



Army Enhances Protective Equipment Quality Assurance

U.S. Department of Defense

Office of the Assistance Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs)

The Department of the Army announced today that it has established additional quality control measures to further ensure that body armor testing documentation and procurement processes are rigorous, consistent, and use available best practices. To this end, the Army has added several quality control positions to include a Senior Executive Service position as the quality assurance director of personal protective equipment. This new senior-level position will report directly to the Army Acquisition Executive. These changes address issues raised in a GAO report released today entitled "WARFIGHTER SUPPORT, Independent Expert Assessment of Army Body Armor Test Results and Procedures Needed Before Fielding."

In addition, the Army will conduct a detailed review of procedures for all personal protective equipment testing and evaluation utilizing external consultants who are experts in best practices for both quality assurance and process audits.

Though the GAO report comments on Army testing procedures, the quality and effectiveness of the body armor has been confirmed by the Department of Defense (DoD) Director, Operational Test & Evaluation (DOT&E), who is the final independent DoD authority on survivability testing of body armor. DOT&E provided oversight during the timeframe GAO observed the Army testing and came to the same conclusion as the Army -- the body armor met performance requirements.

As DOT&E noted, our most important objective is fielding body armor that defeats the threat to our soldiers. "In spite of flaws in procedures," they stated "plates that were fielded have consistently defeated and continue to defeat the threat for which they were designed."

Also noted, "While the GAO report 90-827 points out some weaknesses in procedures and discrepancies in testing recently conducted by ATC (Aberdeen Test Center), it is the DoD's position that these findings have no significant impact on the test results and the subsequent contracting actions taken by the Army."

Even though the Army has every confidence that the body armor is effective, it is important to note that the body armor referenced in this study has not been issued to our soldiers.

There is no higher priority for the Army than the safety of our soldiers. Anything that erodes the confidence soldiers and the American people have in the body armor provided is of the utmost importance to the Army and Army leadership. We are confident our body armor continues to be the best available and the Army is ready to answer all concerns raised in the GAO report.

Source: <http://www.defenselink.mil/releases/release.aspx?releaseid=13052>