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Faced with a growing insurgency in Iraq, the Army wants to order more armored cars for military police and convoy escort missions.

Army spokesman Maj. Gary Tallman told *Defense Today* that the Army has “validated an operational need” for an additional 28 M117 Armored Security Vehicles, or ASVs.

The Armored Security Vehicle, or ASV, is a four-wheeled armored car manufactured by New Orleans-based Textron Marine and Land Systems. Currently, Textron is under contract to produce 104 ASVs, which cost approximately \$600,000 each; if the Army can find the funding, that would bring the total number on order to 132.

The news comes as the Army and Marine Corps have reportedly begun sending more tanks and other heavy armor to the theater of operations. According to Jay Johnson, Textron’s director of business development for ground systems, ASVs in theater are already seeing a lot of action, and there’s demand for more.

“The Army is saying, ‘Look, we need to move every Armored Security Vehicle to theater,’” he said. “So we’ve essentially done that—there are 63 in theater, in operation, right now. They’re used every day, and the commanders use these based on whatever the mission is for that day.”

According to Johnson, the Army is putting a lot of miles on the ASVs in Iraq.

“The mileages that we’re getting back on our vehicles average 2,000 a month,” he said. “They’re using them that much. The highest-mileage vehicle’s got 27,000 miles on it.”

Manned by a crew of three, the ASV is smaller than Army’s larger armored troop carriers like the eight-wheeled Stryker and the tracked M113. But in contrast to ordinary Humvees, the ASV is well armored and features a fully-enclosed turret with a 40-mm MK 19 grenade launcher and a 12.7-mm M2 machine gun.

Over the past several months, the military has rushed to deliver more up-armored Humvees to Iraq, as well as buy add-on armor kits to boost vehicle protection. But critics contend that’s not enough. In a hearing yesterday, Rep. Marcy Kaptur (D-Ohio) chided Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz for the Pentagon’s failure to deliver enough up-armored Humvees.

“I wanted to alert you to the fact that the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment attached to [the] 1st Armored Division that fought outside of Najaf this week still does not have [armored] doors on its Humvees,” she said.

Kaptur continued: “Do we know how many of those [American casualties] have been killed in Humvees

Army Seeks More Textron Armored Cars For Iraq

BY NATHAN HODGE

the up-armored High-Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle [Humvee] is not providing the solution the Army hoped to achieve.”

Johnson suggested that his company’s vehicle could help fill that gap.

“If they need a vehicle that’s imposing, you send in an ASV,” he said. “If you need a vehicle that’s less obvious, then they’ll send in the Humvees.”

The ASV was originally designed for military-police missions. But Johnson said the military had been looking at broadening the range of missions the vehicle is used for, including convoy security.

What’s more, he said the vehicle had proved that it is survivable.

“They’re being attacked virtually every week by improvised explosive devices, by mortars, by small arms, RPGs [rocket-propelled grenades], probably some other things,” he said. “We’ve not wounded a soldier, we’ve not killed a soldier and we’ve not lost a vehicle.”

According to Johnson, one crewmember e-mailed the company to say his ASV had survived six separate hits from improvised explosive devices, or IEDs.

“We had one that had an IED go off right underneath the vehicle, and it blew out all four tires, and they drove that vehicle home, changed the tires out and they’re back in operation,” Johnson said.

The Army gave Textron a contract for a total of 99 ASVs in 1999, but decided at the end of fiscal 2003 not to renew the contract. Congress subsequently tacked on funds for a few additional vehicles.

An earlier push by legislators would have required the Army to revive production of the ASV, but it did not survive passage last year of the fiscal 2004 defense-appropriations bill.

Army spokesman Tallman said the service now wants to accelerate production to receive the vehicles as soon as possible.

Johnson said Textron was “looking at that option right now, but we’re committed to provide them as quickly as the Army is willing to have us ramp up and produce them.”

Delivery of the additional 28 ASVs, however, hinges on whether the Army can come up with the funds.

“We have a valid need, [but] we need more money and we are looking for ways to do that now,” said Tallman.

without doors?”

However, some Army leaders think that even up-armored Humvees are not adequate for urban combat. In a widely publicized memorandum, the head of Army Forces Command recently wrote: “Commanders in the field are reporting to me that