

US Military Fields New Mine Roller Technology to Defeat IEDs

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Photo credit: U.S. Army

The Self-Protection Adaptive Roller Kit System II is the latest in counter improvised explosive device technology.

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan -- The U.S. military is fielding new mine roller technology expected to provide even more protection from improvised explosive devices.

The new roller, called the Self-Protection Adaptive Roller Kit System II (SPARKS II), is a part of an integrated family of equipment that allows servicemembers to adapt to changing IED threats.

The job of the SPARKS II is to attach to the front of vehicles and detonate roadside bombs before they have a chance to harm servicemembers riding in the cab. This is the same job as other mine rollers, but SPARKS II gives servicemembers more options to protect themselves.

The driver has the ability to make on-the-spot changes from inside the vehicle to how the new roller operates,

rather than getting out and making manual adjustments to the roller. They can manipulate a variety of settings and change how SPARKS II interacts with the environment within moments.

One of the most useful features of the new system is the ability to change distance from the vehicle to the roller, which can also be done without having to leave the vehicle, said Tilford Briscoe, site manager for the company in charge of fielding SPARKS II.

"It keeps the enemy guessing," said Briscoe. "With this, the moment we see something suspicious, we can change how we operate. I would trust my daughter riding in this thing."

Another useful feature is the ability to detach SPARKS II from the vehicle at anytime from inside the cab. This allows servicemembers to continue on with their mission or get to safety if the roller gets damaged and becomes a hindrance.

The ability to remain protected while under attack is sure to save lives, said Spc. Steven L. Hanni, combat engineer and driver for 469th Engineer Company, 863rd Engineer Battalion.

Hanni's unit, which is deployed to Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan, from Dodgeville, Wis., is one of the first to field SPARKS II. Even though they have not experienced an attack with the roller, Hanni praised the new features.

"If something was to happen and we didn't have to leave the vehicle and step into a fire fight, that would be the most amazing thing ever" said Hanni. "It's incredible."

Source: <http://www.army.mil/-news/2011/01/03/49983-us-military-fields-new-mine-roller-technology-to-defeat-ieds/?ref=news-home-title7>