



BARKHANE: First operational deployment of the new medium-range missile

From 10 to 22 December, the Picardy Battle Group conducted an operation in the three-border region in the south-east of Mali, during which the new medium-range missile (*Missile Moyenne Portée* or MMP) was deployed and used for the first time in a combat theatre.

Arriving in the area of operations at dawn, the soldiers of the Picardy Battle Group leap out of their armoured vehicles and set about their separate tasks of installing the MMP at the top of a ridge. Each member of the crew of six performs a clearly defined role: commander, gunner, loader, rear gunner, radio gunner or driver.

The MMP is in place. Sergeant Nicolas begins observing with the aid of his gunner. The sights of the MMP pick up signs of ground movement. The gunner examines each particular point, zooming in for closer scrutiny. For Sergeant Nicolas, *“the MMP is an exceptional weapon system for both day and night-time observation. The ‘fusion’ mode detects heat sources and allows us, for example, to detect an individual hiding behind trees.”*

This new missile is a real concentrate of electronic innovations: with a range of over 4,000 metres, it can be used both as an anti-personnel and anti-vehicle missile and as an “anti-infrastructure” missile – a useful new feature for operations in the Sahelo-Saharan Strip, where the sides of certain rock faces are sometimes used as shelters by members of armed terrorist groups. On the technical side, the MMP is easy to use, as the sergeant demonstrates: *“To switch from anti-personnel missile to infrastructure missile mode, I just go to the MMP drop-down menu and select the relevant box. The core of the system is located in the missile, so once the round is launched, my gunner sees in his scope what the missile sees. He can change the target at any time, thanks to the fibre optic data link to the console. The missile is equipped with a camera with day and night vision of outstanding quality.”*

Before being sent out to the theatre of operations, Sergeant Nicolas and his gunner received specific training on the MMP at Draguignan Infantry School.

A major innovation, originally developed for the French Army’s infantry and light cavalry units, the MMP is the successor to the Milan system. Having now been deployed for the first time in an operational setting, it will gradually be rolled out to most front-line units.