

## Thomas Gimble letter

April 19, 2006

The Honorable Thomas F. Gimble

Acting Inspector General

U.S. Department of Defense

400 Army Navy Drive

Arlington, VA 22202-4704

Dear Inspector General Gimble,

I am writing to request that you review the Department of Defense's (DoD) procurement policies for body armor and armored vehicles.

As you know, an internal Pentagon memo - first revealed by The New York Times in January - found that 80 percent of marines killed in Iraq due to upper body wounds could have survived if they had extra body armor. This troubling news follows earlier revelations that our troops went into Iraq without enough bulletproof vests and armored vehicles necessary to safeguard their lives.

In addition to DoD policies regarding body armor, I am concerned with the DoD's procurement history for armored vehicles. As with body armor, the DoD failed at the outset of the Iraq war to equip our troops with the armored vehicles needed to protect them from improvised explosive devices (IEDs). The New York Times has reported that DoD continues to rely on just one small company in Ohio, Armor Holdings, to produce the military's primary vehicle, the Humvee. Initiatives to speed up delivery of the new Humvees remain stalled, as the company is severely backlogged with orders. The Times also has reported that a small company in South Carolina, Force Protection, was given a contract in May 2005 for 122 armored vehicles, despite the fact that Force Protection has never mass-produced Humvees in the past. Predictably, the 122 armored vehicles have not all arrived in Iraq, and the vehicles that continue to be plagued by mechanical failures.

In light of DoD's troubling pattern of misguided decisions regarding supplies for our troops, I respectfully request that your examine DoD's procurement history for body armor and armored vehicles, and determine whether or not proper policies were followed. I would like specific information on why DoD issued contracts to Armor Holdings and Force Protection. In addition, I request that your office determine the effect the Army's ban on privately bought body armor will have on the safety of our service men and women.

I appreciate your attention into this request and await your prompt response. Should you have any additional questions, please contact Alan Snyder of my staff at (202) 225-3615.

Sincerely,

Louise Slaughter

Member of Congress