

PEO Soldier Gives U.S. Troops Everything They Need

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For the past 6 years, Program Executive Office (PEO) Soldier has equipped U.S. Soldiers with everything they need to accomplish their missions safely, effectively, and efficiently. BG R. Mark Brown, Program Executive Officer Soldier, credits much of PEO Soldier's success to its Soldier-as-a-system approach to developing and fielding equipment. "Before PEO Soldier, everything was managed as an individual product or program," said Brown. "However, with the advent of PEO Soldier, we started managing the Soldier as a system. Inherent in that concept is that every kit item must work and interface with every other kit item."

A Soldier uses the AN/PEQ-15 ATPIAL mounted on an M-4 carbine. (U.S. Army photo courtesy of PEO Soldier.)



Soldiers at Fort Bragg, NC, test fire the XM320 Grenade Launcher Module. (U.S. Army photo courtesy of PEO Soldier.)

Soldiers of the 4th Brigade, 9th Infantry Regiment (4-9), used Land Warrior during their 15-month tour in Iraq, which ended in June 2008. They are effusive in their praise for the system. “It’s hard to quantify the time saved,” explained CSM Phil Pich, formerly of the 4-9. “I have seen a conventional unit as it runs into an obstacle going to its target — palm groves or a mountain range — when unit members have to do a map check. I have been on missions where map checks have taken well over an hour. With the Land Warrior system, as an obstacle is encountered, the leader is able to change his planning on the move. You are able to literally shave hours off of getting to a target, actions on the objective, and withdrawing from an objective.”

Land Warrior is evolving into the Ground Soldier Ensemble, which will provide the same capabilities but will be lighter. Mounted Soldier provides the same communication and situational awareness capabilities to combat vehicle crews.

PEO Soldier’s mission is to improve Soldiers’ combat effectiveness, ensure their survival, and increase their physical comfort. Through its three project managers (PMs) — PM Soldier Warrior, PM Soldier Equipment (SEQ), and PM Soldier Weapons (SW) — and the Rapid Fielding Initiative, PEO Soldier designs, develops, procures, fields, and sustains virtually everything the Soldier wears or carries, including clothing and individual equipment, protective gear, weaponry, and systems to improve communication and situational awareness. By employing innovative concepts and technologies, PEO Soldier, which is headquartered at Fort Belvoir, VA, has made great strides in quickly getting improved equipment into the hands of Soldiers when and where they need it.

The Modern Warrior

PM Soldier Warrior manages the Land Warrior, Ground Soldier, Mounted Soldier, and Air Warrior programs, all

of which provide improvements in tactical awareness, lethality, survivability, mobility, and sustainment. Land Warrior is one of PM Soldier Warrior’s biggest success stories. Land Warrior is a Soldier-worn, modular fighting system that uses state-of-the-art computer, communications, and global positioning technology to digitally link Soldiers on the battlefield. The system is integrated with body armor and includes a helmet-mounted display on which Soldiers can quickly view detailed maps. They can also see the locations of enemy and friendly forces in the area of operations, greatly reducing the risk of fratricide.

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Air Warrior is a modular, integrated, rapidly reconfigurable combat ensemble that merges aviation life support and mission equipment. The system includes mission-planning, navigation, and communications equipment; a light-weight flight helmet and integrated laser eye protection; the Microclimate Cooling System, which

helps lower core body temperature while in the aircraft, thus reducing heat stress and increasing mission

endurance by as much as 350 percent; and equipment that increases the odds for evasion and survival for downed aircrew members. More than 16,500 Air Warrior systems have been fielded to date.

The Best in Protection

PM SEQ develops, fields, and sustains state-of-the-art sensors, lasers, clothing, and protective gear as well as a plethora of individual equipment, such as flashlights, sleeping systems, and parachutes.

Soldiers trust their survivability gear for one simple reason — it works. SGT Curtis Pittman, Alpha Co., 4-9, knows firsthand that Interceptor Body Armor (IBA) does what it is designed to do. “It saved my life,” he said. “I was hit by a suicide bomber, and the plates in the body armor stopped the shrapnel from going into my chest, which would have killed me.” Pittman bears no visible wounds. “IBA is the best body armor available, and the number of Soldiers saved proves that,” Brown said.

PEO Soldier continues to look for ways to improve body armor, including reducing its weight. The most recent change to body armor, the Improved Outer Tactical Vest, decreased the armor weight by as much as 3.8 pounds. The side-opening vest increases soft ballistic coverage, adjusts for better comfort, and includes a quick-release that allows Soldiers to instantly remove the vest in emergency situations, such as to escape a burning vehicle. “This vest epitomizes our continuous efforts to seek the next improvement and to provide our Soldiers the best body armor available — bar none,” explained Brown.

In addition to providing ballistic protection, PM SEQ is responsible for flame-resistant uniforms and accessories. As of Jan. 1, 2008, all deploying ground Soldiers receive four Flame-Resistant Army Combat Uniforms (FR ACUs). Aviation and combat vehicle crews are issued mission-specific FR uniforms.

Reports from theater demonstrate that the uniforms are doing exactly what they are designed to do. 1SGT Gordon Sather, 4-9, experienced the benefits of FR ACUs firsthand when his vehicle hit a series of improvised explosive devices late last summer. “While the truck was on fire, the oil from the engine got all over us and the flame was on us, but it never burned through the material,” Sather said. “We got small burn marks on our legs, but it was like very minor sunburn.”

PEO Soldier is also improving target-identification technology that helps U.S. Soldiers “own the night.” Next-generation aiming lights provide capabilities that improve on their predecessors, while offering a reduction in weight and required power supply. The AN/PEQ-15 Advanced Target Pointer/Illuminator/Aiming Light (ATPIAL) and the AN/PEQ-15A Dual Beam Aiming Laser Advanced 2nd Generation Infrared (IR) laser emit highly collimated beams of IR light for



The CROWS demonstrates its firing-on-the-move capability. (U.S. Army photo courtesy of PEO Soldier.)

precise weapon aiming, as well as separate, IR-illuminating lasers with adjustable focus. A visible, red-dot aiming laser can also be selected to provide accurate aiming of a weapon during daylight or night operations. The AN/PEQ-16A Mini-IR Pointer Illuminator Module also features a white light flashlight.

Increased Lethality

PM SW supports the development, production, and procurement of current and future weapons systems, ammunition, and associated target acquisition and fire control products. One of the most technologically advanced systems in recent years is the Common Remotely Operated Weapon Station (CROWS), which allows a gunner, using a computer screen and joystick, to operate a weapon mounted on top of a vehicle from safely inside the vehicle. “The CROWS is working really well in Iraq,” said CPT Darren B. Fowler, 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment. “Our tanks are rolling multiple missions daily, and the tanks with CROWS are seeing a lot of action. This system has added more eyes on the battlefield ... without putting Soldiers’ lives in danger.”

The CROWS can be mounted on a variety of vehicles including the M1114/M1151, M93 Fox, RG-33 Buffalo, Stryker, and others. It is capable of mounting small- to medium-caliber crew-served weapons including the MK19 grenade machine gun, the M2 .50-caliber machine gun, the M240B machine gun, and the M249 squad automatic weapon. It gives gunners the ability to identify, engage, and defeat targets out to the maximum effective range of the weapon.

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PEO Soldier’s mission is to improve Soldiers’ combat effectiveness, ensure their survival, and increase their physical comfort. Here, U.S. Army Soldier CPT Alhaji Bangura observes the area town of Al-Mushahde, north of Baghdad. (U.S. Army photo courtesy of PEO Soldier.)

Another crew-served weapon that is enhancing lethality, and ultimately survivability, is the M110 Semi-Automatic Sniper System (SASS), which dramatically improves sniper operations with a higher rate of fire than the M24 Sniper Weapon System. The SASS can also better address the target-rich urban environments in Iraq and Afghanistan. The M110 is comparable in weight to the M24 and fires the same 7.62 round, but it uses

quick-change 10- and 20-round box magazines, as opposed to the 5-round internal magazine for the M24. This allows the Soldier to configure reload much faster based on mission requirements.

The M110 is the first weapon issued by the Army with its own sound and flash suppressor. The suppressor, which has a quick-detach mechanism, substantially reduces weapon signature, minimizing the likelihood of detection by the enemy.

PM SW recently increased the capability of the M4 carbine, which remains the weapon of choice for most Soldiers. The M26 Modular Accessory Shotgun System and the XM320 grenade launcher module are undergoing operational testing and, when issued, will give additional capability to the M4. Both systems can be used as stand-alone weapons or mounted underneath the M4.

Never at Rest

PEO Soldier is always working to improve the gear Soldiers carry. “We are modernizing at mach speed,” said Brown. “Just because we know we have something good doesn’t mean that we are satisfied. We are always on the lookout to see if we can develop something better.”

For more information on all PEO Soldier equipment, visit www.peosoldier.army.mil.

DEBI DAWSON is the PEO Soldier Public Affairs Officer. She is responsible for providing information on PEO Soldier activities and accomplishments to the public and the media.