

➤ Ground Fires Initiatives

DISCUSSION

With the increased range and speed of the AAV and the V-22, the breadth and depth of the battlefield is increasing immensely. Consequently, the Marine Corps must have weapon systems with correspondingly greater range, lethality, and tactical mobility than those previously available. A triad of indirect fire-support programs is moving the Corps in that direction.

The first element of the triad is the Lightweight I55 (LW I55) towed howitzer needed to replace our current M-198 howitzer that is at the end of its service life. LW I55 is a joint USMC-U.S. Army effort that will meet or exceed all the requirements of the current system while reducing its weight from 16,000 to 9,800 pounds. LW I55's maximum range is 15 miles using unassisted projectiles or 18 miles using assisted projectiles.

The second element, the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS), will deliver very high volumes of rocket artillery in support of the ground scheme of maneuver. The HIMARS will provide accurate, responsive general support and general support reinforcing indirect fires at long range, under all weather conditions, and throughout all phases of combat operations ashore. It will fire both precision and area munitions and has a maximum range of 36 miles.

The Expeditionary Fire Support System (EFSS), the third system of the land-based fire support triad, will accompany the MAGTF in any expeditionary mode of operations. It will be the primary indirect fire-support system for the vertical assault element of the ship-to-objective maneuver force. EFSS as a system will be transportable by helicopter or tiltrotor aircraft to allow the greatest range and flexibility of employment for EMW operations.

In addition to acquiring these fire support systems, the Marine Corps is developing other key adjuncts, such as the Ground Weapon Locating Radar, to assist our ground forces from adversary counter-battery fires.

MARINE CORPS POSITION

Ground-based, indirect fires are irreplaceable when forces are joined in close combat, particularly in the early phases of a sea-based operation. Nothing else is as responsive to the commander's needs, or as reliable. They are not weather or facility dependent. As such, they are a key component in continuing to extend the reach and lethality of the MAGTF.