

# MARINE CORPS WARFIGHTING LABORATORY

The Fabrique Nationale (FN) **M3M .50-Caliber Weapon System** is currently being evaluated as a possible solution for the common assault-support defensive weapon system and as a possible replacement for the aging M2 .50-caliber machine gun.

The M3M represents an improvement in the rate of fire, safety, accuracy, lethality, maintainability and reliability over the currently fielded weapons.

**Background:** The M3M effort was initiated by the Lab in cooperation with Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron One (MAWTS-1) in May 2001 to assess the effectiveness of the system onboard several different assault-support helicopters. While the system is primarily being evaluated onboard the CH-46E, CH-53D/E and UH-1N helicopters, the Lab is also examining vehicle- and ground-mounted applications of the M3M. The V-22 Osprey will initially be equipped with a ramp-mounted M3M.

**Description:** The M3M is a weapon system rather than just a machine gun. The system has three parts: the machine gun, the medium-pintle head or “soft mount” and the cradle to integrate the weapon into each particular aircraft or vehicle.

The M3M all North Atlantic Treaty Organization-standard .50-caliber ammunition and fires from an open breech to eliminate cook-off hazards and increase system safety. The soft-mount technology absorbs both recoil and counter-recoil forces to about one-third the rate of the current M2 and XM-218 .50-caliber machine guns.

MAWTS-1 conducted each of the first three phases of the assessment during their bi-annual weapons and tactics instructors (WTI) course. The fourth phase of the assessment was completed at Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR) on the CH-53E Ramp-Mounted Weapon System in December 2003.

## M3M .50-CALIBER WEAPON SYSTEM

*fact sheet*



### M3M Weapon System Comparison to XM-218:

- Weight: 79.9 pounds
- Sustained rate of fire: 200 rounds per minute (RPM)
- Improved rate of fire: 1,100 vs. 550 RPM
- Improved barrel life: 10,000 vs. 3,000 rounds (rds)
- Integrated illuminator and laser spot: day/night-capable
- Increased ammunition capacity: 300 vs. 100 rds/box

**Deliverable Product:** The increased accuracy, reduced recoil, increased ammunition capacity, day/night capability and increased rate of fire have been noted as significant improvements over current capabilities. A final procurement decision by NAVAIR is anticipated in fiscal year 2004.

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3255 MEYERS AVENUE  
QUANTICO, VA 22134  
WWW.MCWL.QUANTICO.USMC.MIL