

### **The Objective Individual Combat Weapon (OICW): United States**

The OICW has been under development for some time<sup>60</sup> and is part of the “Land Warrior Fighting System” being developed by the US Army. According to preliminary analyses, “if the Land Warrior Fighting System does everything it’s anticipated it will do, the American infantry soldier in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century will be the most deadly soldier in the world.”<sup>61</sup> Land Warrior and OICW is more than just a new weapons system. It represents the digitization of the infantryman in a manner designed to increase the effectiveness of firepower delivery. What this system represents is not a new way to kill or neutralize a target, but rather a more efficient and effective means by which to do so. The OICW, simply put, is a grenade launcher mounted atop a rifle using a 5.56 x 45 mm round. Grenade launchers have been around for many decades, rifles for much longer. Grenade launchers have usually been a separate piece of equipment, except for those rifles which could take an attachment which used the impact energy of a fired cartridge to expel a conventional fragmentation grenade to a greater distance than it could be thrown. What makes this launcher different is its smaller size (20 mm), relatively flat trajectory, control-timed explosive and unique fragmentation pattern. The 20 mm grenade weight is a little less than 100 grams. When combined with state-of-the-art target acquisition and sighting capabilities, an ability to fire from cover, and an advanced digitized personal communication and locator capability, this weapon system will possess a very high target acquisition and kill probability within a 500 metre range. Notwithstanding the technical abilities of the system, it cannot simply be picked up and learned in a short period of time. As one American Sergeant stated, “when I initially started working with the Land Warrior system, I did have a little bit of difficulty engaging targets...it takes practice to start picking them up”.<sup>62</sup>

The US Army is also developing a crew served light weapon system, called the Objective Crew Served Weapon or OCSW. According to the US Army Defense Technology Area Plan,<sup>63</sup>

“The OCSW system will provide decisively violent and suppressive target effects, including a high probability of incapacitation against protected personnel (body armor and in defilade) out to 2,000 m and a high potential to damage light and lightly armored

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<sup>60</sup> There is a fair amount of open information available on the OICW from both the developers of the system and the US Army. This is not the case for the French PAPOP being developed by Giat Industries. The following sources were used for OICW information: *Jane's Infantry Weapons*; Market Brochures from AliantTechSystems courtesy of Heckler&Koch and various information brochures from the US Army Armament Research, Development and Engineering Center, Joint Service Small Arms Project. Also see US Defense Technology Area Plan at [http://fas.org/spp/military/docops.defense/97\\_dtap/weapons/ch100303](http://fas.org/spp/military/docops.defense/97_dtap/weapons/ch100303).for the operational equipment requirements for the new weapons systems being developed.

<sup>61</sup> As quoted by Jim Caldwell, *Army News Service* (2 November 1998).

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> See: [http://www.fas.org/spp/military/docops/defense/97\\_dtap/weapons/ch100303.htm](http://www.fas.org/spp/military/docops/defense/97_dtap/weapons/ch100303.htm)