

M115 ACCV “Meade”

Another surrogate light armoured vehicle was the M115. This vehicle was created by taking the turret of a LAV25 and mounting it on the hull of an M113. The design (inspired by similar Australian versions using Saladin turrets dating from the Vietnam War) was intended as a stop gap measure and used excess production LAV25 turrets (left over as hulls were used for other variants) to produce a light cavalry fighting vehicle as M3 Bradley production was falling behind demand. Trials of the XM115 showed that the vehicle was too high, put a strain on the M113A1 engine and suspension if that hull was used and under armed for its role. It was however put into limited production as the M115A1 and M115A3 (using the M113A3 chassis) as it was felt that this was better than nothing. It was given the name “Meade,” following the traditions of naming vehicles after American generals.



Illustration 1: M115A1 of the 163rd ACR (Minnesota National Guard). A Guide to US Army Vehicles of the Third World War (Frank Wiseman) Grand Duchy Works 2015

Troops in the field had mixed feelings on it. Those who had previously had the M3 Bradley were upset at its lack of a missile system making it only suitable for use against light armour (although the more spacious interior was popular). Those who had been using the standard M113 however appreciated the turret’s firepower.

The 163rd Armoured Cavalry Regiment was equipped fully with the M115A1/ M115A3 before departing for Korea. Here all three squadrons used the M115 backed up by M60A3/4s. Many were issued on a piecemeal basis, often cavalry troops in the US were equipped with enough to have one squadron in M115s and two in M113s.



The 1st Squadron 124th Cavalry (Texas National Guard) came up with

a novel solution to the firepower problem by integrating the anti-tank M901s into the squadrons facing the Mexican Army. Here each cavalry troop consisted of 2 M115s (carrying infantry if any were available), 2 M113s carrying a dismounted infantry squad and an M901. The commander either rode in one of the M115s or occasionally used a HMMWV if one could be scrounged. This unit proved to be reasonably effective as long as the unit retained its scouting role and was not used for sustained combat (although it was moderately successful in defence as the missiles were more useful if the vehicles were static). At squadron level there were two such troops (three were authorised but

Illustration 2: 163rd ACR badge (US Army)



Illustration 3: M115A3 from the 2-121st Infantry, 48th Infantry Brigade (Georgia NG), 24th Infantry Division showing typical external stowage. Note the M240 on a pintle mount. This is presumably a replacement vehicles as the unit was issued M2/M3 Bradleys.

shortages usually reduced it to two) along with a HQ M557 or M113 (very occasionally two of either or one of each), two mortar carriers (usually M125s) and a forward observer in either an M113 or a HMMWV. Logistical, support and anti-aircraft capability (using HMMWV Avengers) were usually deployed above this level along with heavier mortars (usually M106s). Where possible a tank troop would be attached at squadron level to give extra firepower.

Another solution to the firepower limitations was the solution adopted by the 5th Squadron, 117th Cavalry Regiment (New Jersey National Guard) of the 50th Armoured Division. Here inspired by a similar system issued for the M113, a ring mount was welded around the commander's hatch which could take a Dragon missile system. Far from ideal this restricted access to the hatch and required the commander to expose himself from the waist up throughout the flight time of the missile (which was notoriously long). Fitted on about a third of M115s used by the 117th it had limited success as the Dragon was ineffective against modern Soviet armour. It was however as one crewman remarked "better than tapping them with the cannon to get their attention."



Illustration 4: Intriguing image of what appears to be an M115A3 (note rear fuel tanks) with the LAV25 TOW turret. This was never type standardised by the US as no LAV25 was fitted with TOW missiles other than developmental versions. It has been suggested that this was a new build trial version. The lack of any markings does not help. The desert colour is interesting as the background is the southern US. Until further evidence becomes available it will remain a mystery.

It is also known that workshop units, particularly in the Middle East and in Korea (where the LAV25 was more common) have made their own conversions using



Illustration 5: An interesting variant on the M115 was this vehicle captured in Saudi Arabia by French troops in the Saudi War in July 2012. Here a LAV25 turret has been added to a BMP2 by the Iranians. No further details of this interesting conversion are available. At least 6 of these vehicles were encountered and they have been identified as the BMP25 by allied forces. (French Army)

turrets from damaged LAV25s (particularly those suffering severe hull damage from mines as the hull and suspension were difficult to repair). A number of variant LAV turrets were fitted to M113s (although these were indistinguishable from the normal versions as the turrets were identical).

After the war the vehicle was retired quickly and scrapped although a few remain on static display at museums a number were converted back into M113s. No foreign use was ever made of the M115 although the Canadians did briefly consider it and may have produced a few trial vehicles.