



Homer M. Brett

Military Historian ★ Writer ★ Consultant

P.O. Box 111 Alexandria, Virginia 22313 USA

Tel. Voice (703) 548-9694 Fax (703) 548-4582



SUBJECT: The U.S. Army, MOLLE Compatible M9 Bayonet, by Lan-Cay.

The Lan-Cay designed and made MOLLE (Modular, Lightweight Load-bearing Equipment System) compatible bayonet for the United States Army, is a direct derivation of Lan-Cay's work in building prototype Marine Corps MOLLE compatible bayonets for the 2002 USMC Bayonet Trials.

A great deal of confusion exists regarding what the MOLLE systems are. To describe it simply, it is a system of packs, pouches and load carrying equipment for the individual soldier or Marine (warfighter). Its concept is to redistribute the weight and equipment off the hips of the warfighter, and distribute that weight evenly over the warfighter's body, with his shoulders and upper torso carrying the weight and bulk. The system is designed to eliminate the traditional preWWI pistol/ammunition belt that has been used throughout all of the America's 20th century wars.

It also needs to be clearly understood that the Army MOLLE and the Marine Corps MOLLE are different systems, manufactured to different specifications, but they have some common features.

What they both have in common, is the concept of weight redistribution, and the use of a series of horizontal stitched loops, through which all magazine pouches, bayonets, canteens, etc. are laced on to the loaded carrying equipment. These loops are also now on both service's new body armor systems, as can be readily seen in photos from the combat in Afghanistan.

The Marines have had many problems with their MOLLE system, and it had gone into a third generation by the time of the Afghanistan campaign. The feed back from the returning Marines doomed the existing Marine MOLLEs, and in June of 2002 it was announced that the Marines had suspended MOLLE purchases, and would probably be doing away with its MOLLE system, to be replaced by a system that can "carry 200 pounds of weight".

The Army has had a different experience with their MOLLE system, and has publicly stated that they will keep it in service and will purchase more. Regardless of each service's decision, the horizontal loop mounting system, stitched to the MOLLE vest and constituent parts is definitely here to stay.

This being so, obviously any bayonet used by either service must be compatible with the MOLLE loop system. For the Marines this means that any new equipment must be compatible with the loops, and for the Army they must consider how they will modify

2.

all their older equipment so that it can be carried on the MOLLE, and this definitely includes the M9 bayonet.

From this requirement, Lan-Cay was asked to provide an improved M9 bayonet with MOLLE capabilities by Rock Island. Lan-Cay did so by building on its experiences with the Marine Corp bayonet trials. The result is the Lan-Cay, Army MOLLE compatible M9 bayonet, which is also compatible with all of the older webbing systems of the regular Army, the Army reserve and the National Guard.

These "semi-experimental" bayonets have been provided to Rock Island, the Army's Infantry School and various other selected Army personnel and units. As this is written, samples are deploying to the Gulf with selected Army warfighter personnel.

The Army M9 MOLLE compatible bayonet has been produced and delivered **only in the standard Army molded Green color, with green webbing.** The Army MOLLE benefited from the Marine Corps testing in that it has a new ergonomic grip, replacing the standard M9 grip which dates back to the original Phrobis design.

The blade, blade finish, guard, tang rod and latch plate remain the same. The scabbard has an entirely different webbing system with two separate parts. The upper webbing is screwed to the existing holes in the scabbard's back, and has a Fastex quick release clip and an ALICE clip on it. This webbing also has a double bayonet retention strap, some what similar to the old Phrobis system. One strap is horizontal and one is at an angle across the scabbard throat. The angled strap purposely allows the bayonet to be carried in the scabbard with the blade facing in either direction (unlike the Phrobis design).

The lower, and completely separate webbing, mounts on to the bottom half of the scabbard, with an attached "bootie" or cup that encases the tip of the scabbard and cutter plate, providing equal protection to the cutter plate and the wearer. The lower webbing also has its own ALICE clip giving the bayonet a double retention and added stability capability in relationship to the warfighter's vest, while allowing the lower webbing to be laced through the MOLLE loops, so as not to lose it.

This lower webbing is held on the scabbard by a Velcro-tipped cross strap that wraps around the scabbard so that the webbing and bootie cannot slip off. Other than the webbing itself, the scabbard and cutter plate remain the same. Lan-Cay also provides a leg tie with a spring release button for a "quick-slip" feature.

It should be noted that the Lan-Cay Army MOLLE is specifically designed so that it can be worn anywhere on the MOLLE vest or equipment, pommel up or pommel down, safely and securely.

This bayonet mounting system was designed so that not only can new Army MOLLE bayonets be fielded, but it also allows bayonets previously in service to be

3.

modified to the new MOLLE system, avoiding making the Army's many older bayonets obsolete.

There are two additional points of note here. The Army could, in the process of testing and evaluation, chose to modify the design of the Lan-Cay MOLLE if it feels it's necessary. However, so far there has been no indication that this might happen. Secondly **the green color of the bayonet is the only color that has been specified and delivered to the Army.** The green colored MOLLE bayonet has not been delivered to any other U.S. military service, experimentally or otherwise.

In fact the Marines, with their new camouflage system and uniform, specifically put out the information that **they did not want green** colored anything for their 2002 bayonet trials. The new Marine Corps camouflage colors are listed as "**predominately brown**" in color, and the Marines are currently even adopting brown boots and doing away with all of the previously issued black boots, which are difficult to properly camouflage, and also give off a much higher IR signature due to their black, heat absorbing, color.

Finally it should be noted that the first parachute testing (quite successful) of the Lan-Cay Army MOLLE M9 was conducted by me in Yugoslavia during October of 2002. During this testing I broke my right leg while landing in small woods. The testing, however, continued, with the 63rd Para Brigade's senior parachute instructor on the DZ, Major Stojkovic, volunteering to complete the testing for me, which he did most capably.

Respectfully submitted,



Homer M. Brett
Subject Matter Expert
The Marine Corps Martial Arts Program
December 2002