

Mack Trucks subsidiary announces plans to build new military truck for Pentagon

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On September 23, Mack Defense, a subsidiary of heavy vehicle maker Mack Trucks, announced the delivery to the US military of the first production models of the M917A3, a military dump truck designed “to meet military transportation requirements of tactical and logistic missions” both domestically and abroad.

Mack Trucks was awarded the contract for up to 683 M917A3 dump trucks at up to \$296.4 million from the United States military in 2018. According to the publication *Army Technology*, the M917A3 HDT (“Heavy Dump Truck”) is “equipped with a force protection capability and comes with a standard cab and an optional armoured cab ... designed to meet the blast requirements of the US Army.” The vehicle can serve as a “radar, tanker, wrecker, troop carrier, and heavy equipment transport vehicle.”

The armored truck was the focus of a public event held last month in Allentown, Pennsylvania, where the Mack Trucks subsidiary operates the Mack Experience Center (MEC). The MEC is located 7.1 miles away from the Lehigh Valley Operations (LVO) plant in Macungie, where all of Mack Trucks’ super-heavy Class 8 vehicles for North America and export are assembled.

The Mack Defense website’s coverage of the event noted, “Previously, non-armored HDT vehicles started production at LVO and were then transported to the MEC, where final assembly, including adding the dump body, occurred.”

According to an interview on the Allentown *Morning Call* website, Mack Defense President and CEO David Hartzell stated about 35 production assembly and material logistics technicians support Mack Defense production. The positions were shifted from the Lower Macungie plant to the Allentown site to support military vehicle construction. No jobs were created.

The HDT is set to replace the army’s previous armored dump truck model, the MM917, produced by Humvee manufacturer AM General. The dump trucks are constructed under a banner of “born for victory,” a variation on the well-known “born ready” Mack Trucks slogan.

Mack Defense, which was formed in 2012 in order to “go after military and government type contract work,” according to company CEO Hartzell, was first awarded the HDT in 2018. At that time, United States public officials took turns exalting the military and Mack Trucks for its latest hardware. “You would never think you could get emotional looking at a dump truck,” mused Sabrina A. McLaughlin, constituent advocacy director on behalf of Democratic Pennsylvania US Representative Susan Wild.

“A dump truck may not be as exciting as, say, a tank. But, one speaker noted, tanks can’t go anywhere without roads, fuel and bridges,” wrote *Lehigh Valley Live* of the September 23 public event. The news publication informs the reader that the truck “will be used by the Army, reserves and National Guard for jobs ranging from combat support abroad to rebuilding at home after disasters.”

The unveiling of the US military’s vehicle occurs less than two months after Democratic President Joseph Biden personally paid a visit to the Mack Trucks LVO facility in Macungie as part of an effort to promote anti-Chinese economic nationalism. The HDT was revealed only a week after the US announced the formation of the Australian-United Kingdom-United States “AUKUS” military alliance, aimed at opposing China in the South Pacific.

Biden’s appearance was also intended to promote a corporatist alliance between the manufacturer and the United Auto Workers (UAW) union and head off rising

working-class resistance to the pro-company union bureaucracy. Only two weeks prior, the UAW had collaborated with Volvo Trucks in Dublin, Virginia to impose a sell-out offer on 3,000 workers after they voted to reject the deal.

While Biden, flanked by company and UAW officials, used the photo-op to present Mack Trucks as a paragon of “American competitiveness” against the “autocratic” Chinese, the vehicle manufacturer is in fact a globalized corporation, owned by Sweden-based AB Volvo Group with over 100,000 employees and facilities in 18 countries.

David C Hartzell Sr., president and CEO of Mack Defense, conceded in an interview on local FM radio that the production of the new Mack M917A3 is a global effort, telling *WFMZ News* that Mack Defense will produce the HDT “with our global manufacturing organization here in the Lehigh Valley.”



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