



ACQUISITION ISSUES

It is not just in the C4ISTAR sector that the pace of acquisition is far less than the speed of technology change, because there is so much C4 and other civil-led technology in all systems. Coupled with the tempo of continuing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, it has been recognised rather belatedly that greater agility in acquisition is essential. There is much that the civil sector can teach defence, the most obvious area being the motorsport industry. But there are other examples: urgent operational requirements (UORs) or fast-track fielding being obvious ones, as evidenced by the speed with which the Dutch Army bought, equipped and fielded in situ the Bushmaster armoured vehicle in less than three months. We also look at some acquisition lessons from the past with relevance today, and examine whether defence is really a special case.

Fast-Track Fielding of the Bushmaster

by *Lieutenant Colonel Pedro Jooren*

Pedro Jooren was G4 of the Dutch and Australian Task Force in Uruzgan in Afghanistan from July 2006 until January 2007. He is currently on the Army Staff (RNLA) in Utrecht. He describes the challenge of the extremely quick and successful procurement of Bushmaster vehicles for Dutch troops in Afghanistan.

As if the flexibility of the Dutch Army had not yet been sufficiently put to the test, the introduction of the Bushmaster, its new vehicle that was put into action immediately in Afghanistan, formed the ultimate challenge. An often-used saying within the Task Force in Uruzgan (TFU-1) applied: "It has to be done, so it can be done".

The Dutch Army has been playing an active role in Afghanistan for some years now and its participation in ISAF III has increased the number of deployed soldiers considerably. Since 1 August 2006, the Netherlands has been operating in a Task Force in the province of Uruzgan, based at Tarin Kowt and Deh Rawod. The Task Force involves some 1350 Dutch personnel, as well as intensive cooperation with 400 soldiers of the Australian Army at Tarin Kowt.

Before the arrival of the TFU, a Deployment Task Force (DTF) carried

out preparatory work in Afghanistan to facilitate the TFU's entry into Uruzgan. The intensive use of materiel and a thorough threat analysis prompted the Ministry of Defence to make extra funding available for the purchase of additional vehicles. The threat of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) increased exponentially and the safety of personnel was an issue. The diversity of the IEDs was also rapidly increasing, which meant that units were required to adapt their method of operations.

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During the DTF period, there were already several vehicles in use in the mission area, such as the Mercedes-Benz Soft Top, the YPR-765 APC and the Patria. The DTF's focus was on Reception Staging and Onward Movement (RSOM) preparations, unlike that of the TFU, which would be operating mainly within Uruzgan. As the TFU was scheduled to start on 1 August 2006, speed was of the essence

in purchasing a new type of vehicle and moving it into the mission area.

The new vehicle was intended to support various types of operations and to provide adequate security for the personnel, especially if the threat level rose to the point where they were unable to conduct patrols in light, open-top vehicles. Additional armoured vehicles were required and they needed to be in the mission area before 1 September.

What Do We Need?

The main question was what exactly we needed in the mission area. In order to answer that question, a programme of requirements was drawn up in order to select a supplier. From a functional point of view, what was needed was a vehicle for the transportation of personnel and materiel for the purpose of conducting patrols. The vehicle had to have a high degree of mobility, be a four-wheel drive and be suitable for both on-road and off-road transportation.

The vehicle's level of protection had to meet the requirements of the current STANAGs, with the passengers being protected against small arms, anti-tank mines, mortar shells and roadside bombs (IEDs). In terms of firepower, a Remote Controlled Weapon Station (RCWS) was required, initially with an MAG



The Bushmaster met the Fast-Track Requirement in terms of mobility, protection and firepower [Dutch MoD]

machine gun. At a later stage the requirement was changed to a .50 machine gun.

Further requirements concerned the interior layout, the climate-control facilities and transport abilities.

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How Do We Get It?

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Materiel Organisation (DMO) for the procurement of 25 armoured vehicles. The fact that the vehicles were needed in Afghanistan before 1 September required deviation from the standard procurement procedure for materiel. The Defence organisation could accelerate the project by adopting the Fast-Track Procedure (FTP) consisting of the following three phases:

- Fast-Track Requirement
- Fast-Track Procurement
- Fast-Track Fielding

The reason for having the Fast-Track Requirement phase is the fact that the time between political decision-making and the execution of the actual mission is often very short indeed. In the run-up to the mission, gathering and analysing information can provide a picture of what is required for that specific mission. During the mission, specific materiel requirements will arise which must be

met immediately. A great deal of time can be saved by following parallel processes rather than planning sequentially. The key players in both the approval procedure and the procurement procedure are then informed in the same manner. In cooperation with the project manager and the contract manager, the possibilities for the procurement and for setting the requirement are examined and specified. During this phase, it is important that the right people be made available for these tasks and that they remain available throughout the process.

From 23 June to 5 July, the number of personnel required for the procurement process was determined and the requirement package identified. At the same time, a draft contract was drawn up and the logistics concept was designed. The key terms in the Requirement phase are *time* and *communication*.



The Bushmasters, under the Fast-Track Fielding process, were delivered directly to the mission area [Dutch MoD]

Governments are bound by strict procedures for equipment procurement. In principle, procurement must comply with European Community regulations. Only if the procurement specifically concerns military materiel can the procurement be put out to tender according to the regulations of the European Defence Agency (EDA), and even then only under strict conditions. In both procedures it is possible, again under very strict conditions, to shorten the regular processing times, which was done for this project.

On 5 July, the DMO put out a request for quotation (RFQ) to eight candidates. On 17 July, the RFQ procedure was closed, with offers received from six potential suppliers. The quotations were assessed and negotiations were conducted from 18 to 23 July, and on 26 and 27 July the decision was made. On 28 July, a contract was signed with Thales for the delivery

of 25 Bushmasters to the Dutch Army. The key term in the Procurement phase is *procedures*.

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What was remarkable about this order was that the Bushmasters were delivered directly to the mission area. This took place during the final phase, Fast-Track Fielding, which again involves a non-standard procedure. The way in which the vehicle is delivered has to be adapted to suit the units in the mission area. Careful planning ensures that ongoing operations are not jeopardised in any way. The vehicles

were not immediately ready for use on their arrival. First, a programme had to be completed for the installation of the radio equipment and the SRWS (Stabilised Remote Weapon Station). In addition, driving instruction and maintenance training were provided at Kandahar and Tarin Kowt. The key term in the Fielding phase is *customisation*.

The Challenge

On 1 September, 10 vehicles arrived at Kandahar airfield. The project organisation in the Netherlands and the Task Force in Uruzgan had held thorough consultations beforehand with regard to the subsequent steps to be taken. The 'basic' vehicles first had to be fitted with weapons and radio equipment before they could leave the airfield. The TFCU personnel who were due to use the vehicles were stationed in the province of Uruzgan and tasked with conducting operations in the Tarin

Kowt and Deh Rawod areas. The time available for training personnel in relation to the security situation was minimal. In addition, those personnel had to be brought to Kandahar using limited air transport capabilities. After the training, the vehicles were driven in convoy to Uruzgan by the newly trained personnel. The equipping of the vehicles and the conducting of the training involved a steep learning curve.

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As with any new project, problems occurred. They varied from not having the correct materials for the equipping of the vehicles to the communication between the manufacturer, the project organisation and the units in the mission area, the availability of air transport, etc. In view of the security situation and the objective of the TFU, long processing times were not acceptable. In situations like this, a can-do mentality is a decisive factor in bringing the challenge to successful completion.

The maintenance concept of the Bushmaster ties in with the Dutch maintenance concept.

First-echelon maintenance is carried out by the system users of the unit. The second echelon is done by the technical personnel assigned to the unit, who are also able to assess what further maintenance is required. The third echelon is carried out, in the first instance, by the manufacturer. For the duration of the mission, the Netherlands Ministry of Defence contracted civilian maintenance capabilities at the bases in Uruzgan. A supply of spare parts was purchased, which is managed and kept up-to-date in the mission area. As a backup, the supplier trains Dutch military mechanics for every troop rotation. If the security situation requires it, the civilian mechanics can leave the area and the military personnel will then continue to guarantee the operational maintenance of the vehicles. This logistics concept meant that the Bushmasters could be deployed immediately in operations and that their availability and serviceability were guaranteed.

The Paradox

Using FTP leads to a paradox with difficult choices to be made. The key players in that paradox are the political leadership, the supplier, the project organisation of the Ministry of Defence and the combat units. The result is a complicated and challenging power game.

The processing time has to be as short as possible, because specific materiel is needed immediately in the mission area in



Inter-relationships of principal factors

response to the changing security situation. This is facilitated by the FTP. The process requires good communication between those who set the requirement and the project organisation. The procurement must be carried out within the legal parameters. This will require specialised personnel to be removed from current projects in order for them to contribute to this procurement process. In practice, it causes an acceptable delay in other projects, because the required expertise cannot be obtained elsewhere. The decision to deliver the Bushmasters to Afghanistan by air had an effect on the costs, as did the training of personnel, the equipping of the vehicles and the contracting of maintenance capability in the mission area. The fast-tracking of project phases and the introduction of vehicles directly into the mission area also involve certain risks. There is no opportunity to conduct extensive tests with the vehicles in combination with the built-in equipment and there is no time to try out the vehicles under various conditions. The availability of actual users is minimal. The question remains whether the vehicle will ultimately do what it is meant to do.

Final Result

In a mission area, what counts is the final result. Commanders are pleased with the fact that the Bushmaster is very reliable and can also be deployed as a reconnaissance vehicle. The vehicle is versatile and does not make an aggressive impression on the population. Establishing and maintaining contact with the local population is an important precondition for stability in the province. The Bushmaster is deployed during all operations conducted by Dutch units. ■



The Bushmaster vehicle is now deployed on all operations by Dutch units in Afghanistan [Dutch MoD]