

The MRAP Saves Lives

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The Defense Contract Management Agency's Ground Systems and Munitions division hosted the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected Contract Administration Strategy Session 2008 on June 17-19 in Quantico, Va. The conference's theme was "MRAP – Where We've Been, Lessons Learned and the Path Forward."

The sessions included speakers addressing the program's success, the reduction in defects per unit and the future of the MRAP vehicles. There were also breakout sessions and panel discussions that included subject-

matter experts from various teams fielding questions from the audience.

The highlight of the conference, however, was a speaker many of the conference leaders referred to as "the reason for MRAP vehicles," Marine 1st Lt. Lee Stuckey. Stuckey described how a 6x6 MRAP vehicle literally saved his life and four of his fellow Marines by greatly decreasing the damaging effects of an improvised explosive device. Stuckey described the event for conference attendees. "When we passed through an intersection on our designated convoy route, truck one, a 7-ton with roller, noticed a pothole that the roller avoided due

to the usual minor pull of the roller to the left and right as the truck is driving," Stuckey explained.

As Stuckey's MRAP approached, his gunner saw the pothole and leaned forward with his spotlight to check it. "I was looking at the smoking hull of a bus on the left side of the road and then the [improvised explosive device] detonated on the right," Stuckey said. "The force of the explosion directly under the vehicle lifted the front of the 6x6 MRAP approximately six feet into the air, pressurized the cab, slammed both mine and my driver's heads against the side windows, caused shrapnel damage throughout

(background photo) An MRAP vehicle similar to the one Marine 1st Lt. Lee Stuckey describes as saving his life. (Photos by Dianne Ryder)





Stuckey, left, and Mitch Howell, DCMA Ground Systems and Munitions Division executive director, at the MRAP Contract Administration Strategy Session 2008.

the passenger side and filled the cab with dust and smoke.”

Although Stuckey and his driver lost consciousness and received concussions in the blast, three other Marines in the vehicle sustained no serious injuries. Stuckey described the blast as similar to “getting hit with a baseball bat.”

Stuckey’s ordeal was far from over, however. His next priority was to move the vehicle out of the “kill zone.” “We moved the vehicle very slowly out of the kill zone while the gunner conducted thorough 5- and 25-meter checks with his spotlight checking for possible secondary IEDs. I directed the Navy corpsman to assess all personnel in the truck for casualties while the radio operator called the IED 9-line to higher [a detailed report with nine lines of important information]. I expected to get hit with follow-on small arms fire or another IED attack,” Stuckey explained.

Stuckey attempted to direct the other vehicles in the convoy out of the area while instructing them to prepare for another attack and to remain vigilant. “While I was dismounted, truck one and truck eight cordoned off the front and rear of the convoy while all trucks searched for secondary IEDs and possible triggermen and prepared for another attack.” Stuckey continued, “The headquarters battalion center of command received late information that there was a complex attack planned by insurgents in the vicinity of the convoy’s location and directed the convoy to be vigilant.”

An explosive ordnance disposal team could not be dispatched to the scene until morning. So, the convoy conducted secondary searches while continuing on their route. During the radio traffic exchange, Stuckey’s driver pushed up and began changing his blown tire. The wrecker pushed up and began changing tires



Marine 1st Lt. Lee Stuckey was a keynote speaker at the MRAP Contract Administration Strategy Session 2008, hosted by DCMA Ground Systems and Munitions division, June 17-19.

while searching for other possible mechanical issues.

The vehicle’s brake lines were cut and several items were destroyed on the convoy commander vehicle including two spotlights, passenger side mirror, electric countermeasures antenna, air filter and one tire, and there was shrapnel throughout the passenger side.

The vehicle sustained a “mobility kill” and was recovered, enabling the convoy to accomplish its mission. Stuckey offered a list of recommended modifications to the MRAP and ideas for future improvements in MRAP production from his field experience. “The most important lesson learned,” said Stuckey, “is the MRAP saves lives!” **C**