

April 2, 2008 - New DOD Inspector General Report Questions Body Armor Contracting Practices

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New DOD Inspector General Report Questions
Body Armor Contracting Practices

Reports Nearly Half of Body Armor
Contractors Did Not Perform Basic Tests On Equipment

Washington, DC – Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY-28), Chairwoman of the House Committee on Rules, today released a new report from the Defense Department's Inspector General (IG) detailing the procurement history for body armor components of the U.S. Army and Marine Corps. Rep. Slaughter requested that the report be conducted in April 2006.

The report can be viewed in its
entirety [here](#).

The IG found that Army officials did not follow Federal Acquisition Requirements (FAR) in procuring body armor components, and identified deficiencies in 16 of 28 Army contracts and orders reviewed. In 11 of the 28 contracts, adequate files were not kept and the IG could not determine whether the best informed decisions were made for procurement of body armor. In 13 of the 28 contracts or orders, contracting officials did not require or perform First Article Testing (FAT), which ensures that the manufacturing process will produce an adequate product before it is sent to our troops.

"This report indicates that nearly half of the Army's contractors did not perform the most basic test on the body armor before it was sent to our troops fighting overseas," said Rep. Slaughter. "During a time of war, it's shameful that the Army would not scrupulously ensure that every piece of equipment is properly tested, especially a fundamentally life and death product such as body armor. By failing to consistently perform the First Article Tests that safeguard against the production of shoddy equipment, the Army increased the odds that our troops received defective armor and that millions of taxpayer dollars were wasted."

"I demand that those who negligently and callously gambled with the lives of our brave men and women in uniform be fired immediately," Slaughter concluded.

BACKGROUND AND FINDINGS OF the REPORT

The Department of Defense Inspector General's audit scope was limited to Army and Marine Corps body armor contracts and orders awarded between January 2004 and December 2006. During this time period, the Army and Marine Corps issued contracts and Federal Supply Schedule (FSS) orders valued at more than \$5.2 billion for body armor components.

DoD IG found that Army officials did not follow Federal Acquisition Requirements (FAR) in procuring body armor components, and identified deficiencies in 16 of 28 Army contracts and orders reviewed. The DoD IG did not find any deficiencies in the 12 Marine Corps contracts and orders reviewed.

IG found two main deficiencies within these Army contracts: 1) failure by contracting officials to require or perform adequate testing of body armor, and 2) failure to keep adequate files documenting these contracts.

Failure
to Perform or Require FAT for Body Armor Procurement

Contracting officers use First Article Testing (FAT) to reduce the risk of the Government receiving a product that does not conform to contract specifications. Normally, a first article is tested after the contract is awarded to verify that the manufacturing process has generated an acceptable item and to catch and correct any defects in the process before more items are produced. In 13 of the 28 Army contract and orders, contracting officials did not require or perform FAT.

“First article testing” (FAT) is one of the most important lines of defense to ensure that our troops receive body armor that meets the minimum standard for combat operations. FAT makes sure from the ground level that a contractor is capable of manufacturing a product that can meet or exceed the evaluation criteria specified in the contract.

Failures in Contract Documentation

Files and documentation for all contracts must provide a complete history of the acquisition and the award. In 11 of the 28 contracts and orders, the documentation was incomplete. Therefore, it cannot be determined whether informed decisions were made for procurement of body armor.

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