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MOUNTAIN LION III EXCELS IN UAE SUMMER TRIALS

The Mountain Lion III, developed by DCD Protected Mobility (formerly RSD), has recorded world class results in the July 2012 UAE Summer Trials. This robust armoured utility vehicle performed best in its class throughout the gruelling trial that took 12 military vehicles (produced by different manufacturers) through a series of tough terrains, including tar, rocky and dirt roads, as well as sands of diverse compounds and dunes of different heights and proximities, mountain passes and wadis (dry river beds), frequently in desert temperatures as high as 55°C.

The Mountain Lion is equipped with a unique four-wheel steer system, independent suspension and intelligent damping, which dramatically reduce the turning circle to 12 metres, and blast-attenuating seats and energy-absorbing floor panels for enhanced crew protection. The vehicle features a 360 HP engine with six-speed automatic transmission. A 570A alternator, delivering 14kW, supplies power through an unmatched power management system and an AFES provides fire suppression capabilities in the crew and engine compartments, fuel tank and tyres. A ring mount, which can carry a main weapon station of the customer's choice, is fitted to the vehicle.

The Mountain Lion can take on multiple roles on the battlefield. Engineered for demanding high payload while ensuring crew survivability, the vehicle extends expeditionary capabilities and can even be transported in a C-130 aircraft. It fitted with an air conditioner and diesel heater, allowing occupants to operate comfortably in both desert and arctic conditions.

“As part of its evaluation of new military vehicles, the UAE Armed Forces requires these vehicles to demonstrate their capabilities during the hottest summer months in the UAE,” DCD’s Managing Director Rob King explains. “Any potential supplier can take this opportunity to demonstrate their vehicles, even if there is no current specific requirement. The event comprises four phases, each specifically designed to capture the automotive evaluation results required to make informed procurement decisions. Vehicles that prove their conformance to specifications during this event are generally not required to undertake any further hot weather trials, should the authorities wish to purchase a particular vehicle.

“DCD Protected Mobility entered the Mountain Lion into the UAE Summer Trials to demonstrate its functional capabilities under operational conditions defined by a typical Middle Eastern user. This is possibly the first time that a vehicle with a four wheel steer system has been put through the event and we’re absolutely thrilled that the Mountain Lion passed through all four stages with no breakdowns and no technical faults encountered, meeting all the requirements of the UAE Armed Forces.

“In fact, the organiser of the Summer Trials commented that the Mountain Lion had excelled backing our claims with a faultless performance. The trials confirmed that our vehicle achieves optimum balance between performance, payload and protection and, while we identified some areas in which we can make minor improvements, we couldn’t have wished for a better result.”

Tracking devices and data logging equipment was fitted to participating vehicles to monitor all movement over the terrain and ensure that the vehicles followed the required route at all times. The DCD Protected Mobility evaluation team consisted of six observers, a local test driver who accompanied the DCD Protected Mobility driver, and two desert marshals.

In the post-trials report for the Mountain Lion III, the official evaluation team commended the protection level offered by the vehicle against ballistic and mine blasts, as well as its all-round visibility and internal space that allows for different configurations to accommodate personnel or equipment, or a combination of both.

Phase by phase evaluation

Phase one of the Summer Trials covered the preparation of the vehicles, collection of basic physical data such as mass, turning circle, braking, acceleration, ride comfort, noise level, etc., taking of oil samples, determining how long it takes to change a wheel and measuring performance of the air conditioner. The Mountain Lion’s unique four wheel steer system attracted very positive comment from various sources during this phase.

Phase two was the main phase and involved dynamic and mobility tests. This important phase pitted the vehicles against arduous desert driving conditions over a distance of more than 2500 kilometres

over a period of seven days. Any breakdowns experienced during this stage had to be dealt with by the participants themselves and any repair that required more than 24 hours to complete resulted in automatic exclusion from the remainder of the trial. Each vehicle on trial was therefore backed by support crews complete with 4x4 vehicles, equipment, tools and spare parts. The UAE Armed Forces provide recovery services only in the event of rollovers or major component failure. All other failures had to be attended to by the support crew.

Representatives monitoring this trial included the UAE Armed Forces General Maintenance Corps, Land Forces, Presidential Guard and Border Guard and evaluation during this phase was based on criteria such as successful completion of each day's route and the time taken to complete the route, vehicle agility and manoeuvrability, technical compliance with UAE user requirements, fuel consumption, number of breakdowns and failures and crew comfort. The Mountain Lion did not get stuck or experience any difficulties during phase two and completed this section with flying colours. Despite the excessive ambient temperatures and thick sand along the route, all drive line components maintained normal temperature levels and excellent ground clearance was achieved.

Phase three focused on evaluating durability and reliability of specific vehicle capabilities and was conducted at the end of each day at the Military Base to determine specific user requirements, while phase four was a disassembly and assembly stage, to evaluate removal and replacement of major vehicle components of the vehicle.

The future

King says the Mountain Lion is presently undergoing an independent blast test evaluation through the CSIR to verify that it performs to the protection levels required by end users.

"We've recently participated in certain open tenders and found that the Mountain Lion compares extremely favourably with other suppliers in terms of affordability," he comments. "Several potential customers have already expressed an interest and we're working on arranging demonstrations with them in various parts of the world. At the same time we're positioning ourselves to participate in other local vehicle programmes being planned."

About DCD Protected Mobility

DCD Protected Mobility is part of DCD, an international manufacturing and engineering group providing products and solutions to the rail, defence, mining and energy and marine sectors. DCD Protected Mobility's split from the group's railway operations early in 2012 has effectively unleashed its potential to grow in a sharply focused strategic direction, which is underpinned by its commitment to striking a balance within the "iron triangle" of protection, performance (mobility) and payload.

AS the OEM of the Husky Vehicle Mounted Mine Detector (VMMD), hailed as the world's leading route clearance system, DCD Protected Mobility has established itself as a fully accredited, socially responsible international systems house, providing sustainable products for the defence sector by developing intellectual property in partnership with governments, customers and communities. Its broad range of mobile landmine detection vehicles and armoured personnel carriers has been deployed in peacekeeping missions across the globe for the past 30 years and has been tested in accordance with NATO standards in the USA and France.

To facilitate working in the US market, DCD Protected Mobility operates in partnership with Critical Solutions International (CSI) for the marketing and support of its Husky Mine Detection System. This partnership has successfully type-classified the VMMD System on a US Government Programme of Record — the only company in South Africa to do so. The Husky 2G has received one of the highest accolades in the military world — being numbered among the US Army's top ten "Greatest Inventions".

Accreditations awarded to DCD Protected Mobility include the South African Bureau of Standards, BS ISO 9001:2008 Quality and Management Systems, Moody International BS EN ISO 14001:2004 Environmental Management Systems and Moody International BSI OHSAS 18001 Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems ISO.

MOUNTAIN LION PIC 01 : The Mountain Lion provides the best balance of Protection, Payload and Performance.

MOUNTAIN LION PIC 02 : The Mountain Lion is fitted with a 360 horsepower engine and 6 speed transmission which allows the vehicle to comfortably travel at speeds around 100 km/h.

MOUNTAIN LION PIC 03 : The unique four wheel steer system and exceptional ground clearance of the Mountain Lion enables the vehicle to easily negotiate tough obstacles such as the dry river bed shown in the photograph.

MOUNTAIN LION PIC 04 : The large internal volume of the Mountain Lion allows the vehicle to be configured to suit the requirements of most modern armies.

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