



A 30-DAY SPRINT

Cross-Boeing team works fast to provide the U.S. Army with new communications abilities

By DIANA LOFTIS

Boeing works to provide warfighters with the capabilities they need as rapidly as possible. And delivering for U.S. soldiers under tight deadlines is just what the Network Centric Soldier System team has done.

Last year, the team and the U.S. Army's 101st Airborne Division, 10th Mountain Division and 3rd Brigade-2nd Infantry Division (Stryker Brigade Combat Team) conducted a series of integrated battle command concept demonstrations. The tests proved the worth of NCSS, a communications-on-the-move system that improves situational awareness and connectivity for warfighters across the battlespace.

As a result, the company was tasked in early 2006 to retrofit two armored-combat Stryker vehicles with the NCSS. The Boeing team, drawn from Connexion by Boeing and Integrated Defense Systems, had to deliver Connexion by Boeing on-the-move broadband satellite communications and integrated command and control capabilities to a

deploying U.S. Army combat brigade. And they had less than 30 days to do it.

Three weeks after getting the go-ahead, the Boeing team arrived at the Army's Electronic Proving Grounds at Fort Huachuca, Ariz., for prefielding tests and evaluations. After receiving a safety release from the Army's Test and Evaluation Command, the team, with gear in tow, headed to Fort Irwin, Calif., to begin installing the communications system aboard two Stryker vehicles.

With just 72 hours from install to roll-out, the team delivered a safe and effective system that provides situational awareness, battle command and connectivity between distributed warfighters and their tactical operations cells.

The system allowed these enhanced units to conduct distributed operations with unprecedented speed and lethality. The system works with existing military and commercial communications systems, providing integrated command and control capabilities to the tactical edge. In one instance, while out of reach using its tactical (short-range radio) communications system, a vehicle crew was able to call in a medical evacuation for an injured soldier by placing a Voice over Internet Protocol call from a moving Stryker vehicle to a cell phone operating on the public telephone network.

At the conclusion of the National Training Center rotation, an evaluation team consisting of personnel from the U.S. Army

The first of two Stryker vehicles equipped with Boeing's Network Centric Soldier System demonstrates communications on the move shortly before rolling out for operations at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif.

Soldier Battle Lab, the Army Capabilities Integration Center, and the U.S. Army Infantry Center reported that the Boeing-provided capabilities "provide a viable near-term battle command solution."

Following this initial success, the NCSS team recently won a competitive procurement for Phase II development and deliveries to Army units supporting Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"We get the opportunity to help those who are willingly putting themselves in harm's way for us back here in the States, and we get to open exciting new markets and product frontiers for Boeing," said Will Grannis, program manager for the Network Centric Soldier System. "In addition, the cross-functional team is truly a best-of-Boeing group. When you have to take a program from concept to boots on the ground in less than 30 days, a lot of personal sacrifices have to be made by everyone."

"In the end analysis, promises made by the Boeing team were promises kept," said Waldo Carmona, general manager of Advanced C3 and Combat Systems. ■

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