

UAE's Jobaria MLRS: Epic failure!

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The military thinkers in the UAE have surprised us again in the recent 2013 IDEX exhibition held in Abu Dhabi, UAE with their Jobaria MLRS (Multiple Launch Rocket System), which in



Arabic means Monster with the sensational claim of being the world's most powerful MLRS system! The Jobaria MLRS consists of the American made Oshkosh 6x6 heavy equipment transporter, towing a 10-

wheel semi-trailer with 4 power rocket launchers. Each launcher has three pods with 20 rockets each. This rocket system carries a total of 240 122-mm rockets and it can also fire 107-mm rockets. The system was developed in response to a request made by the UAE military for a rocket artillery battery to be mounted on one vehicle, since the army is using six MLRS vehicles to do the same, so the Jobaria MLRS replaces a full battery of rocket launchers

mounted on 6 trucks with a crew of 30 men. As in similar MLRS systems rockets are stored and launched from pods for rapid reloading and interchangeability of various calibers. The rocket pods can be of different caliber rockets and can be fired from the same system with no need for any modifications. The missiles and their launching pods are made by the Turkish company Roketsan, they are the same pods used in their T-122 Sakarya MLRS system (already in use by the UAE armed forces) and it's important to mention that the pods, rockets, firing control unit and all the other sub-systems are made by



Roketsan, the only component made in the UAE would be the 10-wheel trailer that carries the system! First, let us look at the tactical importance of MLRS systems. The MLRS, or Multiple Launch Rocket System concept has been a battle field fixture since World War II, it provides

an all-weather, indirect, area fire weapon system to strike counter fire, air defense, armored formations, and other high-payoff targets at all depths of the tactical battlefield. Primary missions of MLRS include the suppression, neutralization and destruction of threat fire support and forward area air defense targets. The Multiple Launch Rocket System is a versatile weapon system that supplements traditional cannon artillery fires by delivering large volumes of firepower in a short time against critical, time-sensitive targets. These targets often include enemy artillery, air defense systems, mechanized units, and personnel. MLRS units can use their system's "shoot and scoot" capability to survive while providing fire support for attacking maneuver elements. MLRS is not intended to replace cannon artillery, but has been designed to complement it. So the most important value of such a system is its mobility, its ability to keep-up with fast moving formations of the modern battle field and its shoot-and-scoot capability, meaning rapid firing of its ammo and relocating in a quick and rapid manner, that is why all other MLRS systems are nimble and mobile. Although the Jobaria MLRS offers massive fire power from a single unit, it has a fatal draw back which is its massive size and very limited mobility, especially over sandy terrain, limiting it to solid and semi-solid terrain and its shoot and scoot is also extremely limited due to its sheer size. It also requires an equally massive resupply vehicle and the system brochure indicates that resupplying only two pods takes up to 30 minutes! The irony here is that the UAE is a predominantly desert terrain and full of sand, which brings to question the purpose of such a system that is unsuitable for operations in sandy terrain!

This system simply reflects the mentality of the UAE military and the people in charge of thinking and procurement for it. God knows how much money was spent on such a system and the only apparent benefit would be the bragging rights from the claim that it is the world's most powerful MLRS system, but from a strategic point of view, given the UAE's terrain and their needs, such a system is simply a waste of time and resources which, for sure, could have went to another MLRS system which would be better suitable for the UAE military needs. There are many proven MLRS systems on the open market, some of which are much cheaper and already in use by the UAE armed forces like the Russian BM-21 Grad MLRS and BM-30 Smerch MLRS and the Turkish T-122 Sakarya (the Jobaria MLRS itself is nothing more than a T-122 Sakarya on steroids). Yes I am one of the biggest supporters of indigenous military manufacturing in any capacity but sadly the only thing truly made in the UAE of that system is the trailer that carries the pods, and I'm sure that is also made mostly of, if not all, foreign components. The UAE military spends billions upon billions of dollars every year on military procurement, and a strong local industry of any capacity is not only better but would be also cheaper and will give the UAE a strategic advantage, however the UAE military must put some thought into its decisions and more important into the people chosen to make them in order to prevent future mishaps like the Jobaria MLRS. A fraction of the money spent each year on buying over-the-shelf weapon systems can be put towards developing an indigenous industry that will greatly benefit the UAE and the rest of the Arab countries.