Navy Engineers Create New Fuel Analyzer for Marine Corps

By Darrell Waller, Naval Facilities Engineering Command Public Affairs

PORT HUENEME, Calif. (NNS) -- The Navy developed a new fuel analyzer for the Marine Corps that would enable troops to test captured fuels under combat conditions and determine their suitability for use in Marine tactical ground vehicles and equipment.

The Portable Fuel Analyzer (PFA), developed by the Naval Facilities Engineering Command's Engineering Service Center (NAVFAC ESC) through the U.S. Marine Corps Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program, will provide the Marine Corps with the ability to make real-time decisions regarding the use of captured and host-nation fuels encountered on 21st century battlefields. The program began in July and will continue to be introduced during the year to various commands throughout the Department of Defense.

"Today, our military personnel are required to transport captured fuel samples to sophisticated rear-area laboratories for testing and analysis by highly skilled technicians," said NAVFAC ESC Commanding Officer, Capt. Gregory J. Zielinski. "That process could take up to 36 hours to complete and is a costly and time consuming process. The portable fuel analyzer delivers fuel test results in a matter of minutes, allowing greater flexibility by troops in the field."

Simple and easy to use, the portable battery-operated device is designed for use by a single Soldier and can be operated by casual users with little or no specialized training. This capability allows advancing Marine Corps tactical units to utilize by-passed enemy fuels, keeping pressure on retreating enemy forces and sustaining battlefield momentum.

The new technology means huge cost-savings for taxpayers and the military. The projected cost of $75,000 for a PFA represents a significant cost-savings over currently available mobile military fuel laboratories with their related costs at up to $1.2 each. The PFA can be adopted to meet commercial needs, such as quality analysis of jet and diesel fuel and the detection of many fuel contaminants. Prototypes are being evaluated in the field before fleet-wide implementation.

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