



LOUISE M. SLAUGHTER  
CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES  
28TH DISTRICT, NEW YORK

June 26, 2012

Honorable Lynne M. Halbrooks  
Acting Inspector General  
Department of Defense  
400 Army Navy Drive  
Arlington, VA 22202-4704

Dear Inspector General Halbrooks:

I write to you today to request that you review the Department of Defense's (DoD) current testing standards for Advanced Combat Helmets (ACHs).

Since 2006, I have worked extensively with the Department's Inspector General to ensure that our troops are equipped with the best available body armor. I know you share my belief that America's servicemen and women deserve the highest quality protective armor and equipment when they are in harm's way for our country. As the Department has learned from past experience, safe armor and equipment in the field starts with comprehensive and effective testing procedures at home.

Government employees and contractors have shared concerns with my office that a recent modification to the standard for ballistic testing for ACHs would allow up to 17 penetrations out of 240 test shots. The result of that standard is a 90% probability of no perforation with 90% confidence during first article testing. I am concerned that a standard that allows 17 penetrations puts contractors above the need to produce effective and consistent equipment for the men and women of the military.

While procurement standards have improved in recent years, the current standard poses an unacceptably high risk for equipment intended to protect American lives.

In 2010, the Department was forced to recall 44,000 ACHs after it was determined the helmets did not meet service standards due to questionable manufacturing processes. In the field, a penetration to a combat helmet could result in a fatality or extremely serious injury, which is why the Department should continue to take testing and performance concerns seriously.

Our goal should always be the most effective equipment possible and as such, I strongly urge you to review ballistics-testing procedures currently in place to ensure we are meeting this goal.

Thank you for your continued commitment to the men and woman of our Armed Forces. I am confident that you have our troops' best interests in mind and will continue do your very best to improve the quality standards of all protective body armor and equipment. I have also enclosed a copy of a letter to Secretary Panetta for your review. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Louise M. Slaughter". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Louise McIntosh Slaughter  
Member of Congress

Cc: Honorable Leon E. Panetta, Secretary of Defense