

# BETTER TOOLS

## THE MARS-L ASSAULT RIFLE SYSTEM

The first shipment of the MARS-L weapon system arrived in the country last year, and is the first of four tranches to be rolled out to New Zealand Defence Force personnel during the next 18 months.

Two container loads of the MARS-L assault rifles and ancillaries have been shipped to New Zealand so far, and these weapons have been inspected, entered into the system and stored in the armoury.

Late last year soldiers in Linton, Waiouru and Burnham Military Camps were given a first-hand look at the new weapons as part of a series of roadshows around NZDF's camps and bases.

The weapons will be toured around to Navy and Air Force personnel early this year.

In total, NZDF will have 5568 weapons across the three Services plus 3472 in a pool for spares and repairs, and deployments.

Major John Lawrey, the Programme Manager for the In-Service Weapons Replacement and Upgrade Programme, says the feedback from personnel during the roadshows has been very positive.

"Everyone who has had the opportunity to handle the weapon so far has really liked what they've seen, and they're really looking forward to being assigned a weapon of this quality," MAJ Lawrey says.

The MARS-L was selected as the NZDF's new individual weapon after the Ministry of Defence led a tender process on behalf of NZDF to determine a weapons system to replace the Steyr rifles, which had been in service since 1987 and had reached their end of life of type.

Eight of the world's leading arms manufacturers were selected to submit rifles. From there, NZDF carried out an evaluation trial before a final recommendation was put forward.

At the end of 2015, the Government announced the \$59 million purchase of the new weapons system and associated equipment. At the heart of the system is the new rifle but the whole package also includes advanced day optics, a detachable grenade launcher that can be used independently of the rifle if required, and other ancillaries such as combat



torches and sound suppressors.

The MARS-L is a modern, modular weapon that came out on top after a rigorous period of testing.

This testing involved personnel from all three Services, and in a range of conditions, with the MARS-L consistently in the top three rifles for each evaluation criteria and the overall weapon of choice in the final analysis.

With the first shipment of weapons now in the country, training is getting underway for the personnel who will then train units in using the weapons system. This training will be carried out at Burnham and Waiouru and is being organised by the transition into service team, which also carried out the 'train the trainers' for the roll out of the Glock 17 Gen 4

pistol. Training for maintainers will be carried out at selected workshops.

The transition from the Steyr to the MARS-L begins in March, with units trained as the weapons are progressively rolled out during the next 18 months.

1Brigade will be the first Army unit to get the new rifles, around April this year.



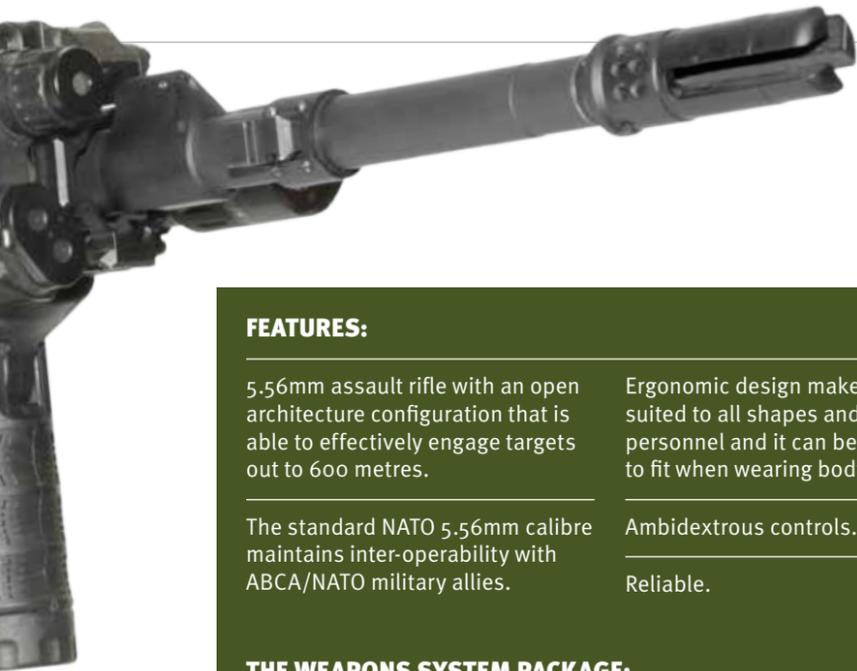
Storing the new weapons ready for distribution

**The MARS-L, or Modular Assault Rifle System – Light, manufactured by Lewis Machine and Tools, will be rolled out across all three Services of the New Zealand Defence Force during the next 18 months. The first shipment has arrived and the weapons are in the armoury. The second tranche of weapons are due to arrive this month.**



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2020READY



**FEATURES:**

5.56mm assault rifle with an open architecture configuration that is able to effectively engage targets out to 600 metres.

The standard NATO 5.56mm calibre maintains inter-operability with ABCA/NATO military allies.

Ergonomic design makes it suited to all shapes and sizes of personnel and it can be adjusted to fit when wearing body armour.

Ambidextrous controls.

Reliable.

**THE WEAPONS SYSTEM PACKAGE:**

At the heart of the system is the new rifle but the whole package also includes advanced day and night optics, a detachable grenade launcher that can be used independently of the rifle if required, and other ancillaries such as combat torches and sound suppressors. It includes initial spare parts, storage/shipping solutions, armoury upgrades, blue weapons (plastic replicas of the real thing), training and maintaining manuals, introduction into service training, and marking and simulation systems.

