

Marine Corps 'Monster Machine' Enters Full-Rate Production



Two of 13th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion's rough terrain container handlers posture at terminal 46 in Seattle, Wash. outside of CenturyLink Field Event Center where Soldiers are setting up a hospital in support of the Department of Defense COVID-19 response, April 4. U.S. Army Reserve / Maj. Brandon R. Mace

QUANTICO, Va. – A Marine Corps vehicle designed to transport International Standards Organization containers to supply Fleet Marines just reached a key acquisition milestone.

The Rough Terrain Container Handler moves 20-to-40-foot ISO containers and shelters on rough terrain, beaches and other surfaces to assist with land and amphibious missions. The machine can lift and transport objects weighing more than 50,000 pounds.

In September 2020, an upgraded version of the material handler reached full-rate production.

"The Rough Terrain Container Handler resupplies Marines during battle," said Matt Wilson, project officer for the RTCH program at Marine Corps Systems Command. "It's a big, monster machine that you'd have to see in operation to really appreciate."

RTCH operates worldwide on rough surfaces, including sandy terrain, and is capable of ordnance ammunition handling operations. The vehicle can be quickly configured for transport by road, rail and marine landing craft, or by air in C-5 or C-17 cargo aircraft.

The vehicle is commonly used during amphibious landings, where engineer equipment operators can employ the RTCH to offload containers, stage them on the beach and push cargo and supplies out to Marines as needed. The machine can also travel through shallow waters and transport ISO containers onto floating bridges called causeways.

The Marine Corps began fielding the RTCH in 2006. While the vehicle has served Marines well, MCSC is always looking for ways to improve their technologies and maintain a competitive advantage over adversaries.

“We communicated with Fleet Marines to determine what they wanted to see improve within the Rough Terrain Container Handler,” Wilson said. “We also looked at what the manufacturer could improve on the system.”

After assessing this input, MCSC decided to upgrade the RTCH through the Service Life Extension Program as opposed to field an entirely new vehicle. The RTCH SLEP gives the RTCH at least another 10 years of operation, said Wilson.

The SLEP also saves the Corps time. Instead of beginning at the start of the process – Milestone Decision Authority – the program began at the Milestone C stage, just prior to the production and deployment phase.

“This has been a very streamlined process,” said Jarrett. “Instead of testing every part of this RTCH, which has already been done before, we only had to focus on the specific modifications to ensure those still met the requirements of the legacy vehicle and what we wanted to do with our SLEP program.”

Since MCSC awarded the RTCH SLEP contract in January 2020, both the Army and Navy have joined the Marine Corps’ SLEP to

acquire additional machines.

“The Army and Navy are now involved in the program,” said Wilson. “When the Marines, Navy and Army seek the same materiel solution for the RTCH, it benefits all in Acquisitions, Provisioning and sets the Marine, Sailor and Soldier up for success.”