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U.S. Army's Maneuver Short-Range Air Defense (M-SHORAD) System

Background

The Army is developing a new maneuver short-range air defense system, or M-SHORAD, to perform short-range air defense (SHORAD). The Army defines SHORAD as capabilities that provide air defense against low-altitude air threats. In the early 2000s, the Army divested SHORAD units from Army force structure to free up personnel to create other types of units deemed more mission-critical at the time. After 2005, SHORAD force structure was reduced to two battalions of Active Component Avenger systems and Counter-Rocket, Artillery and Mortar (C-RAM) batteries and seven Army National Guard Avenger battalions.

Since 2005, there has been a dramatic increase in air and missile platforms that could threaten U.S. ground forces. The use of unmanned aerial systems (UASs) has increased exponentially and UASs have been used successfully in a variety of conflicts, including the current Ukrainian conflict. Given the increase in threat and limited air defense assets available to Army divisions, the Army decided to improve the air defense posture of its maneuver forces.

M-SHORAD Requirement

In response to the growing aerial threat, the Army originally planned to field 144 M-SHORAD Increment 1 systems to four battalions and could field additional battalions in the future. Each M-SHORAD battalion would consist of 40 M-SHORAD systems, support vehicles and equipment, and about 550 soldiers. In April 2021, the 5th Battalion, 4th Air Defense Artillery Regiment received the first four of its M-SHORAD systems, becoming fully equipped in late 2022. In addition to the 144 systems designated for operational units, the Army planned to procure 18 additional systems for training, operational spares, and testing, for a total of 162 systems. Reportedly, as of June 2024, the Army envisioned building about 312 M-SHORAD systems but that number could increase to as many as 361 “based on future Army decisions,” but, at present, the Army only has approval for 162 systems.

M-SHORAD Variants/Increments

Initially, there were three M-SHORAD variants, or “Increments,” planned by the Army.

Figure 1. M-SHORAD Increment 1



Source: <https://www.leonardodrs.com/what-we-do/products-and-services/m-shorad/>.

M-SHORAD Increment 1

M-SHORAD Increment 1 (Figure 1) was developed under the Other Transaction Authority contracting process. M-SHORAD uses the M-1126 Stryker combat vehicle as its chassis. The weapons and radar packages are configured by Leonardo DRS and then installed on the Stryker by General Dynamics Land Systems (GDLS), the vehicle's original manufacturer. Leonardo DRS reports the multipurpose unmanned turret includes

- two AGM-114L Longbow Hellfire missiles capable of hitting ground targets;
- four FIM-92 Stinger missiles for aerial targets in a launcher (configured by Raytheon);
- an XM914 30 mm automatic cannon;
- an M-240 7.62 mm machine gun; and
- a multi-mission radar capable of tracking both ground and air targets.

Prohibition on Hellfire Missile Use on M-SHORAD Increment 1

Reportedly, the Army is planning to replace the Longbow Hellfire missile launcher on M-SHORAD Increment 1 vehicles because the Hellfire mounted on the side of the vehicle “created wear and tear on the missile, leading to potential safety concerns.” The Army reportedly plans to retrofit M-SHORAD vehicles “by swapping out the Hellfire launcher and for a second Stinger pod,” which would give the modified vehicles eight total FIM-92 Stinger rounds.

M-SHORAD Increment 2

M-SHORAD Increment 2 is also referred to as DE (Directed Energy) M-SHORAD and incorporates a 50 kilowatt (kW) laser as its primary armament to defend against a variety of air and artillery threats. Efforts to develop the 50 kW laser began in 2019 and, in 2021, Raytheon was awarded a \$123 million developmental contract after a competitive shoot-off against Northrop Grumman. The Army reports additional testing of the 50

kW laser has enjoyed success against a variety of drones, but according to Army program officials, “challenges remain” in terms of defending against rockets, artillery, and mortars. Army plans called for M-SHORAD Increment 2 to start a user assessment beginning in the fourth quarter of FY2023, running through the first quarter of FY2024. Reportedly, the Army now plans to choose a few designs from an existing group of vendors to compete to develop what it calls its Enduring High Energy Laser (HEL) system for short-range air defense in early 2025. The Army plans to fund teams through design and development and then select a winner to build an enduring HEL in the first quarter of FY2026.

Soldier Observations on DE M-SHORAD Deployed to the Middle East for Testing

Reportedly, according to Army officials, in February 2024 the Army deployed four Stryker-mounted 50 kW laser M-SHORAD prototypes to the Middle East for soldiers to test the system’s performance against aerial threats. Initial soldier feedback was characterized as “not overwhelmingly positive,” with officials suggesting “results from the lab environment and test ranges are very different from the tactical environment.”

M-SHORAD Increment 3

The Army reportedly plans for M-SHORAD Increment 3 to incorporate the FIM-92 Stinger replacement missile—the Next Generation Short Range Interceptor—into the Increment 1 system. In addition, these plans call for the Increment 1 30 mm automatic cannons to receive the XM 1223 Multi-Mode Proximity Airburst munition (MMPA), which features a multipurpose munition that can be employed against air, ground, and personnel targets. In March 2023, the Army reportedly selected Lockheed Martin and Raytheon Technologies to develop competing prototypes of a Next-Generation Short-Range Interceptor. The Army has indicated it planned for a technology demonstration in FY2024, an operational demonstration in FY2026, and a production decision by FY2027.

Army Issues a Request for Information for M-SHORAD Increment 4

On May 8, 2024, the Army issued a request for information (RFI) for M-SHORAD Increment 4, stating that this capability is to focus on delivering “air defense capability to support dismounted maneuver.” M-SHORAD Increment 4 is to include capabilities that can be transported on a C-130 aircraft and that are air-droppable and sling load capable. It is also to be capable of integration onto platforms such as the Joint Light Tactical Vehicle (JLTV) and/or a robotic vehicle. The Army requested RFI responses from industry by July 16, 2024, and that industry provide solutions that would deliver capabilities in the near

term (FY2027 to FY2028), mid term (FY2030 through FY2032), and the far term (beyond FY2035).

Army Names M-SHORAD Vehicle and Program Update

On June 14, 2024, the Army reportedly renamed the M-SHORAD the “SGT STOUT” in honor of Sergeant Mitchell William Stout, an Air Defense Artillery soldier who won the Congressional Medal of Honor during the Vietnam War. In addition to the Army’s first two M-SHORAD battalions—the 5th Battalion, 4th Defense Artillery in Germany and the 4th Battalion, 60th Air Defense Artillery at Fort Sill, OK—Army officials reportedly noted that the Army is currently in the process of fielding to the 6th Battalion, 56th Air Defense Artillery at Fort Cavazos, TX, and plans to activate a fourth M-SHORAD battalion at Fort Liberty, NC in the third quarter of FY2025.

Considerations for Congress

Oversight questions Congress could consider include the following.

Lessons Learned from the Russo-Ukraine Conflict

The ongoing Ukrainian conflict has featured the use of a variety of military and commercial UASs employed in both kinetic and non-kinetic roles. In addition to both fixed and rotary wing air threats, loitering munitions (also known as kamikaze or suicide drones) have also been employed, reportedly with considerable effect. Lessons learned related to the employment of the aforementioned systems may inform current and future development of all four M-SHORAD Increments. Congress may consider what efforts have been undertaken by the Army to incorporate lessons learned into M-SHORAD design.

2024 Army Force Structure Transformation Initiative and M-SHORAD

On February 27, 2024, the Army released a white paper, *Army Force Structure Transformation*, outlining plans to transform the force. Regarding M-SHORAD, the Army stated it would add four additional M-SHORAD battalions.

Reportedly, Army officials noted on June 14, 2024, that the four additional battalions would be activated in the Army National Guard “assuming they are funded across the Program Objective Memorandum (POM) between FY2026 and FY2030.” Given the Army’s new transformation plans, Congress might seek to clarify the Army’s plans for the four new Army National Guard M-SHORAD battalions including the timeline for unit activations and where the units will be stationed.

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