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DEVCOM CBC Provides National Guard with Upgraded Mobile Labs

By Aerial Storey



Lennox Brown and Shelby Bartram test the functionality of the equipment inside an Analytical Laboratory Systems Modified Work Order mobile laboratory at a DEVCOM CBC facility at Aberdeen Proving Ground before clearing the system for deployment. (U.S. Army Photo by Ellie White)

equipped to respond to the threat of a weapon of mass destruction on domestic soil. There is at least one WMD CST in each U.S. state and territory, and each WMD CST maintains a mobile laboratory capability. The ALS MWO replaces an older mobile laboratory system and provides improved reliability, utility, and analytical capabilities.

The development of the units took place over five years, including the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, and is estimated to be worth \$110 million.

DEVCOM CBC attributes the successful completion of the joint program to its partnerships with U.S. Army Pine Bluff Arsenal (PBA) and the Joint Product Manager for Chemical Detectors and Mobile Analytics (JPdM CDMA). Each organization played a critical role in the development of the system. Notably, JPdM CDMA funded and oversaw the project, while PBA produced the specialized parts for each system. DEVCOM CBC coordinated with its partners to drive the development of the system forward by using the expertise of its scientists and engineers to provide a system for warfighters with the best capabilities possible.

The ALS MWO was first conceptualized in 2015 as an effort to modernize the mobile laboratories used by the National Guard. Full system prototypes were built in 2017 and put through rigorous testing at the U.S. Army's Aberdeen Proving Ground. These

Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD – The U.S. Army Combat Capabilities Development Command Chemical Biological Center (DEVCOM CBC) recently completed a project to create 68 state-of-the-art emergency response mobile laboratory systems that will be positioned within every state and territory across the United States.

The Analytical Laboratory System Modified Work (ALS MWO) is a mobile laboratory used by the National Guard's weapons of mass destruction civil support teams (WMD CST). These teams are trained and



developmental tests helped refine the design further. The test results were analyzed by the Army Evaluation Center and the Joint Requirements Office to ensure the end users' requirements were met and that the system was safe, reliable, and effective.

"CBC was absolutely phenomenal to work with," said Jonathan O'Dell, one of JPdM CDMA's project leads. "They had intimate knowledge of the system, along with their backgrounds. From an engineering standpoint, it really helped solve some of the struggles that we had from a testing aspect."

After prototypes were built and refinements were made through testing and analysis, full production of the units got underway. Chika Nzelibe, Engineering Design and Analysis Branch chief at DEVCOM CBC, said the strain on the supply chain caused by the pandemic did not deter the team and their efforts. "We all stayed in the battle because, at the end of the day, we have one thing in mind: get these systems out to the warfighter as quickly as humanly possible," Nzelibe explained. "It just showed that the team cared, and I was very proud of them."

O'Dell emphasized the importance of teamwork in completing the project during unprecedented obstacles. "It's really a success story," he said. "Chika and his team were on the ground every day providing feedback and fine-tuning for testing. Knowing that Chika and his team were right there, at all times, really helped build a great partnership."

Nzelibe explained that the coordination of teams and resources has been a priority for DEVCOM CBC. "This is a foundation that has been built upon over the years. We all need each other to be successful. Everyone brings a different skill set and we all perform better when we work together," Nzelibe said. "We build good relationships with our partners and they know what we are capable of."

The ability of DEVCOM CBC to support an enterprise-grade effort on a national level can be attributed to the knowledge that its subject matter experts provide and the team's ability to coordinate resources within the organization. "I don't know anywhere else you can go where you have engineers and scientists that work in this environment on a daily basis to put their knowledge and expertise in one place. That gives our customers the best capabilities that money can buy," said Nzelibe.

DEVCOM CBC and its partners anticipate providing upgrades and modifications to the systems as needed throughout the coming years. All of the National Guard's WMD CSTs have been equipped with the new ALS MWOs, enabling them to better support civil authorities in the event of a domestic chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, or high-yield explosive (CBRNE) incident. The units also allow for an immediate response to CBRNE or hazardous material releases as well as natural or manmade disasters that could result in the catastrophic loss of life or property.

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