

INFANTRY EQUIPMENT

US special forces assess rugged-terrain vehicle

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The US Army Special Operations Command has recently conducted field evaluations of a new-generation Rugged Terrain Vehicle (RTV) named Prowler.

The prototype RTVs were developed by All Terrain Vehicle Corporation, a subsidiary of Phoenix International Systems of Orange, California.

Powered by a 660cc, four-stroke, liquid-cooled engine, Prowler features a fully automatic transmission with high/low range, reverse and park function and push-button two-wheel-drive/four-wheel-drive selection. The vehicle measures 2.32m long, 1.32m wide and 1.63m high. The height can be reduced to 1.04m if the road cage is removed and 0.89m if the suspension is collapsed.

With an empty weight of 361kg, Prowler has a payload capacity of 363kg and a towing capacity of 550kg. The design features sealed tubular construction and rack-and-pinion steering.

According to an unclassified evaluation report obtained by



The Prowler field trials were conducted in Colombia by members of the US 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) All Terrain Vehicle Corporation; 0551869, 0551870

Jane's Defence Weekly, members of the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) conducted the Prowler field assessment between February and April in Colombia.

"The intent of the evaluation was to test the handling characteristics, utility and maintenance issues of the ATV in the South American area of operations," said the report. Standard vehicle loads for the test

included driver with 32kg rucksack, M4 5.56mm carbine, M9 9mm pistol, radio, stretcher, M249 5.56mm squad automatic weapon and 1,600 rounds of ammunition.

Speeds reached 72km/h, with ranges varying between 80km and 320km per day.

With a total weight of driver and equipment at about 182kg, top cross-country speed was 69km/h

with a top paved-road speed of 84km/h.

The evaluation report credits Prowler with powerful acceleration, even with 363kg of weight in the vehicle; an exceptional turning radius; and a stable 'feel'. Dependability was also rated high – each

of the vehicles tested receiving more than 140 hours of operation with no preventive maintenance and no downtime.

Along with the advantages, the report also identified a number of areas for improvement. These included the need for radiator protection and a diesel engine.

In terms of operational utility, the evaluation summarised: "The vehicle carried up to 900 lb [409kg] of crew/equipment in various configurations. The Prowler can be used as a very stable and agile weapons platform, reconnaissance vehicle, or casualty-evacuation vehicle. This vehicle was mainly used as an equipment carrier, which extended the range of [Special Forces Operational Detachments – Alpha]."

Company representatives say the prototype Prowlers will participate in forthcoming US Marine Corps platform demonstrations before evaluation by US Army elements at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.