



# SHOCK AND AWE

**AS WARFARE CHANGES SO DO THE VEHICLES REQUIRED BY OUR ARMED FORCES. STEP FORWARD TWO BRITISH COMPANIES AND THEIR VISION OF THE FUTURE...**

**W**hen it comes to off-road racing the Qt Wildcat has a long and impressive pedigree. After all, it did take all three top placings in the 2009 Pharaon Rally, Egypt and is a consistent high finisher in African rally raids. Even more impressive is the Wildcat's unerring ability to finish the Dakar, a feat that defeats many a top-dollar works team. Qt Managing director Dave Marsh points out that as an off-the-shelf race car the Wildcat punches way above its weight in the international off-road racing scene.

Wildcats leave Qt's new Plymouth facility ready to compete and a top-of-the-range 500DKR (Dakar), including back-up spares kit, will get you racing for about £100K. Compare this with a Dakar works VW or Mitsubishi which cost around a million quid and you get the idea.

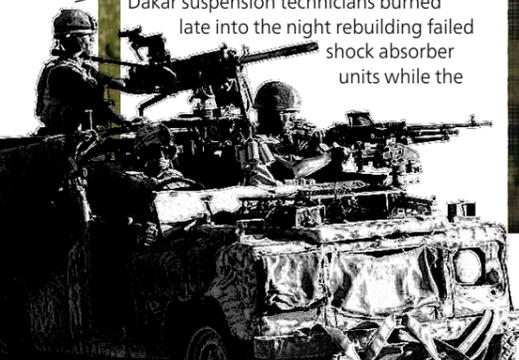
The Wildcat has a reputation as a rugged almost unbreakable endurance car. The highly-developed suspension flattens terrain that would normally have you reaching for a gumshield. But it is the Donerre Lithium remote reservoir shock absorbers that are the real star turn when it comes to making rapid rally raid progress, and keeping the 4-litre Jaguar V8 working as hard as the driver dare push it.

These French made shocks are an engineering masterclass that feature at least four design patents. During the last Dakar suspension technicians burned

late into the night rebuilding failed shock absorber units while the



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Donerre guys sat back in their deck chairs enjoying a beer. Amazingly none of the cars running Donerre shocks suffered any suspension failures during the event.

Great as the Wildcat is at the Dakar, and other such events, there is no denying that the rally raid market is limited. A fact that has not escaped Dave Marsh's attention. Because of this he's been looking to extend the appeal of the Wildcat in two really rather different directions...

Firstly, Marsh focussed on the luxury sports utility market, thrusting the Wildcat into the fray as an alternative to a midrange sports car. The brochure's assertion that the 300STR (Street) is as happy on the streets of London as it is on the dunes of Dubai is tough to argue with.

Having set out his stall for buyers daring to venture out onto the mean streets of Chelsea and Kensington Marsh then turned his attentions to a more demanding and dangerous challenge. Dave reasoned that all the good things

that make the Wildcat a Dakar hero would also suit the demands of a high mobility strike vehicle in Her Majesty's Forces: surely a vehicle that had proven its durability, high speed and manoeuvrability in the Dakar would interest the MOD.

Now it just so happens that there is another Devon based company that has rather a lot of experience building and supplying vehicles to the worldwide defence market. Established in 1981, Honiton based Supacat supply a range of armoured high mobility vehicles to clients worldwide, including their original 6X6 Supacat All Terrain Mobility Platform, which is still in demand today. Other vehicles in their range include the Jackal HMT 400 4x4 and the Coyote HMT 600 6x6 which are currently in service in Afghanistan. They also supply the SPV 400 (Supacat Protected Vehicle), an armoured 4x4 built to withstand IEDs. The SPV 400 was designed to replace the Snatch



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Land Rovers which do not offer the same level of protection. Jamie Clarke sales and marketing manager for Supacat was quick to identify how a partnership with Qt Services could result in a vehicle capable of filling a gap in the market: a high performance vehicle which could fulfil roles such as rapid intervention, strike, reconnaissance, border patrol and special forces operations was an intriguing proposition for both companies. It would also be an industry first for an entirely UK produced vehicle to be transferred into a military role with only minor modifications such as ballistics protection and the addition of weapon and communication systems.

But one fundamental question remained: how would a lightly armoured Wildcat be any safer than a Snatch Land Rover? The answer lies in the differing role the Wildcat would take on and its unique ability to move quickly and effectively over terrain that would destroy a Land Rover. The key to its effectiveness in conflict situations is its high speed (106mph) and ability to conquer rough terrain so avoiding roads and tracks where IEDs lurk. Much heavier armoured troop carriers are obliged to use tracks and roads and as the IEDs get bigger so does the

weight of armour. Wildcat tactics in a conflict zone would be fast in and even faster out. And then there are its recon capabilities... Special forces are often engaged in dangerous information gathering sorties and they depend upon their ability to move quickly and avoid engagement. The Wildcat's rugged dependability is key to its success on missions such as these. To power the Wildcat on its dangerous behind-enemy-lines missions Qt offer three engine choices: the International 2.8-litre



TGV Diesel; Land Rover 3-litre V6 Diesel and the Land Rover 4-litre V8 Petrol. Auto or five-speed manual transmissions are available as is the Sadev six-speed sequential straight cut gear box – the ultimate racing option. Air locking diffs and numerous ratios are also available.

An interesting crossover from the luxury Wildcat 300STR is the adoption of the air conditioning system – which isn't as extravagant as it may at first seem. Outside temperatures in theatres of operation can reach 50 degrees, and climb higher in the vehicle itself. Add to the mix the protective clothing worn by a soldier and the temperatures can become incapacitating. Also personnel may have to be in the vehicle for extended periods of time which makes an efficient air con system far from a luxury item.

The Wildcat's light weight is another plus point: air transport capability is vital in modern warfare, which is another reason

why only light anti-ballistic armoury would be fitted: the Wildcat's weighs in at 2580kg . The Long Range Desert Group was a reconnaissance and raiding unit of the British Army which operated behind enemy lines during the Second World War's North Africa campaign. They used Willys Jeeps alongside big Chevrolet trucks and were able to operate far from base because they set up hidden fuel dumps. The Wildcat, however, will not have to splash and dash because of its massive 365 litre fuel and 3000km road range.

Supacat will be responsible for militarising the Wildcat and will offer a variety of light weight armour solutions. They will also fit appropriate weapons and communications systems according to customer requirements. Should volume sales be achieved Supacat will also support Qt by assisting in the building of Wildcats at their facility in Honiton ensuring that any military contracts will not

**WILDCAT 500DKR**

- CHASSIS AND BODY**
  - High strength tubular steel frame
  - New suspension turrets allowing wide range of suspension options
  - Light weight composite body shell with QD panels
- ENGINE AND TRANSMISSION**
  - 4-litre Jaguar V8 petrol
  - 275bhp and 300lb ft torque @ 3850rpm
  - Sadev six-peed sequential transmission
  - Axles uprated with HD half shafts
  - Range of diffs available from HD to limited slip
- SUSPENSION**
  - New suspension mountings allowing larger dampers and coilovers.
  - Donerre lithium fast rebound shocks
- STEERING**
  - HD power assisted quick ratio steering box with

special valving to give lighter movement  
Other equipment: on-board hydraulic jacking system allows all four wheels to be removed

**INTERIOR**  
SPA Dash  
Quick detach Qt Racing Seats



## SAS LAND ROVERS

**1950s:** Series 1 88-inch Land Rovers were stripped down and fitted with Vickers machine guns. They were used for short range operations in Oman.

**1967-1985:** Series 11A 109 carried more stores, fuel and ammo thanks to its longer wheelbase enabling it to be used on long range missions. The pink paint scheme was effective desert camouflage and gave rise to the nick name 'Pink Panthers'. These were

used for almost twenty years. Later versions were fitted with general purpose machine guns.

**1985-2005:** Land Rover 110 HCPUs became the vehicle of choice as Desert Patrol Vehicles, DPVs.

**2005-present:** Supacat HMT 400s replaced Land Rovers ending a long period of distinguished service. Perhaps the Wildcat is poised to bring back a little bit of the Land Rover spirit into the service of this most elite of regiments.



impact upon the rest of Wildcat's core business.

Jamie Clarke of Supacat said: "This is the first time that we've taken an entire platform from the racing sector and marketed it into defence. It's very exciting."

Wildcat's MD Dave Marsh was equally enthusiastic about the collaboration: "We are delighted to have reached this agreement with Supacat. We are two UK companies based in the South West who share a similar ethos.

The Wildcat fits in well with Supacat's existing product range and we're very much looking forward to tackling new markets with a well proven product".

The militarised version of the Wildcat in these photographs has been equipped with a Kongsberg Protector Super-Lite Remote Weapon Station mounted to its roof. This weapon can be remotely operated by the co-driver from within the cabin day or night. It has 360 degree

movement thanks to a ring mount installed in the roof and a control panel with colour monitor is mounted to the passenger dash board. The gun itself is controlled and fired using a joy stick much like a shoot 'em up computer game – except this isn't a game.

The Kongsberg gun system was installed to demonstrate how the Wildcat could be weaponised should a client require it and Supacat can install other options.

Another advantage of taking an

established race proven vehicle and adapting it to this high mobility role is that the development costs are much lower than designing and engineering a vehicle from scratch. Early estimates suggest that the Military Wildcat will cost around £250,000, which is not expensive when it comes to specialised military vehicles.

While it is regrettable that these vehicles of war are necessary it is encouraging that two British companies are combining their expertise and providing employment opportunities in the South West of England.



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