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**CSBA Questions DoD’s Substantial Investment in MRAP**

The Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments today released *Of IEDs and MRAPs: Force Protection in Complex Irregular Operations*, by Andrew F. Krepinevich, President, and Dakota L. Wood, Senior Fellow. This analysis reviews the current effort by the Defense Department to acquire and field thousands of Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) class vehicles, and to do so on a crash program basis, in support of US forces in Iraq.

According to CSBA’s Report, improvised explosive devices (IEDs) now account for two-thirds of US fatalities in Iraq. The Pentagon is considering investing as much as \$25 billion to procure upwards of 20,000 MRAP vehicles. “While there is broad agreement that the Army and Marines fielded too few MRAPs earlier in the war, the risk now is that the Pentagon may produce far too many,” conclude coauthors Krepinevich and Wood.

“Civilian and military leaders should consider a number of issues before rushing ahead with this program,” warns Wood. For example, he notes, MRAPs seem to run counter to the military’s new counterinsurgency doctrine, which encourages soldiers and marines to “get out of your vehicles and walk” in order to establish close relationships with the population to obtain the intelligence they need to locate and defeat the insurgents.

“This leads one to question whether the Pentagon has faith in its doctrine, or is overinvesting in MRAPs,” notes Wood. “In areas not yet secured, the armor/anti-armor competition appears to be running in the insurgents’ favor, not ours. In fact, the enemy has already countered with explosively formed penetrators (EFPs), an advanced form of IED able to defeat a main battle tank.”

Military leaders have argued that the ground forces must be rapidly deployable, and are emphasizing lighter equipment. For example, the Army’s successor to the current 70-ton Abrams tank is supposed to weigh less than 30 tons. Yet the MRAP would make the force, as a whole, heavier, according to the coauthors. The Army’s successor to the current 70-ton Abrams tank is supposed to weigh less than 30 tons. MRAPs, however, are two-to-four times as heavy as the vehicles they will likely replace.

“Simple solutions to complex problems are inherently attractive and almost always wrong,” concludes Krepinevich. “Prior to making such a substantial commitment to this program, Congress, the Department of Defense, and senior military Service leaders should carefully consider the array of issue raised in this Report.”

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