers." There is now an 80-hour training program

for maintainers and a 56-hour package for vehicle operators. Operator training and electronic technical manuals also have been completed.

That has "gone a long way to help beef up the training," which should improve reliability, Rodgers said.

He said the problems in operating the anti-tank TOW missiles on the close combat weapons carrier "can be solved with improvement in tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs).

Once the Corps has the vehicle and begins working with it, Marines will modify their TTPs to account for the physical changes to the JLTV from the Humvee."

Rodgers said the Army is testing larger rear windows and a front-mounted camera to address the problems with poor visibility and situational awareness cited in the DOT&E report, and problems with getting in and out of the JLTV can be corrected with adjustments to the doors.

Marines also are provided a secondary emergency exit in the new JLTV, he said.

The Feb. 28 delivery to Camp Pendleton is the beginning of fielding 55 JLTVs to supporting units by mid-May, followed by the first deliveries to operational units in July, starting with II Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) at Camp Lejeune, N.C.

Rodgers said he expects to have fielded 250 to 300 JLTVs by end of this fiscal year and to deliver about 1,000 in fiscal 2020.