

# OMFV: the Bradley replacement programme



*M2 Bradley (Image: Wikimedia)*

On 26 June 2023, the US Army down selected General Dynamics Land Systems Inc (GDLS) and American Rheinmetall Vehicles LLC for the award of contracts for the Optionally Manned Fighting Vehicle (OMFV), now renamed the XM30. The value of the two contracts is around \$1.6 billion for Phase III and Phase IV's detailed design, prototype build, and testing phases. The OMFV aims to replace the Bradley fighting vehicles in service with the US Army by 2030 and beyond. However, it is not the first such attempt, but rather the culmination of several past programmes spanning around four decades.

## A brief history of Bradley

Post World WW II, West Germany pioneered the concept of the "Infantry Fighting Vehicle" by developing the Schützenpanzer Lang HS.30. Following it, both the US and USSR invested in the new philosophy, and the US study culminated in the "MICV-65" programme, followed by the "MICV-70". Under the MICV-70, FMC Corporation developed the XM723. This XM723 will later be renamed XM2 and ultimately "M2 Bradley". Bradley entered the service in 1981. However, a replacement programme was initiated even before the first Bradley was handed over to the US Army! As the MICV-70 programme progressed, an extensive study of the XM723/XM2 was conducted. The

platform was found to have slower acceleration and less cross country speed than the XM1 (then the M1 Abrams MBT under development), exposing itself and having thinner armour susceptible to a firepower kill. Besides, it was feared that the noisy engine would expose the position to the enemy. So SAIFV was initiated.

## Special Armour Infantry Fighting Vehicle

Fearing an overwhelming edge by the Soviet and Warsaw Pact forces by the late 1980s, a heavily armoured platform was envisioned. This would use a XM1 hull with weapons ranging from 25 mm to even 75 mm. The platform was expected to be ready by 1986. But the potential enormous cost was found out by maneuvering the benefits. As an immediate alternative, a "High Mobility IFV" concept was proposed, with Bradley being upgraded with a better engine and running gear. But sensing futility, both the "HMIFV" and "SAIFV" were scrapped.

## Armoured Systems Modernisation

The "Armoured Family of Vehicles Programme" was started in the mid 1980s. It was an initiative eyeing the replacement of the M1 Abrams main battle tank, the M2 Bradley infantry fighting vehicle, and the M109 self-