

DMO

Defence Materiel Organisation

ELECTRONIC SYSTEMS DIVISION
COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEMS BRANCH

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OPEN LETTER OF SUPPORT

The Australian Army's Battlefield Telecommunications Network (BTN) is currently centred around the trunking, switching and termination capabilities delivered under JP65 Project PARAKEET. The first element, a trunk satellite capability, was deployed into 3 Brigade in Townsville in November 1995 and since then the network has been developed progressively and delivered into other formations across Australia. The system provides telephone, data access and telegraphic access services to field units. In capability, it is analogous to a public telephone company's services. It is deployed in a variety of Army vehicles and in deployable frames, depending on the service provided and the tactical requirement. Controlling and maintaining of a communications network requires a great deal of local and centralised management. This, too, is provided in specially developed equipment and management systems. A prototypical network management system was deployed in January 1999.

The Australian Army operates in some of the most demanding environmental conditions in the world. It is essential that BTN services are maintained throughout any operation. Not only does the system need to operate efficiently under the most extreme conditions; it requires a reliable management system. Movement on the battlefield constantly changes the physical configuration of the network, physical conditions vary the dependability of communications links, traffic loads vary and require responsive routing and re-configuring, and enemy operations may preclude use of preferred types of communications. Throughout all of these, the network managers are required to keep the network operating. The tools they use to achieve this need to be as robust as the system itself.

We are using the Opentec manufactured rugged portable workstation in a field environment and it must be impact resistant and able to be handled by soldiers. It also must be able to fit within the normal military support and logistics guidelines without needing special procedures; the Openfire rugged notebook achieves requirements.

This style of deployable computer hardware is used in the more austere deployed operating environment running our prototypical network management system application. Opentec has been extremely helpful and reactive to our evolutionary developmental needs. Their willingness to work with the project office to customise and change product to accommodate our requirement is to be commended.

It is a requirement for Project Parakeet to be supported in all areas of Australia. Opentec continues to meet our requirements on logistics and support of the product. The Australian Army has changing needs in our various programs, and Opentec are continually in contact with our project office to enable them to stay in touch with our changing requirements.



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