

TESTING

to the Tactical Edge

A Conversation with an Army Testing Leader



An MRAP Cougar HE tested with landmines detonating around it. (DoD)

Lt. Col. Manuel A. Ugarte, Deputy Director – Quick Reaction Tests and Senior Operations Research Analyst, U.S. Army Joint Test Element, Army Test and Evaluation Center, Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD, regarding the benefits and challenges to joint program testing and evaluation.

Born in Puerto Rico, Lt. Col. Ugarte was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Chemical Corps upon graduation from Norwich University's Reserve Officer Training Corps Program in May 1995. On his initial assignment to U.S. Army South in the Republic of Panama, he served as the battalion Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and high-yield Explosives (CBRNE) officer for 1/228th Aviation Battalion, and CBRNE officer

and Support Platoon leader for 5/87th Infantry Battalion in support of various missions throughout Latin America.

Upon returning to the United States, Lt. Col. Ugarte was assigned as a CBRNE operations plans officer for the III Corps' General Staff in Fort Hood, TX. He was subsequently re-assigned to the 2nd Chemical Battalion, 13th Combat Support Command, where he served as the battalion's personnel officer (S1) and the Commander of the Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment (HHD). While commanding, he deployed the HHD as part of the 4th Infantry Division's Task Force Ironhorse to Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Lt. Col. Ugarte was designated as a Senior Operations Research Analyst

(ORSA) in 2006. As an ORSA, he has served as a combat operations analyst, study team leader and executive officer at the U.S. Army Training & Doctrine Command Analysis Center (TRAC) in Monterey, CA. While assigned to TRAC, he served as the team leader for a myriad of analysis, test, and evaluation initiatives such as: Research, Development, and Engineering Command's soldier interaction projects, unmanned aerial vehicles analysis, and ultimately, the clandestine tunnel interdiction effort in support of the Department of Homeland Security.

Lt. Col. Ugarte was interviewed by A&M Editor Kevin Hunter.

A&M: What is the role of the Army Joint Test Element (JTE)?

Lt. Col. Ugarte: The Army JTE, a part of the Army Test and Evaluation Command (ATEC), collaborates with the Joint Test and Evaluation (JT&E) Program Director, Operational Test and Evaluation (DOT&E) program. The JT&E Program focuses on solving challenges from the tactical to strategic level in joint military operations, providing operationally tested non-materiel solutions to emergent issues identified by the joint military community.

The Army JTE manages one of three Joint Test Units (JTUs) to support JT&E projects. Serving as an Operational Test Agency, the JTE team predominately focuses on Army priorities, but the Army JTE JTu enables ATEC to support DoD operational issues needing a joint solution. The Air Force and the JT&E Program operate the other two JTUs.

A&M: How did the program begin? How did it evolve?

Lt. Col. Ugarte: The JT&E Program was chartered in 1972 to provide quantitative information for analyses of joint military capabilities and potential options for increasing effectiveness.

The program was transferred from Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics to DOT&E in December 2002. The program processes were reengineered in 2004 to improve the response time to issues in joint military operations by shortening decision cycles and project life spans, which resulted in earl[ier] product delivery. The reengineering work group struck a balance with the need for test and evaluation rigor, the program's hallmark, and delivering new products.

The program was also reengineered in 2012 due to a 43 percent budget reduction the program took in FY 13. The key issues for JT&E customers in 2012 were shorter joint test (JT) life spans, and they wanted to maintain governance, flexibility, and test and evaluation rigor. Additionally, the program director's guidance to the reengineering working group was to maximize the number of new test project opportunities, identify potential efficiencies, and keep the current Quick Reaction Test (QRT) business model intact.

A&M: What type of testing is offered? Whom does it benefit?

Lt. Col. Ugarte: We provide near-term solutions to joint, service, agency, or combatant command (COCOM) challenges. Solutions are tested and evaluated through two options: a JT option for complex issues that require up to two years of effort and a QRT option for less complex issues that can be solved in less than one year.

JT nominations are reviewed semi-annually by a board of senior military and civilian leaders who decided which nominations will conduct a six-month joint feasibility study prior



Lt. Col. Manuel A. Ugarte

to the final selection of JT. After the joint feasibility study, the board reviews the study's results to decide which studies will go ahead to conduct a JT.

The JT&E Program provides money to pay for contractor support, test-specific costs, and travel. The JT sponsor provides the operational expertise [and] standard issue equipment for use in test events. The ATEC JTE JTu provides office space with office infrastructure and technical and administrative support to the JT.

The QRT process is designed to solve emerging issues that are limited in scope within one year. These QRTs provide timely solutions and products to meet evolving operational problems. QRT nominations are evaluated and accepted three times a year. The JT&E Program provides up to \$1

million to cover the costs of test resources and contract support. The QRT sponsor is responsible for providing the operational expertise, while the participating operational test agency provides the test and evaluation expertise. The JT&E program also accepts QRT nominations for extremely urgent issues at any time for an expedite[d] review process.

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JTE developed, tested, and validated tactics, techniques, and procedures to support the ground tactical commander's use and support of military working dogs while performing counter-IED missions. (Yuma PG)

The results of JTs and QRTs are typically in the form of handbooks; concept of operations; tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs); revisions to doctrine publications; or training inputs to joint and service schools.

A&M: How does the testing offered by JTE apply directly to servicemembers for use in training or in combat?

Lt. Col. Ugarte: The JTE's mission is focused on generating non-materiel solutions to solve emerging operational problems. Our team is formed of a mix of DoD civilian, Army, and Air Force combat arms and combat support military personnel with extensive strategic, operational, and tactical experience. We bring our collective operational expertise to address the issues selected by the JT&E Program. It

is important to note we focus on non-materiel solutions and that we are not part of the acquisition process. This means we have the autonomy and flexibility to go after tough problems without the constraints of [that] process.

Since 2003, the Army JTE has completed 17 projects and 15 handbooks provided to joint or service organizations in the form of TTPs, user checklists, standard operating procedures, and revisions to training publications that were integrated into appropriate training programs.

For example, last year we completed a project called the Joint Vehicle Protection and Survivability Systems (JVPSS) QRT. This QRT was directed to mitigate injuries crew and passengers suffered due to their unfamiliarity with the combat vehicle's safety features and survivability enhancements. This handbook was distributed widely to

units using the vehicles in combat operations; the JVPSS handbook is still requested and used in theater. We are currently working on an enhanced, interactive digital version of the JVPSS handbook, a format we envision using for future handbooks (and converting past ones into).

A&M: What is the future of the JTE and JTs/QRTs?

Lt. Col. Ugarte: The result of the October 2012 JT&E reengineering effort was to enable JTs with a "hot start" capability in order to begin their test and evaluation events and to issue non-materiel results within two years instead of the previous three-year model. We anticipate that this new process will enhance our throughput capacity and expedite delivery of our products.

There are many opportunities to expand our QRT and JT mission in the near future. Our team will continue to proactively engage our customers through a three-pronged approach: maintain our established relationships with joint agencies; expand the presence of our liaison officers at the COCOMs; and foster our new partnership with the Army Research, Development, and Engineering Command's (RDECOM) Field Assistance in Science & Technology (FAST) Directorate. Our teaming with FAST enables our collaboration with their S&T representatives at the COCOMs, which consequently strengthens our linkages to actively seek their "tip of the spear" operational challenges.

The Army JTE will continue to build on current capabilities and foster collaborative efforts with partner organizations such as RDECOM, the Army Materiel Systems Analysis Activity, and others to provide non-materiel solutions to specific Army issues that cross into the joint domain.

Our people are our most important capability; we are exploring opportunities to invest in potential collaborative efforts to use our operational expertise in support of COCOM S&T data collection efforts overseas for new initiatives.

More info: atec.army.mil