Multifrequency Radio-Frequency (RF) Vehicle Stopper

By Stephen A. Merryman

The widespread use of vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs) in Iraq and Afghanistan has resulted in large numbers of military and civilian personnel being killed or injured. Consequently, the Joint Non-Lethal Weapons Directorate's (JNLWD) top priority is to identify, investigate, and develop technologies and capabilities to non-lethally stop both vehicles and vessels outside of minimum "keep-out ranges" (i.e., ranges where the rules of engagement would dictate the use of lethal force) and to mitigate the blast effects from a VBIED.

One of these technologies is the multifrequency Radio-Frequency (RF) Vehicle Stopper (RFVS), a high-power microwave (HPM) weapon under development at the Naval Surface Warfare Center, Dahlgren Division (NSWCDD). A prototype RFVS system, designed to meet the mission criteria for fixed-checkpoint protection and compound protection, is slated for completion in FY13. Science and technology (S&T) work continues in parallel to the prototype system's construction to broaden its applicability to include convoy protection and the establishment of a quick safe zone. This article describes the 4-year research effort that resulted in the specification of the RFVS system design. Figure 1 shows an illustration of a candidate RFVS platform with the system set up for fixed-checkpoint protection.

The RFVS system uses high-power magnetron tubes to generate intense RF pulses that interfere with a vehicle's electronics, rendering it temporarily inoperable. The engine cannot be restarted while the RF is on but is readily restarted once the RF is turned off. Thus, the RFVS system allows for the maintenance of a safe keep-out zone in situations that might otherwise require the use of lethal force. The defined measure of success for this system is a demonstrated, effective capability against more than 80% of the candidate target-vehicle-class list, which includes passenger cars and large vehicles.

As a nonlethal capability, the effects to the target vehicle are short term and almost always reversible, so that the vehicle is not stranded, which would burden the warfighter with the task of its removal. Moreover, as with all directed-energy weapons, the RFVS system delivers energy at the speed of light. In contrast with other nonlethal vehicle stopping concepts and systems, however, RFVS does not need to be pre-emplaced and has a limitless magazine.

Report Documentation Page

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.

1. REPORT DATE **2012**	2. REPORT TYPE	3. DATES COVERED **00-00-2012 to 00-00-2012**

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE **Multifrequency Radio-Frequency (RF) Vehicle Stopper**	5a. CONTRACT NUMBER
	5b. GRANT NUMBER
	5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER
6. AUTHOR(S)	5d. PROJECT NUMBER
	5e. TASK NUMBER
	5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) **Naval Surface Warfare Center, Dahlgren Division,Corporate Communication, C6,6149 Welsh Road, Suite 239,Dahlgren,VA,22448-5130**	8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)	10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)
	11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)

12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Approved for public release; distribution unlimited

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES
See also ADA556728.

14. ABSTRACT

15. SUBJECT TERMS

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT **unclassified**	b. ABSTRACT **unclassified**	c. THIS PAGE **unclassified**	**Same as Report (SAR)**	**6**	

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 8-98)
Prescribed by ANSI Std Z39-18

Figure 1. Illustration of Candidate RFVS System Setup for Checkpoint Protection

Background

Using HPM or RF energy to stop an automobile engine is not a new concept; it has been under investigation for some time in private, academic, and military sectors. To that end, the RFVS program leveraged as much historic work as possible while collaborating with academic and military laboratories and while aggressively pursuing contacts in the automobile industry to gain knowledge of vehicle electronic design and function.

In 2005, the JNLWD funded the then-Directed Energy Technology Office (DETO) at NSWCDD to perform an extensive reverberation chamber test series to characterize the vulnerability of a representative cross section of automobiles to a wide range of HPM source frequencies.[a] The purposes of the tests were twofold. First, the applicability of the Army's Ground Vehicle Stopper (GVS) data set needed to be established for newer vehicles, and second, a thorough, source-technology independent assessment of vehicle vulnerabilities needed to be performed. The rationale behind the latter was to establish vehicle vulnerabilities without inadvertently biasing the process. Only after the full assessment was performed would factors such as concept of operations (CONOPS) and system requirements come into play. Figure 2 is a photograph of reverberation chamber testing.

Over the past decade, a significant number of private, academic, and military laboratories have investigated the susceptibility of automobiles to HPM energy. The range in approaches spans the gamut from isolated component testing, through direct injection and radiated testing of electronic control units (ECUs), and continuing through full vehicle radiated testing. Each of the different test methods has its strengths and weaknesses. Testing of isolated ECUs in controlled laboratory conditions is arguably the best way to determine exactly how a specific unit is responding to the RF. However, whether or not the identified susceptibilities continue to hold true when the unit is in place in a

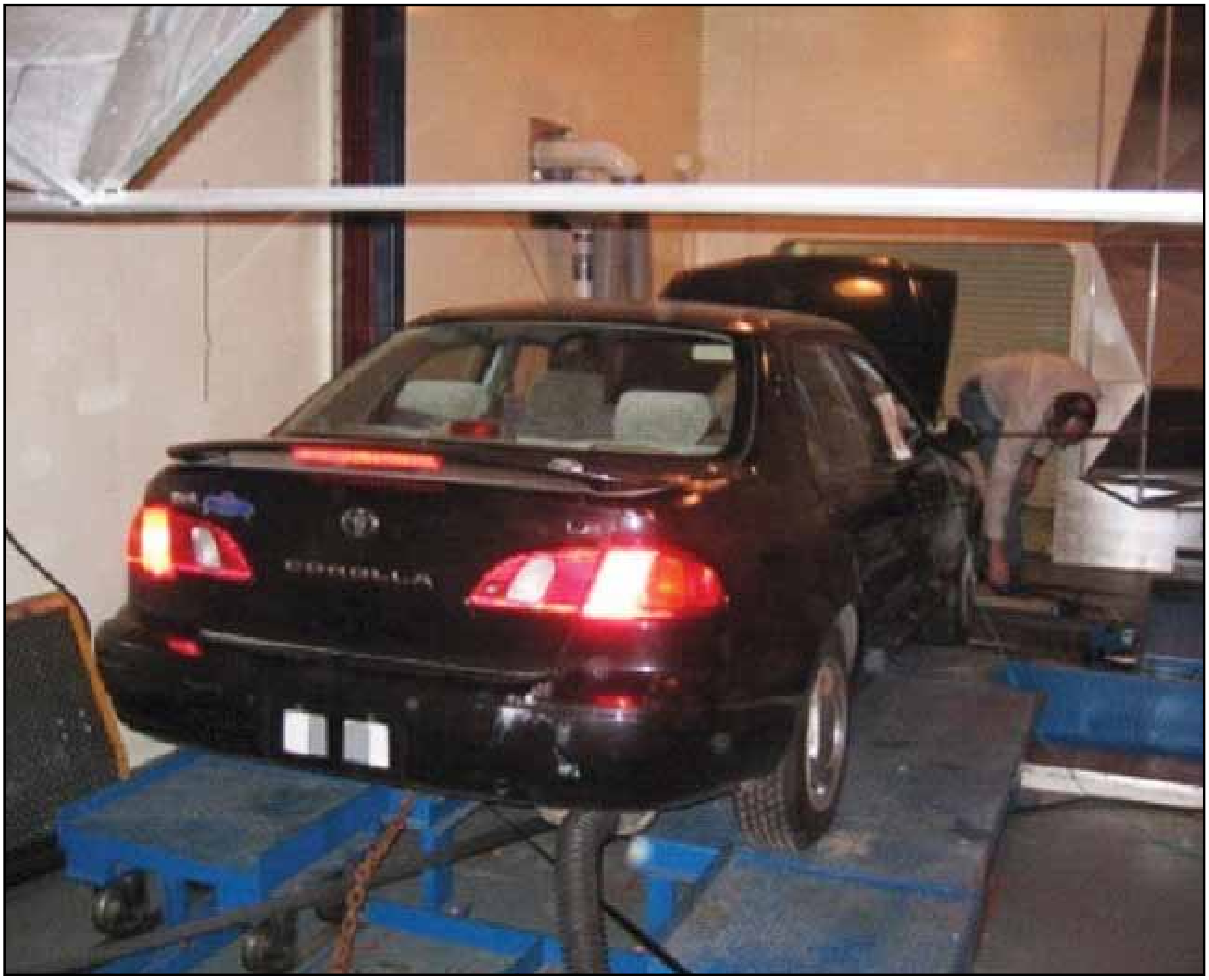

Figure 2. Vehicle on a Dynamometer in the NSWCDD Reverberation Chamber

vehicle, or whether the results apply to other vehicles' ECUs, remains a significant question that limits the applicability of the results.

Full vehicle testing and failure analysis of the ECU can be a daunting task. That said, full vehicle testing affords the advantage of ensuring that the response is commensurate with expectations of genuine engagements. The test approach one chooses to take depends upon resources, test facility availability, and most importantly, the objectives of the program. For the RFVS program, the objectives were to identify an HPM waveform that is effective against a broad class of the candidate target vehicles and to ensure that the identified waveform could be generated with a source that can be packaged in a footprint and cost amenable to military users. To meet the program's objectives, the RFVS program chose to invest the majority of its resources in full vehicle testing. While the focus of the effects testing portion of the RFVS program has remained on full vehicle testing, both time and resources have been devoted to fostering and maintaining connections with academia and the auto industry. There is concerted effort to keep abreast of the latest trends in automotive technology, to ensure that the current RFVS system design will continue to be effective against future vehicle designs, and to leverage all research that might aid in future RFVS designs.

System Operation

The majority of current HPM system concepts employ a narrowband, single-frequency HPM source. In contrast, RFVS utilizes multiple HPM frequencies. The rationale for using multiple frequencies is associated with increased system effectiveness. Electromagnetic (EM) energy can be used to disrupt or damage an electronic target. In order for the energy to affect the electronics, however, it must be able to reach a critical component(s) inside the target. This involves a process referred to as coupling. Different EM waveforms are more or less effective against specific targets depending, in part, on their frequency, as different frequencies couple better or worse depending on varying target geometries. To be specific, each piece of electronics has specific resonance frequencies that most effectively facilitate coupling energy to the target. Unfortunately, these resonant frequencies can be unique to each piece of equipment. Consequently, a single-frequency waveform might be very effective against one target, but less effective against another target. Therefore, a system that utilizes either a sweep of frequencies or multiple frequencies will be more effective against a larger target set. This is not a novel idea, but rather one that has been readily acknowledged within the HPM community for some time and fervently embraced by the RFVS program. Current technology limitations prohibit high-power-swept frequency sources as viable options, leading to the idea of a multifrequency source. The more frequencies that are used, the more effective the system; however, a trade-off is made with system size and cost as the number of source frequencies is increased.

Brassboard System

After completion of the exhaustive vehicle effects characterization testing in 2006, the RFVS program identified the optimal number of frequencies needed to meet mission requirements. It then used this information in the design and construction of the Brassboard System. The purpose in constructing the Brassboard System was to demonstrate the benefit of the multifrequency approach and the ability to meet mission objectives with specified power on target requirements. Construction of the RFVS Brassboard System began in 2007 and was completed in 2008. The Brassboard System was not constructed with specific system footprints in mind. Thus, the antenna and conex used are significantly larger than those in the prototype design. The RFVS team collaborated with a Marine Corps service representative identified by the JNLWD to flesh out the specifics of the mock checkpoint to be used in the RFVS Brassboard System Demonstration. Figure 3 provides a diagram of the checkpoint setup used in the RFVS Brassboard Demonstration. Figure 4 provides photographs of the RFVS Brassboard System.

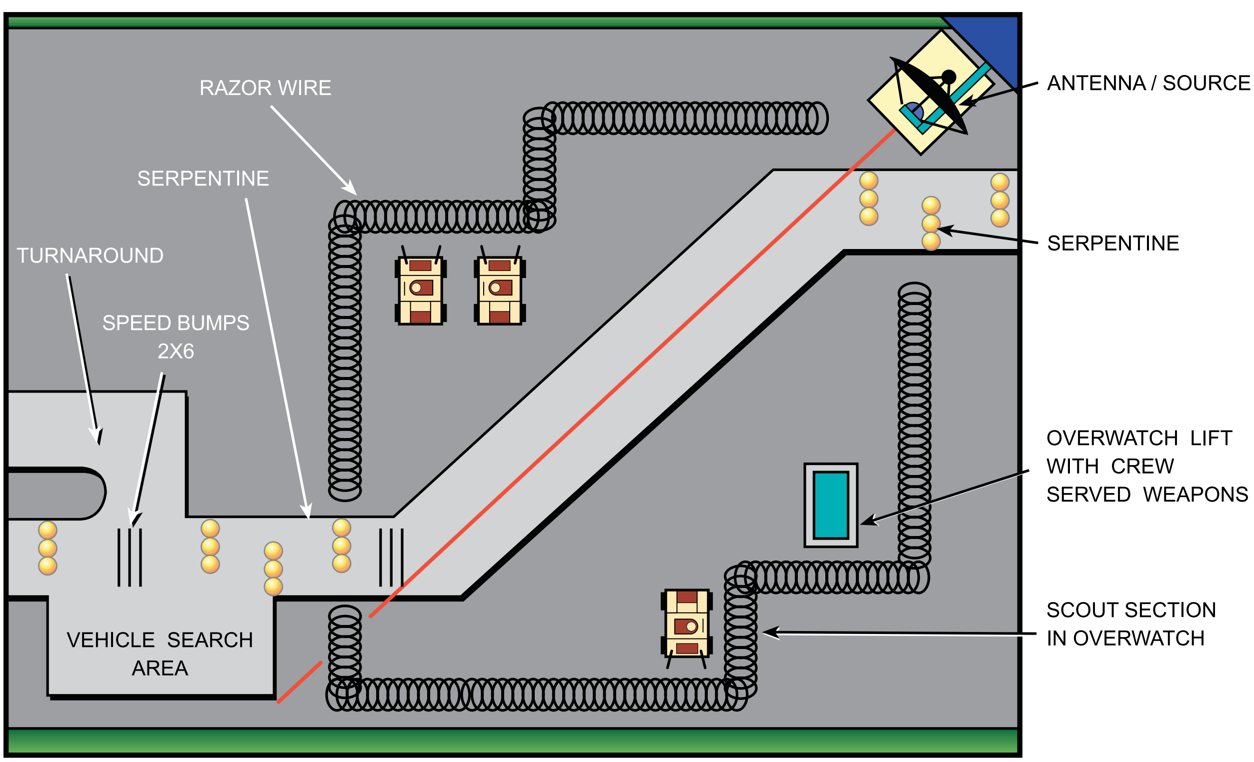

Figure 3. Schematic of Checkpoint Setup

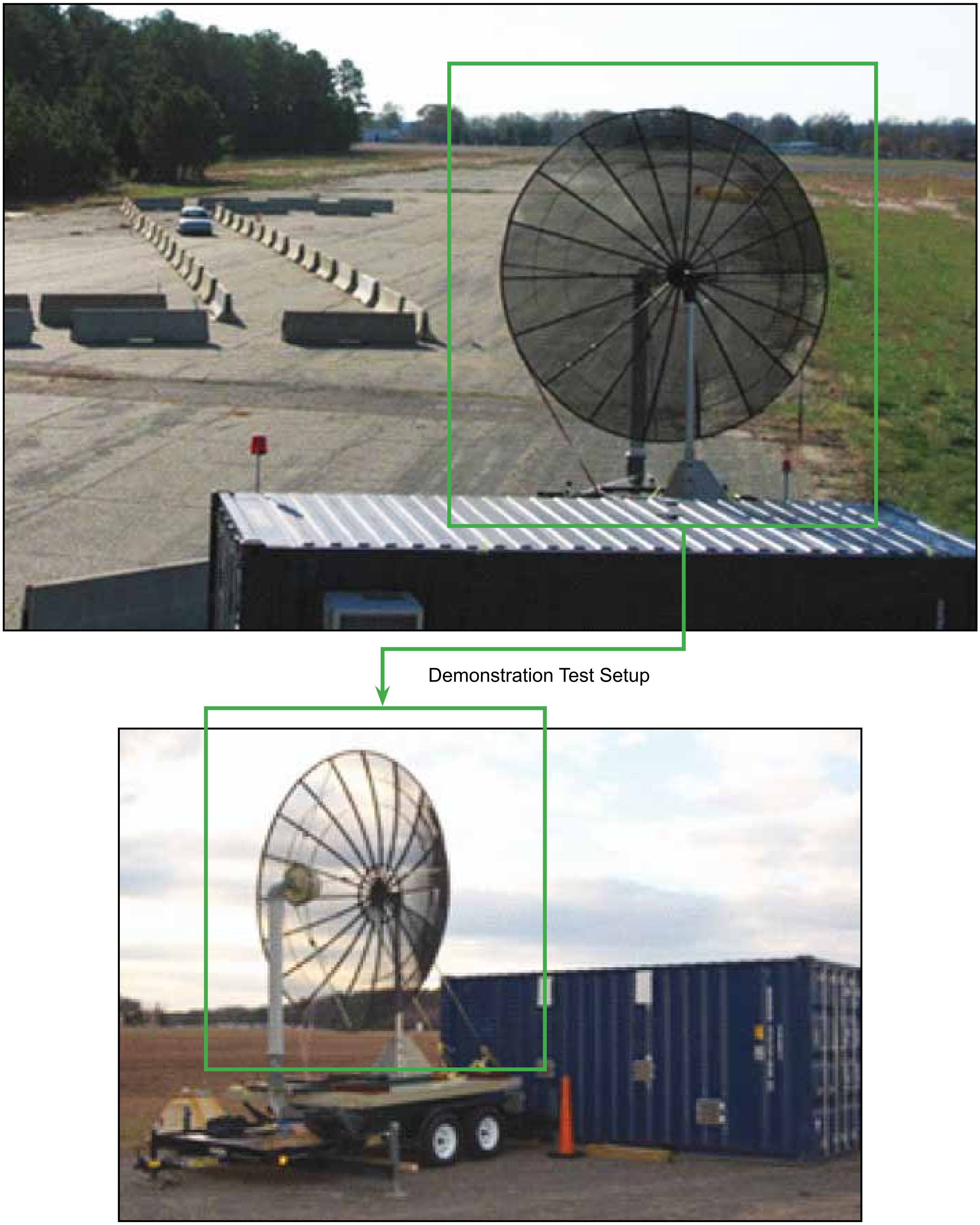

Figure 4. Photograph of the RFVS Brassboard System and Demonstration Setup

The Brassboard System Demonstration was conducted in Spring 2008. The Demonstration was a success, and funding for the RFVS prototype was consequently approved. To date, 42 passenger vehicles (cars, pickup trucks, vans, and sport utility vehicles (SUVs)) and 3 large trucks (dump truck and tractors) have been tested as part of the RFVS program.

Way Ahead

The JNLWD continues to work with the Directed Energy Warfare Office (DEWO) toward the development of a fieldable multifrequency RFVS system. Once the capability is fully developed, tested, and certified ready for operational use, warfighters and civilians alike will benefit greatly. Lives will no doubt be saved using the ability to stop vehicles nonlethally and mitigate the blast effects from VBIEDs.

Acknowledgment

Dr. Cynthia Ropiak (SAQ Consulting) contributed to this article.

Endnote

a. The Directed Energy Technology Office (DETO) was renamed the Directed Energy Warfare Office (DEWO) in August 2009. For reference, see the charter for the DEWO, NSWCDD, 17 August 2009.