



The Paratroopers of the 82nd Airborne Division Have the Mortars App: The Smartphone Becomes a Targeting System

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The United States Army has developed a mobile application designed to help mortar teams calculate firing data and launch ammunition accurately. The new software aims to replace fire control systems that have been in use for decades, encapsulating complex ballistic technology directly into the soldiers' pockets.

Initially introduced in 2023, the "**Mortars App**" was created to offer a much more intuitive and, above all, universal fire control system. Mortars have the crucial task of providing immediate indirect fire support to maneuver forces; to do this, soldiers must coordinate distances, ballistics, weather conditions, types of ammunition, and a myriad of other technical data in just moments.

Goodbye to "Technical Debt": From Old Terminals to Android

The real breakthrough of the application is its **modular** nature. The software can run on:

- Compact commercial devices (such as **Samsung smartphones with Android operating system**).
- Legacy systems already in use, like the *Lightweight Handheld Mortar Ballistics Computer* (LHMBC), a portable ballistic computer dating back to the early 2000s and still widely used among units.

According to a press release issued by the Army on June 4, the app received official authorization to operate on LHMBC terminals last March. This move is part of a broader Pentagon strategy to eliminate the heavy **"technical debt"** accumulated over the years and create software capable of transcending the hardware on which they are installed.

"We have created a solution that has had a huge impact on the Directorate [Fire Control Systems & Technology] and the soldiers, managing to provide something modern, intuitive, and responsive."

— Julia Gustafson, computer engineer and software project lead of the app.



The Challenge of Interoperability and the 2015 Failure

In recent months, the American Army has accelerated the transition to flexible software capable of enabling communication between different and often obsolete hardware. Recently, specialized outlets like *DefenseScoop* have reported details of **Operation Jailbreak**, a "hackathon" held in Colorado where computer engineers from various defense companies came together to exchange data between old and new Army systems. An absolute priority for modern conflicts, where the speed of information flow determines success or failure on the field.

Old systems like the LHMBC or the larger *Mortar Fire Control System* (MFCS) were showing all their years: their original software was inextricably linked to the hardware. If one wanted to bring the system to a new device, they literally had to **rewrite the code from scratch**.

The path to the Mortars App was not without obstacles:

1. **2015:** The Marine Corps requests an Android app for the LHMBC, but the prototype is deemed "not up to par".
2. **2020:** The Army's *Weapons and Software Engineering Center* (WSEC) takes over the project to develop a completely new app.
3. **2023:** An initial version is released, advanced but not yet sufficiently interoperable.
4. **2024:** After a series of formal tests, the "modern" and final version is born.



The Field Debut and the Future of Military Software

The soldiers of the renowned **82nd Airborne Division** have tested the application in the field, managing to adopt it "**with very little training**" thanks to a user interface similar to that of commercial apps to which young soldiers are already accustomed.

The Army has confirmed that further software updates are already in the pipeline, requested at increasingly rapid rates by operational commands. Thanks to the modular structure, future development will be much faster and more economical.

"Since the software is both modular and highly flexible, any significant update or variant will start from an already mature operational base," the Army stated. "These projects will require fewer developers, fewer resources, and will deliver products to front-line fighters much faster than in the past."