

Corrosion Inhibitors for Prolonged Protection of Military Equipment and Vehicles

N. CHENG, Magna International Pte., Ltd., Singapore

J. CHENG, Magna Chemical Canada, Inc., Matheson, Ontario, Canada

B. VALDEZ, M. SCHORR, AND R. SALINAS, University of Baja California, Mexicali, Baja California, Mexico

J.M. BASTIDAS, National Center for Metallurgical Research, Spanish National Research Council, Madrid, Spain

Military assets require the implementation of corrosion control and monitoring techniques, in particular during long periods of storage. Plastic sheets and/or textile canvas, impregnated with vapor phase inhibitors, are used to cover weapons and vehicles. An electronic corrosion control monitoring system for covered vehicles and weapons is described.

The combat fields of modern wars, including the struggle against global terrorism, are localized in diverse, harsh regions: tropical, desert, arctic, marine, and urban, with varied weather conditions that adversely affect the corrosion resistance of the equipment, weapons, and vehicles involved.

Corrosion and degradation of military hardware occur by an interaction between the surface of a material and its environment, damaging the equipment, weapons, vehicles, and machinery.¹⁻² Localized corrosion can occur on parts of this equipment that are prone to corrosion. Many corrosion types are known: intergranular, in microcrystalline grain boundaries; galvanic, between different metals electrically interconnected; crevice, at interfaces between parts; pitting, forming perforations; dealloying, by leaching of a less noble metal from an alloy; fatigue, with cracks

generated by mechanical stress; fretting, caused by two metallic surfaces rubbing against each other; erosion-corrosion, by the combined action of mechanical wear; and electrochemical corrosion.¹ To prevent and mitigate these forms of corrosion, military assets require the implementation of corrosion control methods and techniques, including corrosion inhibitors, particularly the new “green” corrosion inhibitors, according to the characteristics of the corrosive environment.³

A significant development for corrosion control in the military services is the establishment of a central institution to serve the U.S. armed forces. The U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) Office of Corrosion Policy and Oversight (CPO) maintains a Web site, CorrDefense.org, that features content on corrosion and corrosion control of military facilities, equipment, and weapons. In addition, an alliance was created between the U.S. DoD CPO and defense departments in the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Germany, New Zealand, and Australia that ensures the expansion of corrosion control efforts worldwide.

Corrosion Inhibitors

The use of corrosion inhibitors is rapidly expanding worldwide for numerous technological and industrial applications: in cooling water systems;⁴ protected storage of military and electronic equipment;⁵ acid pickling and cleaning;⁶ the oil and gas

industry;⁷ as additives to coatings, paints, and elastomers; for corrosion avoidance in oil pipelines;⁸⁻⁹ and in desalination plants.¹⁰ The importance and relevance of the inhibitor technology are evident from the many patents gathered in published reviews.¹¹⁻¹²

Corrosion inhibitors slow the rate of corrosion reactions when added in relatively small amounts to a treated system. They are classified into three groups:

- Anodic inhibitors—which retard the anodic corrosion reactions by forming passive films
- Cathodic inhibitors—which repress the corrosion reaction such as reduction of dissolved oxygen
- Adsorption inhibitors—such as amines, oils, and waxes, which are adsorbed on the steel surface to form a thin, protective film that prevents metal dissolution

Volatile Corrosion Inhibitors

Volatile corrosion inhibitors (VCIs) are used to protect ferrous tools and delicate machinery parts against corrosion, where it is impractical to apply surface treatments. These parts are kept in closed paper envelopes, in cardboard boxes, or wrapped with cotton canvas, well impregnated with a VCI. Sometimes, the parts are also sprayed with a VCI, depending on their size and shape. Figures 1 through 3 show several pieces of critical military hardware protected against corrosion with VCIs.

VCIs are evaluated by NACE International TM0208,¹³ including some types of VCI materials (e.g., paper), using low carbon steels (CS) as representative of the broad class of ferrous metals. This standard was prepared by NACE Task Group 215, "Volatile Corrosion Inhibitors."

Military Asset Protection

The specific conditions of protecting military equipment in high humidity climates and the diversity of materials used in the construction of military equipment call for special quality VCI products to protect them from corrosion. The slightest occur-

rence of corrosion on arms and other equipment can cause changes in their technical performance, affect their reliability in practice, and result in loss of lives in times of war. VCIs do not significantly affect human health or combat readiness.

In practice, most of the military equipment and arms are continually kept in reserve, so it is of paramount importance to protect them from corrosion while maintaining their original technical properties. Trends in protecting such equipment have been based on reliability, easy application, quick mobilization, and economic benefits.

VCIs have been developed to meet the above requirements. Materials used are organic chemicals containing a proprietary amine compound. This compound is non-toxic, biodegradable, and environmentally friendly. Through years of experience with several armed forces around the world, cutting-edge technologies have been developed to preserve all types of military equipment.

Military assets consist of fixed and mobile structures, including two principal groups: weapons systems for attack and defense operations and vehicular assets for transportation of military personnel, their supplies, and materials.¹⁴

Ground Vehicles

Military services operate many types of armored vehicles, wheeled and non-wheeled. Exposed to harsh environments, they are assembled from numerous metallic components, but mainly CS and some low-alloy steels. Therefore, they are subjected to general corrosion, particularly in humid environments. Due to the limited corrosion resistance of these steels, they are often protected against corrosion by the application of chemical conversion coatings.

The most commonly used vehicle is the high mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicle, also known as the Humvee, particularly in the deserts of the Middle East. The complex interaction of chemical and climatic factors, such as hot afternoons and cold nights, with dew condensation, intense



FIGURE 1 Heavy cannons on wheels covered with rough canvas fabric impregnated with a VCI.



FIGURE 2 Wrapped military hardware on a wood pallet ready for moving.



FIGURE 3 Weapon parts wrapped with transparent plastic sheets containing a VCI.

solar radiation, and salt-laden atmosphere as well as saline, brackish, and briny water, create a harsh corrosive environment. The military vehicles are damaged by corrosion, erosion, abrasion, and wear that impair vehicle mobility and long service life, requiring costly, ongoing maintenance. Plastics, elastomers, and composites are generally unsuitable alternatives because they deteriorate by physicochemical mechanisms.

Polyethylene, vinyl, and canvas tarps, wetted with a VCI, are used as covers for long-term storage of vehicles. These covers also provide protection from ultraviolet radiation, humidity, rain, snow, dust, and mold. The covers are easy to install, are resistant to the climate factors, and are durable.

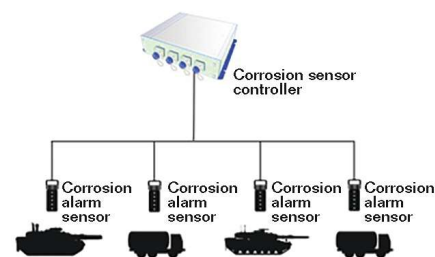


FIGURE 4 Corrosion control monitoring system.

Corrosion Control Monitoring

Corrosion control monitoring systems help to maintain a high level of operational readiness for preserved military equipment and vehicles by drastically reducing corrosion problems during storage. Early detection and resolution of corrosion problems not only help reduce maintenance costs but also provide the logical methodology to maintain operational readiness while minimizing the need for repair or replacement during mobilization. The system enables real-time monitoring of preserved military equipment. It consists of sensor controllers and corrosion sensors and is designed to be easily scalable according to the number of equipment packs or vehicles to be monitored (Figure 4).

Corrosion control monitoring software enables fleet management personnel to easily identify corrosion problems on a specific piece of equipment or vehicle. It alerts personnel upon detection of corrosion at a specific location, and the alert returns to its normal level only after the problem is rectified. This system reduces the regular need for on-site inspection and enhances productivity, helping to improve staffing allocation within the fleet management team.

Conclusion

Proper use of VCIs in combination with a system of automated corrosion sensors can be an effective means of preserving equipment and vehicles during long-term storage. Critical advantages include savings in maintenance costs and prevention of corrosion damage that can reduce efficiency.

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N. CHENG is the founder and chair of Magna Group, consisting of Magna International; Magna F.E. Chemical Pte., Ltd.; Magna Chemical Canada, Ltd.; Magna Australia Pvt., Ltd.; and Lupromax International Pte., Ltd. He graduated as a marine engineer under the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Scholarship. He is recognized as Singapore's leading inventor with the highest number of patents from the Intellectual Property of Singapore. He is the inventor of several technologies for corrosion protection such as VCIs, heat-activated technology lubricants, molecular reaction surface, concrete rebar inhibitors, vapor biocorrosion inhibitors, and colloidal corrosion inhibitors.

J. CHENG is the president and CEO of Magna Chemical Canada, Inc. and Lupromax USA, LLC. He graduated with a B.S. degree in education. He oversees the activities of the Magna Chemical Group in the NAFTA Region. He contributed to the NAVSEA Warfare Research Center-Dahlgren Division by providing technical information for the development of a gelled fuel used for controlling forest fire fighting applications. He is also the inventor of formulations for VCIs in cohesive paper and electro-spray, and designed master batch additives along with several of their VCI products that are being applied worldwide.

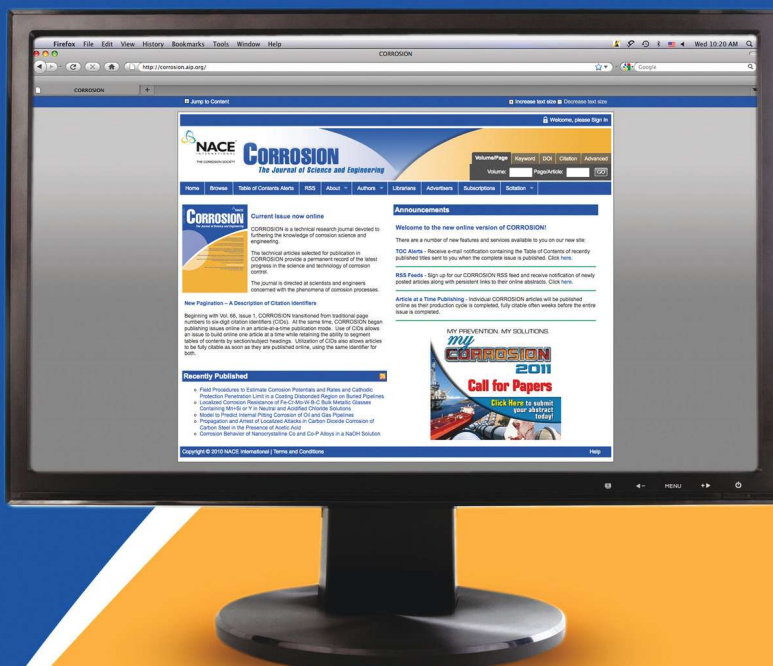
B. VALDEZ was the director of the Institute of Engineering (2006-2013), Universidad Autonoma de Baja California, Blvd. Benito Juarez y calle de la Normal s/n, Colonia Insurgentes Este, 21280 Mexicali, Baja California, Mexico. He has a B.Sc. in chemical engineering, an M.Sc. and Ph.D. in chemistry, and is a member of the Mexican Academy of Science and the National System of Researchers in Mexico. He was the guest editor of *Corrosion Reviews*, in which he produced two special issues on corrosion control in geothermal plants and the electronics industry. He is a full professor at the University of Baja California. His activities include corrosion research, consultancy, and control in industrial plants and environments. He received a NACE Distinguished Service Award. He has been a member of NACE for 26 years.

M. SCHORR is a professor (Dr. Honoris Causa) at the Institute of Engineering, Universidad Autonoma de Baja California. He has a B.Sc. degree in chemistry and an M.Sc. degree in materials engineering from the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology, with 50 years of experience in industrial corrosion control. From 1986 to 2004, he was editor of *Corrosion Reviews*. He has published 360 scientific and technical articles on materials and corrosion in English, Spanish, and Hebrew. He has worked as a corrosion consultant and professor in Israel, the United States, Latin America, Spain, South Africa, and Europe. He received a NACE Distinguished Service Award. He is a member of the National System of Researchers in Mexico. He has been a member of NACE for 23 years.

R. SALINAS is a mechatronics engineer, e-mail: ricardo.silanas@uabc.edu. He received his diploma from the Mexicali Institute of Technology, Mexico. He obtained his M.Sc. degree with the presentation of the thesis, "Phosphating of Steel Equipment for Corrosion Protection in Zirconium Containing Salts," from the Institute of Engineering of the University of Baja California in 2015. He is currently working on his Ph.D. project in the area of corrosion prevention and control of industrial equipment.

J.M. BASTIDAS has a Ph.D. in chemistry and is a full professor at the National Centre for Metallurgical Research (CENIM) of the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC). He has been involved as leader in the development of over 45 research projects on corrosion. He has authored 240 original peer-reviewed journal articles, including book chapters; has presented 115 communications in congresses; and has supervised 30 Ph.D. theses and M.Sc. degrees. He was a winner in the Joint Global Call for Research 2005 project financed by the International Copper Association, USA. During the IMRS Congress in 2011, he received a Meritorious Award to the International Trajectory from NACE and the NACE Central Mexico Section. He is a member of the editorial board of five international journals. **MP**

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