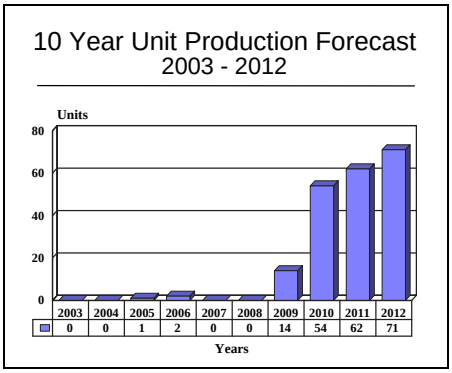
Engin Blindé à Roues de Contact - Archived 8/2004

Outlook

- The design study of this new vehicle began in mid-2000 with Giat Industries; other firms were subsequently brought in
- This vehicle will most likely be a modular design in order to replace several other types
- Various armament options are under consideration
- There is no modernization or retrofit potential in the coming 10 years



Orientation

Description. A wheeled armored vehicle.

Sponsor. The development of the Engin Blindé à Roues de Contact program is being sponsored by the French Ministry of Defense, Délégation Générale pour l'Armement, Direction des Armements Terrestres.

Contractors. The Engin Blindé à Roues de Contact is being competitively developed in the design study phase by Giat Industries/Armored Systems Division, which subsequently teamed with Renault for the follow-on developmental contract, Panhard (teamed with Renault and Hagglunds Vehicle), and Thales. Due to the stage of development, the subcontractors are undetermined at this time. However, several firms, including Matra BAe Dynamics, are involved in the initial design study phase of development.

Licensees. None

Status. The initial sole-source contract for the design study phase of development for the Engin Blindé à Roues de Contact was awarded in April of 2000; subsequently, several other developmental contracts were awarded to the firms listed earlier, and this phase of development is ongoing.

Total Produced. As of January 1, 2003, no Engin Blindé à Roues de Contact vehicles had been manufactured.

Application. The Engin Blindé à Roues de Contact is being designed to replace several tracked and wheeled vehicles, including the AMX 30B2, Engin de Reconnaissance Cannon Sagaie 1, and AMX 10RC. The basic vehicle can be considered a wheeled heavy mechanized infantry combat vehicle from which several versions have been developed.

Unit Price. The projected unit price in equivalent 2003 United States dollars for the basic heavy mechanized infantry combat vehicle armed with a 40 millimeter cannon is $1,564,760. The price will be significantly higher for a 90 or 105 millimeter armed variant if one is developed, and will differ if other weapon systems or options are fitted.

Technical Data

Note: As the competitive design of the Engin Blindé à Roues de Contact is in the early stages, the following data are provisional; in fact, no detailed dimensional data are yet available. The following data are for the proposed basic mechanized infantry combat vehicle.

Crew. Three: commander, gunner, and driver, plus up to 10 infantrymen.

Configuration. 8x8

Armor. The Engin Blindé à Roues de Contact will be fabricated from advanced configuration all-welded steel armor. The vehicle will be required to be proof against 14.5 millimeter projectiles as well as RPG-7 class projectiles. It is probable that the base armor will be supplemented by some sort of appliqué armor suite that can be tailored to the mission.

Design Features. The Engin Blindé à Roues de Contact will be a modular design, possibly a base chassis with a common turret that can be configured with various armament and/or sensor suites to provide the maximum level of mission versatility; the vehicle might be amphibious.

Dimensions. Other than that the Engin Blindé à Roues de Contact will have to be compatible for air transport in the new A-400M military transport aircraft, no other data are available at this time.

Performance. The Engin Blindé à Roues de Contact will have to be able to keep up with the Leclerc tank in Contact operations; no other data are available at this time.

Engine. Undetermined at this time, although an advanced-design diesel engine is the most likely candidate to power the Engin Blindé à Roues de Contact.

Gearbox. Undetermined at this time, although an automatic unit is certain.

Suspension and Running Gear. Undetermined at this time; a number of alternative technologies are being investigated. The tires will be of the run-flat type.

Armament. The armament options for the Engin Blindé à Roues de Contact are being investigated at this time. One supposedly leading candidate for the base vehicle is the CTA International 40 millimeter weapon now in advanced development. This vehicle, or a variant thereof, may also mount an anti-tank guided missile launcher. Other variants could mount a 90, 105, or 120 millimeter tank gun.

Variants/Upgrades

Variants. The Engin Blindé à Roues de Contact is expected to be developed into several variants based on a common turret that can be fitted with a variety of armaments and other sensors.

Modernization and Retrofit Overview. This is not applicable at this time.

Program Review

Background. In the late 1990s, French military officials began to be concerned over the increasing obsolescence of portions of their armored vehicle inventory. While the Leclerc tank presented no problem in the heavy portion of the inventory, the armored vehicles designed to work with the French heavy armor were beginning to be considered questionable in modern front-line operations. Specifically, these were the AMX 10RC and the Engin de Reconnaissance Cannon Sagaie 1, both wheeled vehicles. The remaining AMX 30B2 tanks were also considered questionable, especially after the turn of the century.

Plans for replacements for the above vehicles were well under way as the 21st century rolled in. As the French have always held wheeled vehicles in high esteem, and modern automotive technology had made the light wheeled vehicle much more capable in off-road mobility, the Délégation Générale pour l'Armement, in conjunction with the Direction des Armements Terrestres, decided that a modern wheeled vehicle could replace all the aforementioned types, including the AMX 30B2. To that end, in late April of 2000, a sole-source contract for what was then designated the Engin Blindé à Roues de Contact was awarded to Giat Industries for the design study of a new wheeled vehicle; subsequently, several other developmental contracts were awarded to the firms listed at the outset of this report, and as of mid-2003, this phase of development is ongoing.

Description. As of this writing, only a minimal amount of information on the Engin Blindé à Roues de Contact is available. The new modular design vehicle is to be in the 8x8 configuration, as that offers the highest degree of versatility. There are some reports that the VEXTRA, a concept vehicle developed by Giat Industries, will be the basis of the Engin Blindé à Roues de Contact, but other sources state that Giat Industries is starting with a clean slate for the program. The other

competitors have also started with new designs, with Panhard offering two designs: a conventional 24 tonne design with a large manned turret, and a 28 tonne design with a small unmanned turret. As of mid-2003, no additional data on the various designs in development were available.

The Engin Blindé à Roues de Contact is planned to be developed in the following versions, although this is certainly subject to change:

- Mechanized infantry combat vehicle, for which the above technical data are pertinent.
- Leclerc Escort Vehicle, possibly armed with the Mistral surface-to-air missile system.
- Reconnaissance vehicle, probably mounting various sensors on an extendable mast.
- Assault Gun vehicle armed with a 90, 105, or 120 millimeter gun.

Of course, the number of crew members and fire control and other equipment will vary depending on the type of vehicle and mission area. A common turret, capable of being fitted with a variety of armaments and sensors, is expected to be developed for the Engin Blindé à Roues de Contact.

Funding

Funding for the development of the Engin Blindé à Roues de Contact is being provided by the French Ministry of Defense, Délégation Générale pour l'Armement, Direction des Armements Terrestres.

Recent Contracts

Not available, as contractual information is not released; however, the initial developmental contract issued in April of 2000 ran for 16 months. No details are available for the subsequent contracts.

Timetable

Month	Year	Major Development
Late	1990s	Concept developed
April	2000	Developmental contract awarded
Mid	2003	Development ongoing

Worldwide Distribution

Export Potential. While French light wheeled vehicles have long been known as best sellers worldwide, it is far too early to forecast the impact the Engin Blindé à Roues de Contact will have on the export market.

Countries. None

Forecast Rationale

Despite official pronouncements to the contrary, France continues to go it alone in the development of armored vehicles. Despite the supposedly "unified" Europe and, indeed, the advent of several bi-, tri-, and multinational armored vehicle programs, history proves that the French simply cannot be counted on to stay with such programs very long. In any event, perceiving the increasing obsolescence of the AMX 30B2, AMX 10RC, and Engin de Reconnaissance Cannon Sagaie, the French have decided to develop a new advanced-design wheeled vehicle to replace all three earlier vehicles.

The initial developmental contract for the Engin Blindé à Roues de Contact expired in 2001, but the program has continued on follow-on developmental contracts awarded to Giat Industries, Panhard, and Thales.

Based on our latest research, the forecast assumes that the development of the new Engin Blindé à Roues de Contact will proceed as depicted in the forecast chart below. The first definitive prototype vehicle of the winning design should be fabricated in 2005, with two additional prototypes the following year. Serial production is expected to commence in 2008 for first deliveries in 2009. The evidence indicates that the total

French requirement for the Engin Blindé à Roues de Contact will top 400 vehicles and could reach 609.

Ten-Year Outlook

ESTIMATED CALENDAR YEAR PRODUCTION

			High Confidence Level			Good Confidence Level			Speculative			
Vehicle	**(Engine)**	**through 02**	**03**	**04**	**05**	**06**	**07**	**08**	**09**	**10**	**11**	**12**	**Total 03-12**
GIAT INDUSTRIES													
ENGIN BLINDE A ROUES DE C (a)	NOT SELECTED	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	14	54	62	71	204
Total Production		0	0	0	1	2	0	0	14	54	62	71	204

(a) The through 2006 production is for the developmental prototype vehicles used for contractor and operational evaluations.