

WHY SPEND \$887 MILLION ON ARMORED VEHICLES FOR AFGHAN ARMY WHEN THOUSANDS SIT IDLE?



A shiny new Mobile Strike Force Vehicle in Afghanistan.

A single line item in the latest quarterly report from SIGAR (pdf) has my blood boiling. The report states that among the up to \$7.73 billion that the Defense Department has requested for fiscal 2014 in Afghanistan, a single item of \$886.9 million is listed as being for Mobile Strike Force Vehicles. A quick look with teh Googler gives us this page where we see details on just what the Mobile Strike Force Vehicle is. A Marine Corps photo of an MSFV appears here to the left. Here is the caption that the Marine Corps provided for the photo on Flickr:

Cpl. Damario Tillman, vehicle commander, Mobile Strike Force Advisor Team, observes his surroundings as a Mobile Strike Force Vehicle assigned to the Afghan National Army (ANA) Mobile Strike Force Kandak, navigates through a series of obstacles at a rough terrain driving course on Camp Bastion, Helmand province, Afghanistan, May 13, 2013. The

course was part of a three day training package that the Marines with Mobile Strike Force Advisor Team conducted for their ANA counterparts.

The stupidity of spending nearly a billion dollars on new armored vehicles for Afghanistan is mind-boggling. I have been haunted for several months by this photo:



Here is the caption provided by the Defense Video & Image Distribution System where the photo can be found:

Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles wait in a staging area for onward movement at an undisclosed base in Southwest Asia March 20, 2013. The joint team of Marines, soldiers, sailors and airmen of the Central Command's DDOC will play a major role in moving the more than 50,000 Coalition (U.S. and NATO, of which 28,000 are U.S.) military vehicles in Afghanistan that will need to be recovered or pre-positioned in contingency stocks abroad.

Although I am far from an expert on defense equipment, it appears to me that the MSFV is merely the latest version in the wide array of MRAP vehicles. Here is a snippet from a press release relating one of the major purchases of MSFV's:

Part of the TM&LS COMMANDO Select line of armored vehicles, the MSFV is derived from the combat-proven M1117 Armored Security Vehicle (ASV). All MSFVs are configured with Enhanced Survivability (ES) capability, which increases blast protection to mine-resistant, ambush-protected (MRAP) levels. The ES-equipped vehicles continue to possess the ASV's original, all-important V-shaped hull design, in addition to innovative protection design features that enable them to meet MRAP blast protection standards.

Note that the date given for the photo of MRAP's that have already been shipped out of Afghanistan is March 20 of this year. It would appear that the Defense Department is engaging in a bit of misinformation to make it look like there isn't an excess of usable MRAP's, given this Marine Corps Times article dated less than a week later on March 26. The title of the article is "Most MRAP's won't be coming home from Afghanistan" and it is accompanied by this photo of several disheveled, out of service MRAP's that look nothing like the shiny, functional ones already shipped out of the country in the March 20 photo.



The Marine Corps wants us to think this is what the MRAP's in Afghanistan look like so that we can send new MSFV's to the ANA.

The article states:

Very few of the Marine Corps' 1,200 mine-resistant ambush-protected vehicles still in Afghanistan will be traveling back to the U.S., the Corps' deputy commandant for installations and logistics said this week.

Speaking at the Potomac Institute for Policy Studies Wednesday afternoon, Lt. Gen. William Faulkner revealed elements of a plan to donate unwanted MRAPs to partner nations within Central Command as Marines balance efforts to retrograde from Afghanistan with a mandate to get lighter and more compact as a service.

"The bottom line is, we don't need them," Faulkner said of the MRAPs remaining in Afghanistan. "We don't need as many as we have today."

/snip/

The Marine Corps has about 4,000 MRAPs in its inventory, Faulkner said, and officials have calculated they want to keep fewer than 1,500 of the 14-ton machines after Operation Enduring Freedom draws to a close in 2014.

So the Marines have an excess of 2500 MRAP's and Faulkner even admits we want to give them away. So why haven't these MRAP's been donated to the ANA instead of the US sending them brand new MSFV's?