A trio of Marines stops to admire the minigun-equipped L-MADIS (Light Marine Air Defense Integrated System)/ GBAD (Ground Based Air Defense) drone-killing system mounted on a hulking Oshkosh M-ATV.

marcorsyscom.marines.mil
“We’re going to go shopping; we’re going to put gear in the hands of Marines in order to figure out if we need it. That’s turning the world upside down ... we need to get Marines—junior Marines—together with industry in a conversation way earlier than we have been comfortable with in the past.”

—Lt. Gen. David Berger, Commanding General of the Marine Corps Combat Development Command (MCCDC)

Modern Day Marine Expo 2018

“Modern Day Warfighter: Ready, Lethal, Adaptable”

Photo Report by Robert Bruce, Military Affairs Editor

Speaking at the opening ceremony for the 38th MDM Expo, three-star General Berger threw the door wide open for both close-range and leap-ahead technologies and ideas, recently enabled by significant budget increases after years of what many saw as intentional starvation under the previous presidential administration. And the Corps, with a deserved reputation as the most nimble and warfighting-focused of the U.S. Armed Forces, would shake up traditionally cumbersome acquisition processes by inviting and more seriously considering ideas from Marines of all ranks as well as businesses big and small.

Berger’s forceful commitment was energetically supported in all aspects of this annual Expeditionary Warfare extravaganza, where defense industry reps and Navy/Marine Corps program offices showed their wares and interacted with high value attendees—not just generals, Pentagon potentates and allied military shoppers, but multitudes of muddy boots Marines with plenty of combat experience.

Show, Tell, Listen

This year saw an expanded set of formal presentations, information panels, product demonstrations and “Booth Briefs” both scheduled and off-the-cuff for
Perhaps most useful to potential vendors came on opening day in the form of info-packed Briefs to Industry by Marine Corps Systems Command and its components. In addition to stage-setting overviews, specific needs were identified in ground combat, logistics, support and training.

Ground Combat is our focus so we zeroed in on the presentation by Colonel Mike Manning, GCE Portfolio Manager, that led off with the very welcome news that funding has increased dramatically and is projected to move steadily upward by more than 2lbs. The two-stage match trigger and muzzle brake help shrink groups to less than a single MOA, accuracy simply thought impossible from a gas piston. sigsauer.com

“Once per year, Weapons Training Battalion in conjunction with Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory, will invite select industry participants to the Marksmanship Technology Demonstration to demonstrate commercial off-the-shelf technologies with potential to address Marine Corps marksmanship gaps. The Marksmanship Technology Demonstration is not a tradeshow.” —MTD RFI

Marksmanship Technology Demonstration (MTD)

Again this year, a formal RFI (Request for Information) issued months before MDM 18, invited industry participation in an MTD exclusively for “Marine Corps units/agencies that are within the capability development process.”

[Author’s Note: Officials emphasize that the MTD is not associated with MDM but is “aligned to make it easier for the vendors to participate.” Smart move all around.]

Here’s the list of this year’s industry participants, as released by Warfighting Lab: Daniel Defense, SIG SAUER, Competition Machine, Tri-State Precision, H-S Precision, Steyr Arms, NEMO Arms, American Technologies Network, Trijicon, FN, Mantis, Marathon Targets, Pratt & Miller Defense, Smart Detection Initiatives, Oakwood Controls, Conflict Kinetics and Horus Vision.

The product demonstration and live-fire event was closed to civilian press, but in a televised interview with the USMC’s “Saved Rounds” video news feature series, Captain Bryan Grogan, Operations Officer for Weapons Training Battalion, provided this perspective: “The purpose of this is to link up vendors and capability developers, [and] requirements writers so they can see what is in the realm of the possible in regards to marksmanship technologies.”

Sharp-eyed viewers will recognize several of the weapons and technologies seen in action in the video, accessible on YouTube and at facebook.com/moderndaymarine (scroll down to October 5).

So, if you think your company has what it takes for serious consideration, be watching for next year’s RFI on fbo.gov.
$133 million by fiscal year 2020.

On the weapons track, he’s looking for help from industry with a prioritized list including variable power day optics, binocular night vision goggles, multi-spectral imagers and rangefinders, medium machine gun modernization and a “next generation squad weapons/rifle,” a noble but seemingly endless quest.

Oh, and now that the Corps is buying 15,000 more of HK’s superlative M27 Infantry Automatic Rifles, the ongoing search for a rugged, reliable, higher capacity feed device intensifies. Maybe like MAGPUL’s compact, unstoppable 40-round PMAG M3 drum?

Now, having the new hardware is one thing, but making sure it’s used most effectively by grunts and others in the fight is daunting—particularly as everything on the battlefield gets more and more high-tech.

Colonel Lois Lara, Training Systems’ Program Manager, called for emerging technologies to enhance and improve head-mounted displays and moving past serious limitations in current laser systems being used for small arms in force-on-force training.

The follow-on Brief to Small Business was a lifeline to those offering worthy products to meet identified needs but a bit short in the “how do we let the Marine Corps know what we’ve got?”

[Author’s Note: The website for MDM Expos is among the most comprehensive and user-friendly we’ve encountered. There’s a wealth of info for exhibitors and attendees, as well as an invaluable portal for those unable to attend in person. Links are available to the actual content of the Briefs to Industry from MCSC’s Commander and Portfolio Managers. Links are also available at marcorsyscom.marines.mil. For specific solicitations and contract awards see FedBizOpps.gov or fbo.gov. Also, Defense Innovation Marketplace is a comprehensive resource: defenseinnovationmarketplace.mil.]

Some additional presentations over the expo’s three days featured the “Close Combat Lethality Task Force,” “Synthetic Training Environment” and informed speculation on the “Future Operating Environment.”

New this year were concurrent presentations in the Marine Corps University’s on-site Expeditionary Seminar Facility. Attendees sampled sessions on “Expeditionary Energy,” “Cybersecurity” and a hush-hush (closed session) explaining once and for all, “Why the North Won the Civil War....”

Regularly scheduled “Booth Briefs” were offered by a number of exhibitors, and we hastened to observe Warfighting Laboratories’ show ‘n’ tell on the tough and versatile Marathon Robotics system. These somewhat eerie, man-sized, mobile targets move around realistically and flop over “dead” when hit. MCWFL also provided on-the-spot briefings from Center for Lessons Learned, the Technology Initiative Screening Branch and RCO’s rapid development and delivery of operational prototypes to forces in the fight.

More than 360 Exhibitors

For all three days of the expo while deadly serious information was being dispensed in the Briefing Center tent, the other giant tents and the outside displays were buzzing with activity as visitors ranging from

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ROBERT BRUCE

FN America’s Jim Cerulli with the mean-looking 9mm FN 509 Tactical pistol, an enhanced version of its submission to the Army’s Modular Handgun trials. This one is fitted with a Leupold Delta Point Pro, but the topside cut on its slide enables secure mounting of a wide variety of other red dots. Note the suppressor-height 3-dot night sights and the knurled thread protector for screw-on cans. fnamerica.com
youthful enlisted Marines to high-level military, DoD and industry potentates patrolled the aisles.

Discipline is needed to avoid being overwhelmed by the variety of offerings on display and the sheer size of many including hulking AFVs, artillery pieces, real aircraft and the like.

All are certainly compelling to others, but man-portable weaponry is our stock in trade. 2018’s lineup included weapons from prominent names like American Rheinmetall, FN, General Dynamics, Glock, HK and SIG SAUER. Some of their rivals in the firearms arena included Arbor Arms, Geissele and LaRue.

**Short Bursts**

Space limitations dictate just brief notes on some of the things we encountered, so follow-up info is encouraged by visiting vendor websites as noted.

**SIG SAUER MHS** and more. Flushed with victory, of course, in winning the multi-service Modular Handgun competition, they showcased the M17 and M18 versions, along with a full selection of other pistols and long arms. Most all, by the way, were going to be made available for handling and shooting at the concurrent Marksmanship Tech Demo. sigsauer.com

**FN 509 Tactical.** Heavily advertised these days in most gun- and defense-related magazines, the versatile 509 Tactical drew a lot of admiring attention at their sprawling display that was dramatically dominated by the fuselage of a “Little Bird” helo. fnamerica.com

A menacing M240 machine gun provides the bite for this version of AimLock’s R series product line, upgrading existing stabilized, remotely operated weapons stations with proprietary auto-targeting technology and ruggedized components. nikolamotor.com

SAAB’s Carl Gustaf tank and bunker buster is affectionately nicknamed “The Goose” by Rangers and other snake-eaters. Here Kevin Dunham does demo duty for the M3E1/M4, the newest version slated to eventually join the armament mix in every USMC infantry squad and replace the old SMAW in combat engineer squads. saab.com

Aimpoint’s Thane Smith with the FCS13RE. The Carl Gustaf and similar launch platforms get superior hit probability on static and moving targets with this laser-ranging, ballistic computing Dynamic Universal Reflex Sighting super system from Sweden. aimpoint.com
Barrett MRAD. Touting “Modularity Without Compromise,” this bolt-action tack driver offers six distinct cartridge options. [barrett.net](http://barrett.net)

AimLock R-M1. Augmenting battle-proven stabilized, remotely operated weapons stations with innovative automatic targeting technology, it features ruggedized computing and display modules with a game-style controller. [aim-lock.com](http://aim-lock.com)

LaRue Tactical BET. When a glitch kept away the weapons they planned for display, these tough Texans rallied to release a herd of 500 distinctive armadillo-configured “Beverage Entry Tools" branded with MDM 18 and the classic USMC logo. [larue.com](http://larue.com)

SAAB Carl Gustaf. One of the bigger weapons we were drawn to was the latest M3E1/M4, tapped by the Marines to eventually arm every infantry squad with one of these devastating tank and bunker-busters. [saab.com](http://saab.com)

Taking Aim

Aimpoint FCS13RE. The Carl Gustaf and similar launch platforms get superior hit probability on static and moving targets with this Dynamic Universal Reflex Sighting super system from Sweden. [aimpoint.com](http://aimpoint.com)

KF Armory Defense’s Jessica Miller had no trouble at all lifting and sliding into place these big blocks of the MIB2S that will stop even armor-piercing .50 cal. BMG rounds. Available in several sizes, they provide a configurable, mobile and deployable barrier giving highly effective protection for personnel, buildings and other assets in a variety of situations. [kfarmory.com](http://kfarmory.com)

Spyderco’s Mike Janich showed us three versions of the new, compact and wickedly handy PARA 3 knife. Seen from top to bottom are the 3-inch blade G-10 Midnight Blue CPMS110V, Military Model G-10 CPMS30V in non-reflective black and G-10 CPMS30V basic. [spyderco.com](http://spyderco.com)

With its wide field of view, crystal clear glass in a rugged aluminum housing and steel sheath, the Leupold’s Delta Point Pro red dot drives on as the high-performance, cost-effective choice atop plenty of military/LE/competition handguns. [leupold.com](http://leupold.com)

“Delivering multi-spectral target engagement capability to the warfighter," the Excelitas Talon combines image intensification and thermal imaging in a single integrated optical package for all weather and battlefield conditions. Compact and weighing just 21oz, it works with a range of conventional optical sights commonly used on current carbines and rifles. [excelitas.com](http://excelitas.com)

ROBERT BRUCE

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ROBERT BRUCE
It's billed as "the world's largest military exposition focusing on enhanced capabilities for expeditionary forces." Kicked up a notch yet again under the leadership of Alex Hetherington, a veteran Marine Aviator, this year's Modern Day Marine Expo was held from September 25 through 27 aboard Marine Corps Base, Quantico, Virginia.

Co-sponsored by the base, the Marine Corps League and Marine Corps Systems Command, the 38th Annual MDM showcased the products and services of close to 400 entities that support military land, air and sea operations.

Wendell W. Webb, National Commandant of the Marine Corps League, emphasized his organization's vision for this annual event. "The Marine Corps League is committed to the Modern Day Marine Expo as a program to share the development and awareness of the tools our future Marine Warriors will need for the next unknown conflict. This type of expo allows the industry team to interact with the planners, General officers, Staff NCOs, NCOs and the Warriors on the ground or in the air, sharing the needs and ideas of future weapon systems that turn into requirements then tactics."

Exhibits at this year's exposition filled three enormous, sparkling white, climate-controlled tents, as well as several others showcasing small business and housing the official briefings. These, and adjacent space in the outdoor display area, were packed with the latest operational equipment and technology, along with videos, models and prototypes of items soon to enter service.

Defense contractors from throughout the U.S. and some allied nations signed on to show their products and services, get feedback from the warfighters and respond to questions.

Much of the equipment now used by Marines and other U.S. and allied forces confronting enemies in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere around the globe was first presented to military leaders, operations planners and acquisition managers at previous editions of the expo.

As well as experiencing the latest, greatest technological advances, attendees can go face-to-face with many of the nonprofit organizations and agencies that exist to assist service members and veterans.

"Crossroads of the Marine Corps"

Strategically located about 30 minutes' drive south of Washington, DC, America's capital city with powerful lawmakers, the Pentagon, numerous defense contractors and foreign embassies, MCB Quantico is an ideal expo location.

It is home of the Marine Corps Combat Development Command, charged with developing Marine warfighting concepts and determines the Corps' capability requirements for doctrine, equipment, organization, training, education and support.

The Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory at Quantico is part of the Development Command and responsible for improving current and future naval expeditionary warfare capabilities for the Marines and their amphibious roles and missions.

Also at Quantico is Marine Corps Systems Command, principal agency for acquisition and sustainment of systems and equipment for the Marines' warfighting mission. Many of the personnel who staff those organizations took advantage of continuously running shuttle buses to visit the exhibit halls and discuss missions, capabilities and requirements with defense industry professionals.

BAE Systems with IVECO Defence Vehicles presented their ACV 1.1 (Amphibious Combat Vehicle) which can have 13 personnel plus 3 crew in armor on land or sea. While the ACV features cooperation from Harris, Kongsberg, Leonardo DRS, Endeavor Robotics and Lockheed Martin, perhaps the most interesting to our readers is the addition of the "Fletcher" Laser Guided Rocket launcher from Arnold Defense. Fletcher is a rocket pod that allows a variety of vehicle mounts to have four 70mm (2.75-inch) rockets with an overall range of 10km and a warhead with a variety of High explosives. These are laser guided and have a 100% target hit rate at 2km to 5km. Now, that's "Precision Strike!"
Photonis Vyper 14. The AN/PVS-14, a SPECOPS favorite, now gets 40% greater range with the new 4G image intensifier tube. photonis.com

Leupold. Well-proven in combat and competition, Leupold's Delta Point Pro is a tough, economical, high-performance red dot for pistols, shotguns and carbines. leupold.com

Excelitas Talon. Rugged and compact, this new clip-on image intensifier/uncooled thermal imaging weapon sight gives all-weather performance. excelitas.com

Optics 1 I-CUGR. The Integrated Compact Ultralight Gun-Mounted Rangefinder gives the operator the ability to range man-sized targets out to 1500 meters. optics1.com

Trijicon VCOG. This tank-tough 1-6x24 power Variable Combat Optical Gunsight boasts an LED illuminated, first focal plane BDC reticle. trijicon.com

Nice to Have

MAGPUL Bipod. Their ever-expanding line now includes a clever bipod with distinctively configured, quick-adjusting legs. magpul.com

KF Armory Defense MIB®S. Designed for easy assembly, disassembly and extreme durability, the Modular Interlocking Ballistic Barrier System's giant super blocks defeat .50 BMG APIT projos. kfarmory.com

Meggit Linkless Magazines. Metallic-linked 30mm ammo is too heavy and prone to feed problems, so their linkless magazines are winners for machine-cannon systems. meggitdefense.com

Quantico Tactical LRAD. Adding to their offerings by leaps and bounds, this mega gun seller has now partnered with LRAD Corp. to offer the Long Range Acoustic Devices, including the new 450XL. quanticotactical.com

American Rheinmetall. Among its many superior quality munitions, the company’s 40mm MK281 training grenade uses unique target marking technologies, giving USMC MK19 gunners realistic day and night training. americanrheinmetall.com

Arnold Defense. Long recognized for superior launch systems for area suppression with 2.75-in. rockets, the new FLETCHER uses advanced rocket guidance technology for land-based, vehicle-mounted applications. arnolddefense.com

Laser Shot. Who can resist the chance to fire machine guns and pistols right in the middle of the show floor? Countless Marines and others tried their skills on the MMTS and SimRange simulators. lasershot.com

Revision’s additions. Perhaps best known for excellent ballistic eye protection, the company’s offerings now include the Viper Helmet System, tactical power packs and communication components. revisionmilitary.com

Spyderco. This highly respected blademaker’s pro line features the new compact Para 3 folders that offer full-service cutting performance for professional end users who want versions optimized for tactical use. Available in a variety of handle colors and blade edges in stainless and matte black. spyderco.com

Small Business, Big Ideas

We always make it a point to visit the Small Business Pavilion and again found much to recommend. We needn’t say too much about the NEW YOJIMBO™ 2 Trainer

- Mechanically identical to its live-blade counterpart
- Blunted CTS™ BD1 stainless steel blade
- Red textured G-10 scales
- Spyderco’s Compression Lock™
- 4-position hourglass pocket clip
- USA made

SIMIS

Perhaps a rival to Marathon’s robots, the RHTT (Robotic Human Type Target) from SimIS is a mobile, trackless, autonomous smart target aligned with the U.S. Army’s Future Force goals for more realistic moving training targets. Seen here in early form, we’re told it has been “ruggedized with special hardened composite materials protecting the chassis and tubeless wheels. Sensors were added so that each one is able to communicate with the others, allowing both sense and avoid algorithms and situational awareness capabilities.” simisinc.com
Cheata Tactical’s quick entry tee shirt for nursing military moms (cheatatactical.com), but the RHTT (Robotic Human Type Target) under development by SimIS shows promise as a potential rival to Marathon’s near lock on the smart, tough, roll-around sniper target market.

The Corps’ Small Biz office was strategically located right there in the tent, busily dispensing advice to eager applicants.

Honorable Mention

Battle Challenge. Gyrene gladiators flocked to the expo’s newest and most spectacular event, to strain, sweat and shoot in an exciting and fast moving “Fire and Maneuver” contest that incorporates highly relevant military skills and fitness challenges that include precision laser M4 carbine shooting, cargo net climb, rope descent, man-down rescue and more. Participants compete against each other and the clock to earn “Best of the Best!” battlechallenge.org

National Museum of the Marine Corps. It would be close to criminal negligence to come all the way to the expo yet fail to visit the Corps’ spectacular, state-of-the-art museum, just outside the main gate. usmc-museum.com or marineheritage.org

The Navy claims ownership of the Marines, so cutting edge research and development at Office of Naval Research (ONR) deserves respect and attention in exhibits. While this super high tech command has lots of spooky projects in the works, we gun guys are most interested in things that facilitate hole-punching one way or another. Some examples are the continuing work on lightweight and caseless ammunition, leap-ahead improvements in integrated day–night optics and lots of directed energy initiatives.

Something for Everyone

Other firms and military entities offering innovative weapon sights, ammo, accessories, edged weapons, hydration, chow, extreme weather clothing, rugged gear, VR worlds, tactical tea and more, enjoy not only our attention but that of salty Marines of all ranks swarming the aisles. Word of particularly notable items and other things of interest gets around quickly, and reps are always kept busy with show-and-tell duties.

Oh, and thousands of free copies of Small Arms Review and Small Arms Defense Journal were handed out by the friendly and energetic Chipotle Publishing team. Best deal at the show.

A full listing of exhibitors, their websites and other information may be found at marinemilitaryexpos.com.
Marine Military Expos 2019

Next year’s Modern Day Marine Expo is scheduled for September 17-19, once again aboard MCB Quantico, Virginia. This is the largest of three related shows where exhibitors meet the Marines on their own turf. Marine West Expo 2019 is slated for February 7-8 at Camp Pendleton, CA, and Marine South Expo 2019 for April 11-12 at Camp Lejeune, NC. Both are held at home installations for two of the Marine Corps’ expeditionary forces, which are continually training and dispatching fighting elements to a broad spectrum of missions around the world “in the air, on land and at sea.”

Exhibitors at the Marine Military Expos meet and exchange information, face-to-face, with not only the users of their equipment but also the men and women responsible for equipping the Corps, tasked with a broad range of existing and emerging demands. In addition to displaying products before thousands of users, Marine Military Expo exhibitors also exchange information with their target audience, listen to their needs and gain valuable insight into what works best in a wide array of combat, combat support and combat service support situations. Marines who have recently returned from wartime missions not only provide feedback but also convey suggestions and ideas that are often considered and adopted in designing or improving equipment and systems.

The decision-makers and procurement experts who exhibitors want and need to meet attend the expos for up-close and personal exposure to the leading-edge equipment, systems and services—solutions their Marines need for the years ahead. At the Marine Military Expos, networking opportunities among the buyers, the users and defense industry professionals are unlimited. Take advantage of those opportunities for your company by exhibiting at the Marine Military Expos: marinemilitaryexpos.com
Honors and Awards

With so many high-level Marine leaders and other VIPs converging on the expo, important ceremonial events are conveniently scheduled to coincide. Bad weather on Wednesday moved the customary Enlisted Awards parade inside the main Briefing Center tent. There, eight outstanding Marines and one Navy Hospital Corpsman were standing tall to be personally congratulated by Commandant Neller, along with the Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps and the Commandant of the Marine Corps League.

For us, the Gunnery Sergeant Carlos Hathcock II Award for outstanding contribution to marksmanship training is most prominent among these. 2018’s honoree was Sergeant Kailub S. Young for his exemplary performance while serving as the Line Staff NCO, Charlie Range, Range Company, Weapons and Field Training Battalion, Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, California. His award citation notes some 4,589 recruits under his supervision and with his numerous innovations, achieved a record 98.71 percent Combat Marksmanship Initial Qualification, with 2,264 scoring “Expert.” This “undoubtedly enhanced the capabilities of the Marines obtained by Operational Forces.”
MDM 2019: Show Master Info

Location
Quantico Marine Corps Base, Lejeune Field, Quantico, VA, U.S.

Website
marinemilitaryexpos.com

Contact
Marine Military Expos
1525 Wilson Blvd., Suite 1200
Arlington, Virginia 22209
Tel: 760-576-6701

Next Show
September 17-19, 2019

Focus
MDM is billed as “the world’s largest military exposition focusing on enhanced capabilities for expeditionary forces.”

Dress
Business casual for civilians and duty uniform for military.

Hotel Hints
Most U.S. chains have hotels and motels locally. The nearby Stafford and Fredericksburg areas have a lot of great lodging and dining options. Book early—the event is a very popular show, and the hotels fill up fast. See the Hotel and Travel link at the MDM website.

Show Food
Numerous vendors right on site featuring delicious local and regional food and beverage items.

Power and Plug Types
American standard 110 volts AC

Cultural Hints
General American culture in the immediate area with a tendency towards “Southern Hospitality” from friendly, polite and helpful locals. The show and the base have specific USMC culture as well; pride in being courteous, straightforward and honest. Attend the show, interact with Marines, and you’ll understand.

Tipping
U.S. customs apply. Taxis about 10%; bellhops $1 per bag minimum; Sky-caps $2 per bag; and sit-down restaurants 15-25% depending on service quality. Note “tip jars” at some of the show’s food vendors. Toss in a dollar or two for these hard-working folks.

Currency

Getting Around

Military Museums
The spectacular National Museum of the Marine Corps is just outside Quantico MCB.

Tourism
Visas required for all foreign visitors. Popular attractions in the area are found in and around Washington, DC, some 30 miles from Quantico MCB. DC’s Official travel and tourism website is washington.org.

Although recent Federal court rulings should have relaxed DC’s draconian gun prohibitions, no one other than on-duty military or authorized law enforcement personnel should take a chance by carrying firearms, magazines or even a single round of live ammunition into the District of Columbia without obtaining the most strictly controlled permits. Not surprisingly, the nation’s capital city has all of the usual big city problems; visitors are cautioned against walking or even driving in all but the most heavily patrolled areas. The Maryland suburbs are almost as bad. Stay in Virginia, but make it south of Alexandria and near Quantico—much more safe and sane.