

Major Upgrade to Infantry Soldiers Equipment

Aug 16, 2017

The French army has been upgrading the equipment of its infantry soldiers – including a new troop carrier and advanced personal gear. The Army unveiled for public display on July 14 the Griffon multi-role troop carrier, one of the vehicles driven in the Bastille Day parade.

Griffon relies on innovation, a major element in the Army's €6 billion (U.S. $6.8 billion) Scorpion modernization program, with Nexter, Renault Trucks Defense and Thales building the vehicle. Those industrial partners are also working on Jaguar, a combat vehicle designed to share common equipment with the Griffon, according to defensenews.com.

The Griffon in the parade is one of the two prototype vehicles undergoing certification tests by the Army and Direction Générale de l'Armement, or DGA, procurement office, with four more prototype units due for delivery, an Army program officer said.

Protection tests have been conducted on the Griffon, with the hull submitted to explosive and ballistic tests at Bourges in central France. The level of protection is classified information. Mobility tests have also been conducted. The second prototype vehicle is undergoing tests at Angers in western France for operations under hot and cold temperature.

Griffon has a double hull design, including an aluminium shell, and a third layer of modular armor can be fitted to protect from rocket-propelled grenades.

The infantry equipment is due to be upgraded to Felin version 2 in the second phase of the Scorpion program in 2025, with work on prototypes to boost capabilities for dismounted troops.

In observation capability, Cat Eye from LHeritier is a night vision camera with a laser to pick up reflected light from enemy snipers, a company executive said.

Thales is working on a night vision goggle that shares with friendly troops video pictures and location information of the enemy.

An infantryman showed Defense News how the Heckler & Koch 416 F assault rifle will be fitted to allow the soldier to operate the personal radio and goggles while holding the weapon in the firing position.

The weight of the body armor will be decreased. Safran Electronics & Defense, the supplier of the Felin kit since 2010, has worked on making the body armor lighter, fitting radio antennae on shoulder pads and boosting battery power to 72 hours from 12 hours, from a power source weighing 40 percent lighter.

There is work on allowing soldiers to look up tactical information such as blue force tracking on tablets, smartphones and Apple and Samsung watches.

Safran E&D has funded work over three or four years on a demonstrator for an exoskeleton, aimed at helping soldiers in movement, with studies for wiring in artificial intelligence into the lightweight system.

The main benefit in the Scorpion battle management system, dubbed SICS, from Bull, an Atos unit, is a faster and more user-friendly response and an automatic sharing of information through the field command, a company executive said.

For Thales, a command post version of the Griffon offers around half of the value of that vehicle, a company executive said. That compares to an estimated 30 percent on the 11 versions of the modular Griffon, including troop carrier, artillery observation, ambulance, and field engineers.

Thales supplies onboard electronics, Contact software defined radio and a jamming system against improvised explosive devices.

Renault Trucks Defense will supply two types of remote controlled turrets, comprising the 7.62-millimeter or 12.7-millimeter machine guns, or a grenade launcher.