

Updated January 23, 2025

The U.S. Army's Typhon Strategic Mid-Range Fires (SMRF) System

What Is the Army's Strategic Mid-Range Fires (SMRF) System?

Reported improvements to Russian and Chinese artillery systems present a challenge to the U.S. Army. Improved longer-ranged artillery systems, new employment techniques for unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), and the proliferation of special munitions (such as precision, thermobaric, loitering, and top-attack munitions) have renewed concerns about the potential impact of Russian and Chinese fires on U.S. combat operations and ground combat systems. In response, the U.S. Army is seeking to improve its ability to deliver what it refers to as long-range precision fires (LRPF) by upgrading current artillery and missile systems, developing new longer-ranged systems and hypersonic weapons, and modifying existing air- and sea-launched missiles for ground launch.

Originally known as the Mid-Range Capabilities (MRC) System, SMRF is part of the Army's LRPF modernization portfolio. It is intended to hit targets at ranges between the Army's Precision Strike Missile (PrSM) and the developmental Long-Range Hypersonic Weapon (LRHW) system. The SMRF Weapon System leverages existing Raytheon-produced SM-6 missiles and Raytheon-produced Tomahawk cruise missiles and modifies them for ground launch. The SMRF system is also known as the "Typhon" missile system (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Typhon Launchers and Battery Operations Center



Source: *The Drive*: <https://www.thedrive.com/the-war-zone/army-fires-tomahawk-missile-from-its-new-typhon-battery-in-major-milestone>, accessed July 6, 2023.

SMRF Weapon System Components

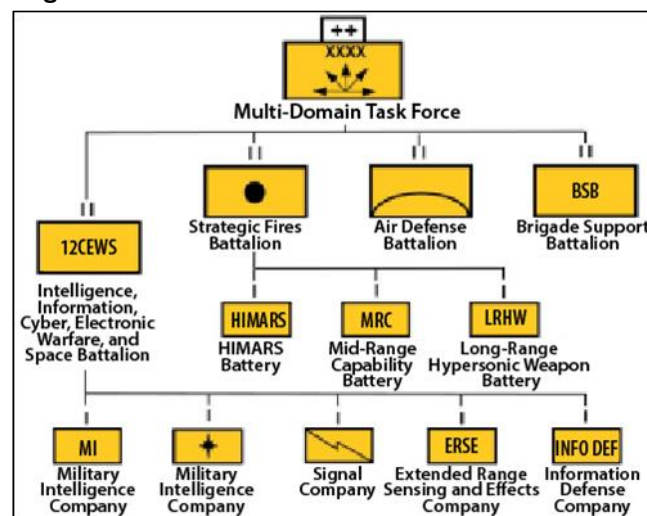
According to the Army, the prototype SMRF battery is planned to consist of four launchers and a battery operations center (BOC) (Figure 1). SMRF batteries are to be equipped with a number of prime movers, trailers,

generators, and support vehicles. Numbers of soldiers assigned to each battery is presently unknown. The Army originally planned for the first prototype SMRF battery to be fielded no later than the fourth quarter of FY2023 and three additional batteries were to be fielded on an annual basis thereafter. It is not clear at this time if the Army will field more than four SMRF batteries or if any of the batteries will be Army National Guard units.

SMRF Unit Organization

The Army plans to field one SMRF battery in the Strategic Fires Battalion of the Army's regionally aligned Multi-Domain Task Force (MDTF) (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Army Multi-Domain Task Force (MDTF) Organization



Source: Chief of Staff Paper #1 Army Multi-Domain Transformation Ready to Win in Competition and Conflict, March 16, 2021, p. 12.

Note: MRC Battery depicted above is now known as the SMRF Battery.

The Army describes MDTFs as "theater-level maneuver elements designed to synchronize precision effects and precision fires in all domains against adversary anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) networks in all domains, enabling joint forces to execute their operational plan (OPLAN)-directed roles."

What Is Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD)?

Anti-Access (A2) is an action, activity, or capability, usually long-range, designed to prevent an advancing enemy force from entering an operational area.

Area Denial (AD) is an action, activity, or capability, usually short-range, designed to limit an enemy force's freedom of action within an operational area.

Source: *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, November 2021.

Program Status

Reportedly, Lockheed Martin delivered the first of four prototype Typhon systems to the Army on December 2, 2022. The Army originally planned to field its first prototype SMRF battery no later than the fourth quarter of FY2023.

SMRF Test Launches and Full Operational Capability

On June 27, 2023, the Army reported

The Army's Rapid Capabilities and Critical Technologies Office's Mid-Range Capability Project Office successfully demonstrated the launch of a Tomahawk missile from the Army's prototype Mid-Range Capability system. Soldiers assigned to the 1st MDTF conducted this live-fire event. This test follows the successful launch of an SM-6 missile from the Mid-Range Capability system earlier this year, confirming the full operational capability of the system.

Plans to Deploy SMRF in 2024

Reportedly, in November 2023, U.S. Army Pacific Commander General Charles Flynn noted

We have tested [Typhon] and we have a battery or two of them today. In 2024, we intend to deploy that system in the region. I'm not going to say where and when, but I will just say that we will deploy them in the region.

SMRF Battery Deployed to the Philippines for Exercise Salaknib 2024

According to U.S. Army Pacific, the Joint Base Lewis-McChord's 1st MDTF deployed a SMRF battery to Northern Luzon, Philippines, on April 11, 2024, as part of Exercise Salaknib 24. Reportedly, the deployment of the SMRF battery is temporary for exercise purposes, and it is to be used during Exercise Salaknib 24 and the upcoming Exercise Balikatan 24.

SMRF Battery Activation

Reportedly, the Army activated its second SMRF battery—D Battery, 5th Battalion, 3rd Field Artillery Regiment—as part of Joint Base Lewis-McChord's 1st MDTF in January 2024. The article notes that “while no statement can be found on the creation of the first battery,” it is assumed that “the second battery activated was part of the Army's 1st Long-Range Fires Battalion, implying that the 1st MDTF now has at least two Typhon batteries.”

Recent SMRF Typhon Activities in the Philippines

Reportedly in January 2025, the Army moved Typhon launchers from Laoag airfield in the Philippines to another location on the island of Luzon. According to a Philippine government official, “The redeployment would help determine where and how fast the missile battery could be moved to a new firing position.” U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) officials reportedly indicated to Reuters that the United States “has coordinated closely with the Philippine government on every aspect of the MRC deployment, including the location,” and further noted that “the relocation was not an indication that the batteries would be permanently stationed in the Philippines.” In terms of the impact of the Typhon deployment,

The weapon [Typhon] drew sharp criticism from China when it was first deployed in April 2024 during a training exercise. In September, when the United States said it had no immediate plans to pull the Typhons out of the Philippines, China and Russia condemned the deployment as fueling an arms race.

Potential Issues for Congress

Planned SMRF Units

The Army's original plans called for fielding four SMRF batteries. The Army, however, plans for five MDTFs, with each MDTF having one organic SMRF battery. Reports suggest the 1st MDTF now has two SMRF batteries instead of one. The Army has reportedly stated that while “each [MDTF] is supposed to have one battery,” that “MDTFs can be adjusted to their combatant commander's requirements with more or fewer units.” If this is the case, it suggests the Army may eventually field more than the four originally planned SMRF batteries. Congress might seek clarification on the Army's current plans for total number of SMRF batteries, including if any batteries are to be fielded in the Army National Guard.

Overseas Stationing of SMRF Units

As previously noted, the Army reportedly planned to deploy SMRF in 2024 in support of U.S. Army Pacific at undisclosed locations in the Pacific region. In April 2024, a SMRF battery was deployed to the Philippines for exercises, and these systems are still in the country as of early 2025. It is not known if this temporary deployment could eventually be made permanent, and U.S. defense officials have given no public indication that the Philippine deployment is permanent or long term. It is possible that SMRF units may be stationed elsewhere in the Indo-Pacific region or at other overseas locations. Given the importance and issues that often affect securing overseas basing, Congress might examine ongoing efforts to secure Army long-range precision fires unit basing in the Indo-Pacific region and other overseas regions.

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IFI2135

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