

Fact Sheet: GAO Report on Army Body Armor Testing Procedures

On October 16, 2009, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) is expected to release a report on recent testing of the Army's next generation body armor. The report is critical of the Army's and the Office of the Director, Operational Test and Evaluation (DOT&E)'s failure to apply consistent processes, protocols, and test techniques for the evaluation of the next generation small arms protective insert (X-SAPI), body armor.

Primary GAO Findings include:

- The Army and DOT&E did not achieve Preliminary Design Model (PDM) test objectives of determining, as a basis for awarding contracts, which designs met performance objectives; and
- The Army and DOT&E may not have met First Article Test (FAT) objectives of determining whether contracted designs met performance objectives and whether vendors could produce, in full rate capacity, plates that passed preliminary design model tests. The Department of Defense (DOD) provided 25 pages of comments addressing GAO recommendations and principal findings.

DOD generally agreed there were deviations from testing protocols as identified by GAO, but maintained that these issues did not affect the testing results. DOD is currently not fielding X-SAPI plates to the warfighter and is treating these plates as contingency stock.

Below are several key points:

- None of the body armor in question has been fielded to our troops. The plates in question will not be fielded unless the current threats in Iraq and Afghanistan change.
- Our warfighters still have the best body armor in the world and it continues to save lives.
- The Armed Services Committee has been closely following body armor related issues for years.
- The GAO was directed by the Armed Services Subcommittee on Air and Land Forces to investigate the Army's test procedures.
- The GAO report reveals that although the Army has made improvements in their test procedures and protocols, there is still room for improvement.
- The Army recently briefed the Committee that as a result of the GAO report they plan on conducting additional testing.
- The Ranking Member and Chairman of the Air and Land Forces Subcommittee have written a letter to the Secretary of the Army and Members of the Armed

Services Committee continue to closely monitor the situation in order to ensure our troops have the best life-saving body armor.

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Josh Holly

Republican Spokesman, U.S. House Armed Services Committee

Rep. Howard P. "Buck" McKeon, Ranking Member

d: 202.226.3988

c: 202.236.7909

e: josh.holly@mail.house.gov

t: <http://twitter.com/JoshHolly>

fb: <http://www.facebook.com/joshholly>

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