

AS "FAV" paratrooper PORTUGUESE

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In 1989 the troops Corps Paratroopers Air Force purchased six vehicles' Fast Attack Vehicle ". It was the beginning of the history of these singular military vehicles in Portugal. In 2011, 22 years later, they began their last mission: part of the museum collection of the School of Paratroopers Brigade of the Army Quick Reaction in Tancos.



Once in Portugal in 1989, the FAV have participated in the exercise "Jupiter 90" Brigade Parachute Light in Vilar Torpim / Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo. For 20 years these vehicles operated in exercises in various parts of the country.

Troops Corps Paratroopers

The years pass and certainly many readers do not know some peculiarities of the Portuguese Paratroops when belonged to the Portuguese Air Force (1955-1993). So this little previous chapter, very synthetic and facing the subject of the article may be useful to realize the purchase of these vehicles. Since its inception the paratroopers, all over the world, distinguished from other units by the choice of equipment, weapons, uniforms and a number of unique items, different. This had almost and always to do with the specificity of its activity, air transport and the jump in parachute, but also, it must recognize it, a certain desire to be different, to innovate, to be more updated and launching new concepts. In Portugal, since the creation of the paratroopers in 1955 that this path has many and often followed (1) - today! - And over the past nearly 60 years, there were many specific equipment and weaponry that the Portuguese paratroopers troops used. Tell however that, all over the world, and also in Portugal, this trend has gradually disappeared not only economic issues - these materials are generally more expensive - as the trend that professionalization brought better equip each said smaller and smaller contingents of "normal troop." Today in many armies and also in our few differences in equipment is between a military paratrooper and infantry, having shifted the uniqueness of the equipment and weapons for special operations forces. It is in this context that the "FAV" were bought, but not only. Moreover, the procurement processes in troops Corps Paratroopers (CTP) of the Air Force were almost solely the responsibility of body - naturally following the legal proceedings with the consent of the branch and within the budget itself. The paratroopers had financial autonomy, that is, simply put, FAP attributed them an annual budget and the CTP managed it, decided to spent the money and what - and so were purchased and placed into service in Portugal, unpublished uniforms, different types of modern weapons, transmitters / receivers, equipment, vehicles.



Camp Doha, Kuwait in 2003. US Navy SEALs with their "Desert Patrol Vehicles" in preparation for another mission. The SEALs used their "FAV" in combat in the 1st Gulf War and then again in Iraq and Afghanistan, have been disclosed at least one important action of the M1040 Chenoweth DPV SEAL "team four" in 2002 in the region of "Tarnak Farms Two" in the Netherlands.

fast attack vehicles

Armed cars to attack had one of its high points - for many were born right here - in the 2nd World War, with the Long Range Desert Group and the Special Air Service, British units, who used conventional, armed and adapted vehicles to make forays into enemy territory in the deserts of North Africa. After the World War, the wars that were involved, especially the British, but also some of the US elite units continued to use such platforms, which have been evolving for vehicles dedicated to the purpose, no longer as mere occasion adaptations. The "Jeep" and "Land-Rover", armed, were the favorite machines and fought, Korea to Oman and Aden, through Vietnam and Panama.

It is however during operation "Desert Storm" in 1991, the world gets to know - among other vehicles used by Special Forces units - what the British designated by "Light Strike Vehicle" (LSV) and the Americans "Desert Patrol Vehicle" (DPV). "Essentially the development of an armed buggy with two or three places. The English of 22 SAS used it in the Iraqi desert but did not like it and left, but the US Navy SEALs also used the by the end of the conflict, and adopted the concept "(free translation of the book" Special Operations Patrol Vehicles, Afghanistan and Iraq, "Leigh Neville, Osprey Publishinh, 2011). American DPV continued to the service, whether in Iraq or in Afghanistan were (are?) used by SEALs.

That is, the BRIPARAS adopted what around here known as the 'FAV' (acronym for "Fast Attack Vehicle"), the same time as US special forces and the United Kingdom. Needless to say that in Portugal the vehicles were in ignorance of it, derided by some ... Only when seen in action abroad realized that after all it was not bad thought at all! Not being without its critics, was a vehicle whose military use for certain purposes could be very interesting. Now it was not, as often users want a "handyman", it never was.

Foto Alfredo Serrano Rosa



Shortly after his arrival in Portugal, real fire tests with the new weapons were made in the area of San Jacinto in area under the responsibility of troops Operating Base Paratrooper paragraph 2.

Foto Alfredo Serrano Rosa



The LGA mod.3 MK19 40mm reached the paratroopers in 1990. They had a weight of 33 kg and a range of 2.212m. There was the date weapons of this kind in Portugal.



Part of AVF were equipped with the LGA Mk.19 and others with the powerful Browning 12.7mm. Initially each FAV just had a gun.

Foto Alfredo Serrano Rosa



It was soon found that the way the "gunner" operated the weapons was not the best or in terms of security for himself or to make use of the weapon.



Military parade of the "Day of the Air Force" in Foz / Harbour on June 30, 1991, was the first public presentation of the AVF.

AVF in Portugal

After his arrival in S. Jacinto, then the Operating Base Paratroops paragraph 2, they were assigned to the Squad Recognition Battalion Parachute No. 21 Brigade Parachute Light (BRIPARAS). I planned to buy another 12 vehicles, six for each of the other two battalions of paratroopers BRIPARAS, acquisitions that never came to fruition.

In its initial configuration - in 1989 - AVF had 2 seats and support (disabled, say) for a legal weapon. Three were equipped with heavy machine guns Browning 12.7mm and three with the Grenade Launcher Auto AGL MK19 mod. 3 "Bag" 40mm, type of weapon in Portugal did not exist until this acquisition. In this version, which to facilitate differentiation, will be called the "FAV Mk 1", the scorer / scorer had to leave the seat next to the driver and climb along the gun to use, sitting precariously on a canvas strip or standing .

Foto Alfredo Serrano Rosa



BOTP 2 in San Jacinto, departure for another year, all FAV still in its original configuration.



Banks, even having no head restraint, fixed the crew very well through a safety belt system perfected.

key features

Manufactured in the firm Chenoweth Racing Products of San Diego (USA), had tubular structure of high strength (steel / chrome); 4 × 2 with 2 crew members; 4-wheel independent suspension, 2 hedicoidal spring dampers per wheel, front bumpers and 3 per wheel with two torsion bars with resistance 21kg / cm²; Empty weight 726Kg; width of the tires of the front axle, the rear 22cm and 30cm; Volkswagen engine modified for high performance with 4-cylinder, mixed cooling oil and air, 1984cc and 94HP (4.400rpm); Maximum speed 140Km / h; acceleration uncharged, 0-50km / h in 3.6 seconds; exceed vertical obstacles to 33cm.

Length, 3.7m; wide, 1.9m; height 1.4m (FAVMk1) and 1.75m (FAVMk2).

Foto Pedro Sottomayor



The instruction area for combat in built-up areas of S. Jacinto, very complete and near the airfield of the airport, was a frequent scenario exercises and demonstrations.



assault landing in S. Jacinto. These exercises were repeated and showed the intervention capacity of the paratroopers battalion paragraph 21 of BRIPARAS, able to perform limited missions unconventional character.



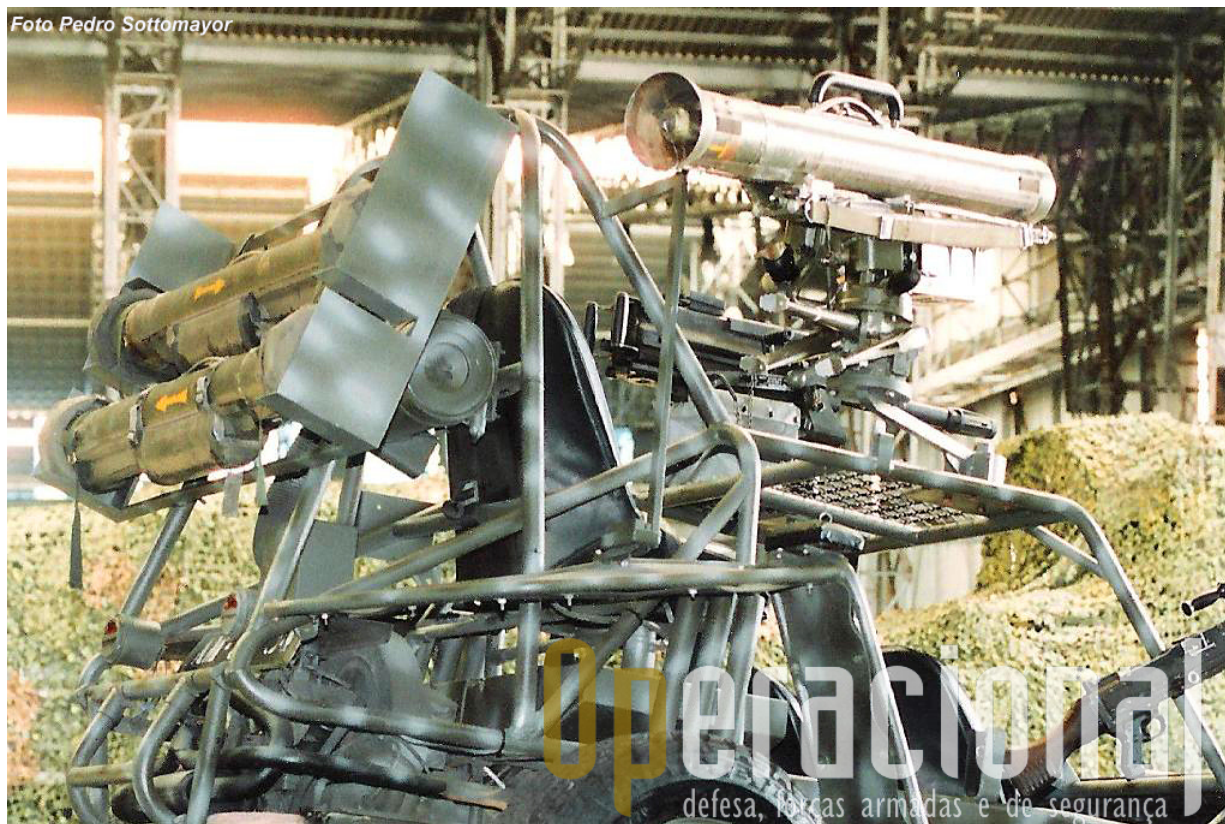
AVF modified in S. Jacinto became a vehicle with increased capacity for these missions "lightning". Neutralization of an objective or hostage rescue were trained and improved possibilities.

The "FAV Mk2"

After some use the cars were modified in San Jacinto, having been placed a seat for the "gunner" and stands for more weapons: light machine gun FN MAG 7.62 mm (with the head of vehicle) and missile type station Milan to be fired as an alternative to the main weapon, 12.7mm or Mk 19. the spare tire was placed in front, on top of the car and still were added brackets for 3 containers Milan ammunition and an additional tubular structure to protect the "gunner" in case of AVF from tipping over.

Modifications were made to the unit's workshops! And this was made possible first by the spirit of initiative that prevailed at that time in the lower levels and coverage and support that commanders conferred; second because the BOTP 2 had "inherited" the former Air Base No. 7 a machinery park that is very recent era of great versatility, which joined skilled employees with years and years of service in this air unit capable of "making all ", with military support" technical terrestrial material, "the Air Force.

Foto Pedro Sottomayor



Milan shot station coupled to FAV now also be able to carry ammunition for this anti-tank weapon.



In this photo sequence you can see how the assault teams or support, they settled in the car ...



... Always taking into account that the "journey" in these conditions -
always at high speeds - just was effected to cover a few hundred meters ...



Operacional

defesa, forças armadas e de segurança

Foto Alfredo Serrano Rosa

... Between the C-130 that landed and was "on hold", the assault on the target and return to the "Bison" which took off then.

Foto Alfredo Serrano Rosa



In 1992 during the "Jupiter" exercise in Alentejo, the politician responsible for National Defence and the controversial transfer of Paratroopers Air Force to the Army, Fernando Nogueira, passes through FAV Mk2.

Foto Alfredo Serrano Rosa



curious image. In the Army and also an exercise in Alentejo, the Company's elements of Special Operations of the National Guard, used as "passengers"

AVF conducted by paratroopers military.

Education and employment tactical

AVF of BRIPARAS were received and immediately it began the training of drivers for these "machines". According to Jorge Nascimento (in "Green Beret No. 157 APR / MAI1991)" ... it should be remembered that to date - 1989 - the characteristics of all-terrain vehicles the paratroopers used in recognition, although exploited successfully, they were very limited, or in speed, or in transposition obstacles both in survivability when compared with the FAV's. There were drivers capable of in all-terrain, run routes limited to speeds between 80 and 120 km / h. After the creation of the first instructors able to get the most out of this car, thanks to the American technical teachings that went to Aveiro to make the submission and processing of this car, began a series of courses (COVIREC) Operator Course Car Recognition ... ". With the very typical enthusiasm of those times, supported on the professionalism of the instructors and squares sergeants (chosen!) Which began operating the vehicles, the planning done in the battalion and unit command support, it began testing for future operational use of vehicles. These courses had the support of civil mechanical unit and technical staff of terrestrial material Air Force in BOTP 2

paid service. The stemmed driving training in San Jacinto, in Muranzel the shooting range and still in Sever do Vouga a self-cross track (Talhadas). Continued Jorge Nascimento, the date First Sergeant Paratrooper, "... despite its origins are linked to the vast desert plains, the vehicle manifested frankly good in rough terrain, forested or not dry or soggy. THE major drawback found is that there is not any kind of protection for operators in adverse weather conditions. Another area was also explored night driving with and without night vision devices. When used by experienced

drivers in this type of vehicle, and using the car lighting, can be very close driving levels of their daytime use. Regarding driving with night vision devices, and note that I'm talking about pure driving off-road, the case changes appearance: driving is much more demanding, the driving experience has to be much more high, the adaptation to the device must be complete, and requires a prior and thorough recognition of the zone to operate. The last test performed, and perhaps one of most spectacular was the use of four FAV's an assault landing at the aerodrome of Viseu, part of the Instructor Course / Operations in Urbanized Areas Monitors. The unprecedented operation both for the Troops Corps Paratroopers want to Squadron 501, is coated preparation, planning and great care training. After careful choice of drivers, proceeded to enter training and exit of vehicles on inclined planes, simulating the ramp of the C-130. Then went to the adaptation and driver training with assault and support teams, holding fast to the car's structure the action itself after landing, was performed as had been expected, achieving a perfect synchronization between teams, drivers, cars and airplanes. As we arrived, we boarded and took off leaving the ground a number of observers who certainly still have not forgotten the accuracy and speed put in carrying out the operation. "

Foto Alfredo Serrano Rosa



Sometimes weaponry that was not originally planned had to be adapted to FAV. Here, as in the Army, instead of the "traditional" FN MAG, the head of the car features a Browning .30. IN 1996 the same gun also equipped the Chaimites the parachutists operated in Bosnia and Herzegovina.



After the purchase of the LGA 40 "Santa Barbara" of Spanish origin by the Army, the LGA Mk.19 of FAV eventually replaced.

In fact the use of AVF this kind of action proved to be almost routine in S. Jacinto with a high degree of proficiency for trims of vehicles and assault teams / support. Taking advantage of the instruction area of operations in urbanized areas that troops Operating Base Paratrooper No. 2 had, a few meters from the airfield runway, and this new capability - unique in Portugal - there was high national organization visit or foreigner who was not "toasted" with one of these statements. But not only the FAV began to participate in exercises or battalion or the BRIPARAS (Jupiter series) in various parts of the country and in various weather conditions. The Special Forces Company BRIPARAS (which was extinguished by the transfer of paratroopers to the army) came to use the FAV - as passengers - but the car always remained in the Battalion Parachute No. 21 (now It is the 2nd Airborne Infantry Battalion and later 2nd Battalion Infantry Paratrooper in the army). In fact the debate on what should be the "place" of the AVF in the organization of BRIPARAS was never conclusive and vehicles were up keeping in S. Jacinto, being used in exercises, demonstrations and exhibitions all over the country.



AVF on deposit at the School of Paratroopers ...



.. Here photographed in detail ...



... When, after 20 years of service, already awaiting final mission: museum!

In 2004 they were transferred from Aveiro to the School of Paratroopers in order to equip airborne precursors (advanced recognition), the Battalion Support Aeroterreste today Airborne Operations Battalion of the Rapid Reaction Brigade. Tancos reached and were "increased the load" Command and Service Company of the unit never getting to be delivered to Precursors airborne. Indeed addition of bureaucratic problems associated with organic framework unit material than those contemplated also mechanically now checked many shortcomings. In addition, the precursors the vehicle did not arouse much enthusiasm due to these problems but also its consumption and effective trim: the first large and small second!

So the component "public relations" of the car became the main use and whether the ETP or in exhibitions at the unit abroad were there more fulfilling this mission, helping the dissemination of parachutists troops. In 2011 finally departed for the last mission, with the transfer to the museum center.



FAV Portuguese paratroopers: 1989-2011.

(1) Even without being exhaustive, it should be noted that the paratroopers Portuguese were the first elements of the armed forces to wear a cap as head covering, to introduce the camouflage uniform (today the pattern of camouflage used by the three branches was first introduced in the parachutists troops of the Air Force, which later brought him to the Army that adopted and then the other branches), using abafo "gore-tex", to use the rifle 5.56mm, using the new helmet type "fritz," etc.

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