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Analysis: 155mm Wheeled Mobile Howitzers Could Become Anti-Ship Artillery

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(https://www.navalnews.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/155mm-Wheeled-Mobile-Howitzers-Could-Become-Anti-Ship-Artillery.jpg)

The BAE Systems 155mm ARCHER Volvo A30D Wheeled Gun System is touted as the fastest firing howitzer on wheels, able to emplace and fire within 30 seconds and depart within 30 seconds, all automatically. The barrel nestles into the long chassis and the armored cab is separate from the turret to offer a two-target aspect.

Picture by Stridsvagn122

Analysis: 155mm Wheeled Mobile Howitzers Could Become Anti-Ship Artillery

The concept of 155mm tracked Self-Propelled Howitzers (SPHs) acting as mobile coastal artillery isn't particularly new; however, the reality of implementing this concept recently got much better with new advances in GPS precision-guided



rocket-assisted projectiles and Hypervelocity shell
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SPHs, and wheeled mobile howitzers, having a high rate-
 of-fire, fully automatic ammunition loading; automatic
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 traverse, elevation, and firing, and more complete fire

and displacement times, 155mm mobile howitzers have
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 finally advanced to the point of achieving a good

percentage against a moving target, large or small. Thus,

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moving wheeled 155mm mobile artillery systems that

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Most land armies envision using Long-Range Precision Fires (LRPF) missiles and **Land Based Anti-Ship Missiles (LBASM)** (<https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2020/09/land-based-anti-ship-missiles-and-the-u-s-marine-corps-options-available/>) to attack surface warships out from a few dozen to a few hundred miles since LRPFs and LBASMs have the best chance of ensuring a hit, and the missiles' long range can deter enemy warship encroachment. Very large Tactical Ballistic Anti-Ship missiles, especially those on Chinese and Russian Transporter Erector Launcher (TEL) trucks, can range out to over 1,000 miles (1,609 km) and provide effective deterrence over-the-horizon, keeping naval forces at a distance. Due to the limited number of mounted missiles per truck launcher, deterrence by a few coastal LBASMs can keep *some* enemy warships at a distance; however, the lack of quantities of LBASM trucks and their reloading support trucks means that LBASM trucks might be hard-pressed to stop a determined large-sized amphibious invasion force once all the missiles are expended.

Thus, 155mm SPHs or wheeled mobile howitzers acting as coastal artillery batteries start to appeal to land armies because a single 155mm mobile howitzer can



carry around 20 to 40 155mm precision-guided munitions compared to a Multiple Launch Rocket System

(MLRS) truck firing anywhere from two to twelve or more guided precision LBASMs. Quantity of ammunition has a

quality deterrence all its own.

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The 155mm Hypervelocity Howitzer Round is a "Game Changer" ([HTTPS://WWW.NAVALNEWS.COM/CATEGORY/CAVASSHIPS/](https://www.navalnews.com/category/cavasships/))

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Hypervelocity Projectiles, fired from an U.S. Army 155mm M109A6 "Paladin," proved that regular conventional tube artillery can engage certain aerial and sea targets with smart precision-guided extended-range. Photo: BAE Systems

Advances in 155mm howitzer fire control technology, Hypersonic glide flight bodies, precision GPS guidance, and enhanced rocket motors have created high-technology tube artillery ordnance that provide new capabilities to mobile artillery cannons.

On September 3rd, 2020, a Hypervelocity Projectile (HVP) fired from an U.S. Army 155mm M109A6 "Paladin" tracked SPH successfully intercepted a BQM-167 target drone simulating a cruise missile. This is "Game Changing" significant because M109s are more available and common in the field than dedicated and specialized LBASM trucks, and a HVP artillery shell's glide body, often used for supporting ground fire, hit a small moving *aerial* target. Thus, a 155mm SPH firing precision-guided HVP



rounds can engage and destroy incoming cruise and tactical ballistic missiles ordinary reserved for

specialized, expensive, and rare Air Defense missile assets. **EVENT NEWS (HTTPS://WWW.NAVALNEWS.COM/CATEGORY/EVENT-NEWS/)** ✓

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In this drone-intercept test, the 155mm HVP used can fire out to 58 miles (93 km or 50 nautical miles) and the

HVP munition weighs in at 68 lb (31 kg) with a 46 lb (21

kg) flight body containing a warhead and guidance **CAVASSHIPS (HTTPS://WWW.NAVALNEWS.COM/CATEGORY/CAVASSHIPS/)**

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Thus, with the HVP round, not only can 155mm tube artillery engage land and sea targets, they can also intercept certain missile and aerial targets as well when

teamed with remotely-located sensors such as

unmanned aerial drones, Airborne Warning and **CONTACT US (HTTPS://WWW.NAVALNEWS.COM/CONTACT-US/)**



Command System (AWACS) planes, and ground or ship radars that can detect enemy warships over the horizon, and send firing coordinates via secure network data-linking for Integrated Warfare (IW) operations in the U.S. Army's "Multi-Domain Operations" (MDO) and the U.S. Navy's "Distributed Lethality" battlefield concepts. This networking creates a "Force Multiplier Kill Chain" and the new precision-guided munitions could produce new multi-mission firepower assets for the Army and Marines to keep littoral threats at bay than just providing artillery ground fire support to advancing ground units. A new kind of "Shooter" is born.

Although the U.S. Marines, and many other NATO Marine Corps have divested of their tracked self-propelled howitzers years to decades ago, preferring lighter helicopter sling-loaded towed 155mm howitzers instead, the new 155mm HVP and precision-guided extended range munitions, such as Excalibur and **Vulcano (https://www.navalnews.com/event-news/sas-2019/2019/05/sas-2019-bae-systems-vulcano-precision-guided-munition-for-naval-5-inch-155mm-guns/)**, could bring renewed investing in 155mm mobile howitzers.



U.S. Army Issues a RFP for a 155mm Mobile Wheeled Gun System

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In July 2020, the United States Army has issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a 155mm Wheeled Gun System (WGS) as a faster, lighter, and more mobile alternative

to the M776 155mm Howitzer. *Naval News* will examine two 155mm WGS options (the M776 and the M777) and compare them to the M776

Howitzer. *Naval News* will examine two 155mm WGS options (the M776 and the M777) and compare them to the M776

Anti-Ship artillery for the United States and NATO. All of these systems will be transported and fired by these WGSs, such as High Explosive (HE), High Explosive Extended Range (HEER), and Smoke, in addition to specialized precision-guided munitions.

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AM General's® 155mm 6×6 "Brutus"

AM General's 155mm "Brutus" is as simple a Wheeled Gun System one can achieve, mounting a bare M776 on the back of a 6×6 FMTV without an armored cab, turret, or an ammunition handling system

Photo: AM General

AM General returned a call and an email by *Naval News*, stating the following:



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Currently, our Brutus 155mm Mobile

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been contracted by the U.S. Government. We

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have had interest from the U.S. Marine Corp

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*and our solution can certainly be adapted to
fit a 6×6 MTRV.*

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AM General spokesperson

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AM General's 155mm "Brutus" mounts a simplified M776 155mm howitzer (without wheels and towing arms) on the flatbed of a 6×6 U.S. Army FMTV or U.S.M.C. MTRV truck, with or without armored cab. The "Brutus" was designed to keep up with the U.S. Army's Stryker Brigade Combat Teams (SCBTs). Towing a M777 adds drag to the FMTV, slowing it behind the fast 8×8 Strykers, but carrying the M777 on the cargo bed allows the "Brutus" to keep up with the Strykers (or U.S. Marine Corps 8×8 amphibious Armored Combat Vehicles if mounted on MTRVs) for land maneuver warfare. The "Brutus" essentially reuses the FMTVs that previously towed the M777s for the U.S. Army's SCBTs.

The 155mm "Brutus" M776 uses a hydraulic hybrid soft-recoil mechanism that takes 60-65% of the recoil out of the firing process and doesn't place the recoil stress onto the FMTV. Essentially, the "forward-recoiling" hybrid soft-recoil mechanism moves the barrel and breach forward first when the gun is fired, and effectively cancels out much of the recoil going backwards, making the howitzer more accurate and able to be fired when mounted on medium tactical trucks. The 155mm "Brutus" howitzer



has no armored turret, leaving the firing crew exposed to
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 the weather, enemy fire, and counter-battery fire

although an advantage to this design is that the M776
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 can be dismounted via screws, removed, and remounted

and transported via another FMTV if the host FMTV 6×6
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 truck is somehow disabled.

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The experimental M776 “Brutus” prototype weighs in at
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 14.81 tons (32,620 lb), including the unarmored FMTV
 6×6 truck, or under half the weight of the 33-ton BAE

Systems 155mm ABCHER system (66,000 lb). As of late
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October, 2020, AM General’s spokesperson reported that
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 there is no sling load data; however, in theory, a “Brutus”

could be slung under the new U.S.M.C. CH-53K helicopter
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 with a maximum sling load rating of 18 tons. The

“Brutus” requires a crew of 5-7 people (5 minimum) and
 fires at a rate of five rounds per minute maximum and
 two rounds per minute sustained. Maximum range with
 Charge 5 is 15.5 miles (24.7 km), and Rocket-Assisted
 Projectile(RAP) is 18.75 miles (30 km).AM General
 declined to comment on if the “Brutus” has fired the
 Excalibur or Vulcano precision-guided GPS extended-
 range round, citing that the M776 can fire any round
 deemed fit for 155mm cannons.155mm ammunition for
 the “Brutus” has to be provided from a separate
 accompanying truck.



155mm Brutus firing its M776 cannon. A special hydraulic
 mechanism reduces howitzer recoil by 60-65%. This photo shows
 the prototype and the FMTV’s cab is unarmored.



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What makes the "155mm Brutus" appealing is that the

M776 howitzer could be mounted on existing U.S. Army

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FMTV and U.S. Marine Corps MTVR vehicles already in

service with some modifications and have the

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ammunition carried by a separate 6x6 truck to increase

survivability. This, in theory, makes the "Brutus" a

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cheaper and lighter WGS alternative that can be brought

in larger numbers compared to some of the more

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advanced and complex WGSs that have to be custom

built and maintained, such as BAE System's 155mm

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ARCHER.

ABOUT US (HTTPS://WWW.NAVALNEWS.COM/ABOUT-US/)**BAE System's 155mm ARCHER**
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Enhanced photo of the BAE 155mm ARCHER Wheeled Gun System firing a shell. New advances in shell technology and remote sensors could make it possible to use 155mm WGHs in the Anti-Ship role. Photo: BAE Systems.



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BAE Systems has proposed its ARCHER

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request for proposals [RFP] for a 155 mm

INTERVIEWS ([HTTPS://WWW.NAVALNEWS.COM/CATEGORY/INTERVIEWS/](https://www.navalnews.com/category/interviews/))

wheeled gun system. ARCHER

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(<https://www.baesystems.com/en/product>

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that provides highly responsive and versatile

fire support to troops in combat. BAE Systems

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is offering ARCHER for participation in the

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[US] Army's plans to conduct a 'shoot off'

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Proving Ground in Arizona. The Army's RFP,

released on July 30, looks to evaluate mobile

howitzers in support of future Army

requirements. ARCHER is already in service

with the Swedish Army with the highest

technical and manufacturing readiness levels

BAE Systems press release YR2020

The 33-ton (66,000 lb) BAE System's ARCHER, designed in 1995, mounts the head mired Bofors FH 77 155mm/52-caliber cannon at the rear of a 6×6 Volvo A30D all-terrain articulated hauler. A30D truck speeds are 40 mi/h (65 km/h) with a range of 310 miles (500 km). ARCHER can also mount on a German Rheinmetall MAN RMVV HX2 8×8 truck that has speeds of 55 mi/h (90 km/h) and a range of 403 miles (650 km). The truck's configuration separates the 155mm ammunition from the armored crew cab for increased survivability and ARCHER can be transported via rail, sea, and air.



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155mm ARCHER can also be mounted and fired from a German

MAN RMVV 8×8 truck. Photo: BAE Systems

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The 155mm/L52 cannon can fire up to 24.8 miles (40 km) with conventional extended range high explosive shells, and up to 31 miles (50 km) using Excalibur GPS-guided rounds. Firing HVP rounds through the 155mm/L52 gun howitzer can theoretically extend that range out to 58 miles (93 km). Leonardo's Vulcano precision-guided munition rounds have a advertised M777 range of 37.2 miles (60 km) to over 62.1 miles (100+ km) when using the M109A7's Extended Range Cannon Artillery (ERCA) tube. ARCHER can also fire the 155mm BONUS specialized Anti-Armor round with two Explosively Formed Penetrator (EFP) submunitions against armored targets out to 21.7 miles (35 km). The system also includes the separate ammunition support carrier truck, a removable container with 100 rounds mounted on an armored truck that can reload the MAN 8×8 ARCHER in five minutes. Total unit cost is around \$4.5 million.

ARCHER promotes itself as being able to fire the first round in less than 30 seconds of emplacement and being able to stow the cannon and depart in less than 30 seconds for the Volvo chassis. The BAE Systems brochure states that the German Rheinmetall RMVV MAN



HX2 8×8 ARCHER can go in and out of action in 20 seconds. Onboard ballistics calculation, automatic electronic fuse setting, digitized fire missions, radio and data communications, cannon traverse and elevation, and automatic ammunition handling is handled from within the armored cab and no crewmember mans the 155mm cannon turret.

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The ARCHER mobile howitzer comes with an armored and ballistic windows cab offering protection against Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical warfare, 7.62mm armor piercing rounds, artillery shrapnel, fragmentation, and mines up to 6 kg (13.2 lb). The Volvo A30D and German RMV MAN 8×8 can drive with all the tires punctured by mines or small arms to increase survivability in case of emergencies.

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The 155mm cannon turret contains 21 stored rounds. Burst rate-of-fire is three rounds in twenty seconds, 8-9 rounds sustained per minute, or all 21 rounds fired in 3.5 minutes using automatic ammunition handling. ARCHER can lay a six-round Multiple Round Simultaneous Impact on target from different incoming angle trajectories. These impressive Bofors FH 77 155mm/L52-caliber specifications make the ARCHER attractive as a mobile wheeled howitzer for coastal artillery defense against close-in littoral combat warships, and can carry and fire more ammunition than LBASM trucks.

An accompanying ammunition carrier can reload all 21 rounds in 5 minutes for the RMV MAN 8×8 truck to 10 minutes for the 6×6 Volvo A30D truck using a purpose-built lifting device.

The ballistic armored cab seats four, normally a gun/vehicle commander, one or two cannon operator(s), and a driver although the entire howitzer firing process just requires a driver and a single gun operator. The crew never has to leave the cab to fire the cannon. An optional .50cal heavy machine gun or 40mm grenade



launcher Remote Weapons Station such as the
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PROTECTOR or CROWS II can mount over the cab for
surveillance and defense against close-in threats in all
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weather, day and night.

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Currently, 48 ARCHERs serve with the Swedish Army with

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cancelled orders from Norway and Croatia due to
scheduling for the former and financial reasons for

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The ARCHER's entry into the U.S. Army's WGS RFP could
have effects that might mitigate to the Anti-Ship and

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coastal artillery defense roles, and even interest by the
Marine Corps of the U.S. and NATO nations. If

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implemented as Anti-Ship artillery, a group of ARCHERs
could fire over the horizon using remote sensors such as
ground-based, ship, or aerial radars and Unmanned
Aerial Systems.



A call and email to BAE Systems seeking more
information was not immediately answered.

155mm Wheeled Gun Systems Would Be Useful for Navy and Marine Littoral Warfare

If produced, 155mm mobile wheeled howitzers such as ARCHER and
"Brutus" would fall under the ERCA and LRMF cannon category in the



U.S. Army and perhaps NATO and the U.S.M.C., able to provide
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offensive and defensive fire against a variety of threats from surface,
 air, and sea using new precision-guided Hypervelocity and GPS
 Extended range shells. US Army slide
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The U.S. Army's interest in a wheeled mobile howitzer
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could pave the way for the U.S. Marines and NATO to
 implement 155mm Wheeled Gun Systems for coastal,
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port, Waterway, Arctic, Littoral, and Anti-Access/Area
 Denial island defense. A mobile 6×6 or 8×8 155mm
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cannon, having a magazine of around 20-40 rounds, and
 able to deal with certain amphibious, armor, warship,
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and aerial targets using extended range precision-guided
 smart projectiles would certainly have "Force
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Multiplication factors for littoral defense whereas a
 LBASm truck carrying two to a dozen or so expensive and
 rare Anti-Ship missiles can reach further out to extend
 the coastal defense envelop.

The 155mm American "Brutus" and Swedish ARCHER
 Wheeled Gun System options by far do not encompass
 all the mobile wheeled howitzers available. Other
 155mm mobile howitzers that might be invited to and
 qualify for the 2021 U.S. Army's Yuma Proving Ground
 "Shoot Off" evaluation could be the French 6×6 or 8×8
 CAESAR, the Japanese 8X8 Mitsubishi Type 19 prototype,
 the South African 6×6 G6 Rhino, the Israeli 6×6 Tatra
 T815 ATMOS, and the Slovakia (former Czechoslovakia)
 8×8 DANA.

Wheeled mobile howitzers could add to the U.S. Army's
 Multi-Domain Operations (MDO) tactics, and for the U.S.
 Marines, could contribute to the U.S. Navy's "Distributed
 Lethality" for "Distributed Maritime Operations" (DMO)
 tactics of employing more "Shooter options" for the
 targeting data received via remote sensors and
 downloading datalinks in an effort to contribute to the
 Joint Force's Integrated Warfare initiatives. The ability to
 rapidly set up and fire the first 155mm rounds in under
 half a minute, and then displace also in under half a



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