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From the Editor:

A Rare Victory over the Army Bureaucrats



By Ed Offley

Brad Giordani's long struggle with the Army bureaucrats may be nearly over, and countless thousands of American troops in Iraq and Afghanistan will have reason to celebrate.

Giordani's firm, Militec Inc. of Waldorf, Md., manufactures a synthetic-based weapon lubricant called MILITEC-1 Synthetic Metal Conditioner. The lubricant is used by dozens of state and federal agencies including the United States Secret Service, Coast Guard, Immigration & Naturalization Service and U.S. Marshall Service.

MILITEC-1 first became a news topic last spring after widespread allegations emerged from Operation Iraqi Freedom that the Pentagon's longstanding weapon lubricant, CLP (for Cleaner, Lubricant and Protectorant), had caused numerous weapons to jam during combat in the Iraqi desert. The most famous incident involved the ambush of the 507th Ordnance Maintenance Co. in Nasiriyah, Iraq. Iraqi fighters killed 11 soldiers (including two from another unit), wounded nine and took six prisoner, including Pfc. Jessica Lynch, after all of the soldiers' weapons jammed during a 45-minute running firefight.

As I noted in an earlier column (["Wrong Lubricant, Jammed Weapons, Dead Soldiers,"](#) *DefenseWatch*, June 18, 2003), experts in the field had complained for years that CLP was ineffective in a desert environment such as Iraq, where the sand has the consistency of talcum powder. Retired Lt. Col. Robert Kovacic, who works for a defense contractor in Kuwait that trains U.S. military units, told *DefenseWatch*, "I can say with complete assuredness, from many, many observations [of training exercises], that CLP does not work. I did not use it ... at Fort Polk (because it did not prevent rust, I don't care what the government says), and it sure as hell does not work here."

What made the MILITEC-1 lubricant a matter of controversy was the fact on the eve of combat operations in Iraq, Army bureaucrats responsible for monitoring and approving acquisition of weapons lubricants had arbitrarily blocked Militec Inc. from being able to sell its product to a

host of Army and Marine Corps units who had already ordered it.

The reason? Giordani and his company had been engaged in a protracted struggle of their own for over 10 years to win formal DoD acceptance of MILITEC-1 as a product for military purchases, and the bureaucrats – primarily at Picatinny Arsenal, N.J. – repeatedly ignored directives from higher authority to permit soldiers to purchase the lubricant.

"We've spent the past 15 years marketing our product to the military," Giordani told *DefenseWatch* this week. "But these civilian bureaucrats who have never fired a gun or been in combat are calling the shots."

Militec's 10-year struggle with the Army acquisition staff is a sad and depressing account of a bureaucracy's refusal to admit it was wrong, and a relentless determination to impose its will on the Army despite overwhelming evidence that the product it developed 23 years ago – CLP – was ineffective and a danger to the troops forced to use it.

It began in July 1993, when Militec was first granted "National Stock Numbers" that would enable military units to purchase the lubricant. Less than a year later, the bureaucrats issued an order blocking the stock numbers, which prevented further sales. Giordani and his company appealed the decision and 19 members of Congress wrote then-Secretary of Defense William J. Perry demanding that the Army restore access to the military market. Three months later, the under secretary of defense replied that the Defense Logistics Agency would re-issue the stock numbers so that Militec's lubricant could be purchased by the military.

For the next eight years, Giordani said, Militec sold its product to military units without incident. But just days before the outbreak of combat in Iraq, the Army bureaucrats struck again, tersely canceling the company's stock numbers and blocking over \$117,500 in existing orders to units in the invasion force. Giordani said his company lost over \$500,000 in income due to the cancellation.

The Army in mid-April seemed to relent, offering Militec a limited opportunity to receive orders for MILITEC-1 from units in Southwest Asia through the Defense Supply Center Richmond. But four months later, the bureaucrats again blocked the company's access to military sales. Giordani and his company officers lobbied members of Congress and went public with additional interviews, and the Army seemed to relent again, temporarily reinstating its sales access on Oct. 14.

What led to Militec's belated victory?

What the Army bureaucracy could not overcome was the "ground truth" in Iraq, where soldiers who had struggled with CLP-related jamming found that the MILITEC-1 lubricant worked effectively. The Army's own official "lessons learned" report from Iraq on May 15 confirmed that most soldiers preferred to use MILITEC-1 rather than CLP.

Giordani said Militec has been swamped with requests for MILITEC-1 samples by relatives of troops deployed to Iraq. The company decided early on to provide samples free of charge in such cases.

Moreover, now that the ban on sales has again been lifted, the company is receiving a steady stream of sales orders from units currently in Iraq and those preparing to deploy there as part of the Army troop rotation plan.

Col. William R. Bishop, assigned to the Coalition Provisional Authority headquarters in Baghdad, recently wrote Giordani an email that the Militec president says is typical of

hundreds he has received from troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. Bishop noted:

"I use your product back in the US and it is truly superb. However, all I can get over here in Baghdad is CLP and it is just not hacking it. Seems to attract grit like a magnet and that is if you can get a fresh can It separates out very easily and usually you get stuck with the thin cleaning agent – but not the lubricating properties which sink to the bottom like a milky white sludge. So, it does not lubricate due to the separation and what you do get still attracts the sand! Please send me some MILITEC-1 lube and grease as we will use it on all our weapons – M9 pistol, M4 carbine, M249 SAW and M240B medium MG. I know for sure your product works as I use it on all my transferable MG's back home!"

Giordani said he is both cautiously optimistic yet still suspicious over the latest Army decision to allow Militec into the military market. "These civilians, when they have a position – right or wrong – are going to fall on their swords until they are forced to make a change," he said.

He noted that the Picatinny Arsenal staff recently posted a formal "[Request for Information](#)" (RFI) on the Federal Business Opportunities website for small-arms weapons lubricants, that could be the precursor for a formal Request for Proposal (RFP) that would constitute a formal decision to shift from purchases of CLP to another lubricant such as MILITEC-1. However, the announcement states, "The lubricant evaluation team is formulating requirements for the development of a Statement of Objectives to acquire, test and validate alternate weapon lubricants designed to work in sandy/dusty/desert environments."

What that means, Giordani said, is that the acquisition staff wants to set up its own, separate and lengthy test and evaluation process for the proposed new lubricant that "ignores the real-world combat lessons of Afghanistan and Iraq."

But for now, Giordani said the clamor for MILITEC-1 from troops in the field seems to have stifled any more bureaucratic games.

"It appears that we are on the threshold of the system fully embracing our product based on overwhelmingly enthusiastic support from troops either in the desert or getting ready to go into the desert," Giordani said. "It's getting a lot better. We're getting orders in from all over the place."

At least for now.

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