

Countermeasure Flares Team (CFT) Leverages Acquisition Process to Meet Warfighter Demands

Rene Medina

In November 2005, the Army drastically increased monthly requirements for the M211, M212 and M206 countermeasure flares from 9,000 to 54,000 in just 3 months. This new requirement was the challenge faced and met by the Project Manager Close Combat Systems (PM CCS) CFT.

An AC-130 Spectre gunship fires M211 flares during an air interdiction mission. During *Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom*, the USAF and SOCOM expended nearly 80,000 flares per month. (USAF file photo.)

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Driving the demand was the highly accelerated, fleetwide fielding of the new helicopter-mounted Common Missile Warning System (CMWS) without sufficient munitions to support it in theater. “The M211, M212 and M206 flares have been highly effective in defeating surface-to-air heat-seeking missiles, and have saved countless Soldiers’ lives,” remarked PM CCS COL Ray Nulk. “Recognizing this, the CFT worked tirelessly with contractors to meet the increased demand and get this lifesaving equipment into the hands of our warfighters.”

As demand rose and funds became available, the team worked with the flare producers to rapidly increase production capacity. At the same time, the testing team performed lot acceptance testing against intensive schedules to verify product quality while performing additional qualification testing in support of new production processes and equipment implementation. According

to Santo Lombardo, PM CCS Pyrotechnics and Shoulder Launched Munitions Division Chief, exceptionally close communication between the government and contractors — Alliant Techsystems Inc. for the M212 and Alloy Surfaces for the M211 — allowed this to be choreographed so effectively.

Prompt, Expedited Contracting

In response to Soldiers’ increased needs, the integrated product team (IPT) was established to guide the effort streamlined the contracting process, resulting in several awards within 30 days of receiving funds. This was accomplished by providing innovative contracting strategies such as multiple ramp ups, product improvements and increased production quantities. It also required the development and staffing of several justification and approvals to various levels, the highest being the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology (ASAALT).

The M206 team promptly executed supplemental funding requirements, assuring appropriate justifications, approvals, solicitation and award documentation was completed to award two split (45 percent/55 percent) contracts within 1-2 weeks of funding receipt. The team’s contracting specialists negotiated requirements and delivery schedules with each contractor to meet 30-60 day customer-required delivery dates.

The IPT was able to identify issues, develop solutions and contractually execute alternative approaches quickly and decisively to meet the need for more countermeasure flares to support the increase in fielding of the CMWS currently being used in *Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF)*. “By developing effective solutions and accelerating the award of multiple contracting actions, the team was able to provide a higher level of protection to our Soldiers during conflict,” said Lombardo.



USAF transport planes preemptively fire countermeasure flares during take-off and landing, as those are the times when they are most vulnerable to shoulder-fired IR missiles. (DOD photo by SA Julianne Showalter.)

Collaboration Increases Production Without Delays

The government team and flare producers worked in close collaboration so increases in production capacity did not interrupt current flare production, delivery or quality. Jointly, they were able to streamline approvals of new tooling, manufacturing processes and lot acceptance testing to ensure that deliveries arrived in time to support theater operations. PM CCS qualified new suppliers to support increased production, not only allowing increased rates, but also eliminating potential single points of failure while reducing and mitigating risks. Manufacturers were directed to expedite flare delivery by shipping directly from the production line to Dover Air Force Base (AFB), DE, or Charleston AFB, SC, for delivery to Kuwait or Iraq until inventory was sufficient in theater to support monthly requirements.

The team also helped facilitate construction of a new manufacturing plant that successfully completed the ramp up of M211 flare production to 80,000 units per month — enough to meet Army, U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM) and U.S. Air Force (USAF) requirements for the flare.

Expedited Delivery and Clearance Times

Transportation specialists on the CFT managed the delivery process to expedite clearance and shipment of materials through constant communication and quick action. Aside from continuously tracking production delivery schedules, they provided liaison support between the contractor, Defense Contract Management Agency and Army Air Clearance Authority to expedite clearance into the aerial port of embarkation.

Using Lean Six Sigma techniques in addition to other initiatives, process time was reduced from 3 days to 1.

The transportation specialists also coordinated unit line number airlifts directly with the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) and U.S. Army Transportation Command and created a weekly dedicated Air Mobility Command channel mission to provide supply stability to the entire theater. Diplomatic clearance time was reduced from 21 to 9 days for these critical items. This group was also able to maximize scarce transportation assets, including diverting in-transit ground shipments to alternate ports to meet critical theater needs.

Continuous Reporting to Army Leaders and Warfighters

The CFT continuously reported flare requirements, usage and projections to the very highest level of Army leadership, supporting balcony briefings, CENTCOM status briefs, weekly production updates and reports to the ASAALT. This vital information was provided to Congress in support of the Army's request for supplemental funding for these urgently needed flares.

The team also provided support and information directly to warfighters in theater through weekly teleconferences with the Coalition Forces Land Component Command's Command, Control Communications and Computers (CFLCC C4) Ammunition Officer; PM CCS; Joint Munitions Command (JMC) managers; and logistics support. The weekly meetings were an integral part of coordinating with CENTCOM, the 321st Theater Materiel Management Center and the U.S. Army Materiel Command. CFT members have also traveled to theater to provide the latest information on flare status.

In recognition of their outstanding support, CFLCC C4 presented the



A UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter fires flares during a combat troop insertion during OIF. Transport helicopters are especially vulnerable to shoulder-fired IR-guided missiles. The new LA59 flare will greatly improve crew survivability in both Army fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft. (U.S. Army photo courtesy of PM CCS.)

During OIF, U.S. and coalition forces have depended heavily on American manufacturing base initiative and production capability to counter insurgent ground-to-air missile threats. Here, an Australian airman loads U.S. produced M206, M211 and M212 flares to his aircraft in preparation for a combat mission. (Photo courtesy of PM CCS.)



team with commander coins. Positive feedback was received from theater regarding the Joint Munitions and Lethality Life Cycle Management Command support. CFLCC C4 Commanding General BG Raymond V. Mason remarked, “[CFT’s] daily dedication and coordination efforts for Class V have been nothing short of outstanding! It is individuals like you who have allowed the U.S. Army to leverage its logistics capabilities to give our Soldiers and our allies the best support available.”

Team Wins Prestigious Packard Award

The PM CCS CFT received the David Packard Excellence in Acquisition Award in November 2006 in conjunction with the U.S. Army Armament Research, Development and Engineering Center; the Rock Island-based JMC; the U.S. Army Tank-automotive and Armaments Command contracting staffs; the Army Field Support Command; and the Communications Electronics Research, Development and Engineering Center (CERDEC) (e.g., CERDEC’s Infrared (IR) Flares

Team) for their work on the M211, M212 and M206 countermeasure flares project.

“This award means a great deal to all of us,” stated Patti Felth, Deputy PM CCS. “Through teamwork, hard work and focus on our ultimate customer, the Soldier, we are proud to have been instrumental in meeting the Army’s accelerated demand for the lifesaving M211, M212 and M206 flares.”

Multipurpose Flare Prompts Quick Procurement Action

In early 2007, the U.S. military experienced an increase in aircraft losses from enemy attack. Testing conducted in FY06 by SOCOM had shown that the LA59 (XM216) Aircraft Countermeasure Flare provided a better level of protection with a lower visible signature and a lower cost than the M206, M211 and M212 flares currently in use. When the results were presented to Army senior leaders, including Vice Chief of Staff of the Army GEN Richard A. Cody, at an aviation summit held in February 2007, Cody directed PM CCS to procure the LA59.

The LA59 improves crew survivability by protecting Army fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft from shoulder-fired IR-guided missiles. It also acts as a decoy to counter an attack on aircraft from various IR-guided missile threats at both low and high altitudes. This new flare can serve as protection for Army helicopters and low-altitude aircraft, and can be used on the A-10, F-16 and C-130. The LA59 is intended for use in either the CMWS dispenser or the Improved Countermeasure Dispenser (ICMD) package, both of which hold 30 flares total. Currently, upon engagement, the CMWS dispenses a minimum of one each of the M206, M211 and M212 for up to 10 engagements. With the LA59, the CMWS or

the ICMD will be able to handle up to 30 engagements.

“Once sufficient quantities of the LA59 are on hand,” said Lombardo, “it will enhance the current cocktail of countermeasure flares that are used to counter an attack on aircraft at high altitude.”

The CFT developed an acquisition strategy to rapidly get the Army on contract to procure the LA59 by using a letter contract to award a 1-year indefinite delivery indefinite quantity contract only 3 days after receiving congressional approval for new start authority. The IPT used this Unfixed Contract Award approach to award a delivery order concurrently with the contract award and began receiving flare deliveries in November 2007, with increased flare production per month exponentially by May 2008. PM CCS definitized the contract in October 2007, which will vastly increase deliveries in May 2008 as the initial contract will only satisfy the urgently needed requirements.

Army requirements for aircraft countermeasure flares consist of operational requirements (war reserve plus training requirements) of approximately 800,000 per year. This 1-year contract will allow the government enough time to have another contract vehicle in place to satisfy additional nonurgent requirements.

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