

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED BY
THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

STATEMENT

OF

**COLONEL EDWARD J. SMITH
PRODUCT GROUP DIRECTOR
COMBAT EQUIPMENT AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS
MARINE CORPS SYSTEMS COMMAND**

BEFORE THE

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

ON

MARINE CORPS BODY ARMOR PROTECTION EFFORTS

6 JUNE 2007

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Colonel Edward J. Smith
United States Marine Corps

Colonel Ed Smith is currently serving as the Product Group Director for Combat Equipment and Support Systems at Marine Corps Systems Command in Quantico, VA.

He was commissioned upon graduating from Shippensburg University in 1982. Upon completion of the Infantry Officers Course in 1983, Lieutenant Smith was assigned to 3d Battalion, 8th Marines, Camp Lejeune, NC where he served as a Weapons Platoon Commander, Company Executive Officer and a Company Commander, deploying to the Mediterranean Sea twice. In January 1986, he attended the Logistics Officers Course and was transferred to the MCAS, New River, NC where he served as the Station Assistant Logistics Officer. In May 1988, Captain Smith was assigned to 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, 29 Palms, CA where he served as the S-4 during a unit deployment to Okinawa and Operation Desert Storm.

In June 1991, Captain Smith was transferred to the US Army, Transportation Officers Advance Course, Ft Eustis, VA, as a student, graduating with honors. Following graduation, he went to Marine Corps Systems Command, for duty with the Program Manger for Light Armored Vehicles in Detroit, MI as the Logistics Support Officer, a Project Officer and the Assistant Program Manager for Operations until May 1995. From 1995 to 1999, Major Smith served as the S-4 and Executive Officer for the 2d SRIG and then the Executive Officer for H&S Battalion, II MEF. In June 1999, he was transferred to the US Army Command & General Staff College, Ft Leavenworth, KS, as a student, where he also earned a Master's Degree in Procurement and Acquisitions Management.

In July 2000, Lieutenant Colonel Smith returned to Marine Corps Systems Command in Quantico, VA and was assigned as the Operations Officer for Systems Engineering and Integration for C4I systems. In June 2002, he was reassigned as the Team Leader and subsequently the Program Manager for the Expeditionary Fire Support System. He was transferred to the 3D MLG during October 2004 and served as the G-4 and Inspector. From May 2005 to January 2006, Colonel Smith served as the Officer in Charge, MARCENT Coordination Element in Kuwait in support of OIF/OEF. Returning to the MLG in February 2006, he was reassigned as the Chief of Staff. Col Smith returned to Marine Corps Systems Command in July 2006.

Colonel Smith's personal awards include the Legion of Merit with gold star, the Meritorious Service Medal with gold star, the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal with gold star and combat "V" and the Combat Action Ribbon. He is a Life Member of the Marine Corps League, Landis-McCleaf Detachment and is married to the former Robin Jones of Oakland, California. They have one son, Edward III.

Chairman Skelton, Congressman Hunter, and distinguished Members of the Committee, I am honored to appear before you today and for this opportunity to discuss Marine Corps body armor. But first, on behalf of all Marines and their families, I want to thank you for your continued support to meet the needs of our Marines as they fight the Long War on Terror.

Force protection is the top priority for the Marine Corps. We are committed to providing body armor and other personal protection equipment to save Marines' lives, reduce Marine casualties, and limit the severity of our casualties. Our warfighters have the best body armor available. According to the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, there have been no deaths attributed to the penetration of the Enhanced-Small Arms Protective Inserts or E-SAPI plates by a threat round that it is designed to defeat. Our body armor works! Our mission is to ensure that one-hundred percent of our body armor requirements are quickly met with the best systems available; and, to my knowledge, there are no available commercial body armor protection products more capable of saving our warfighters' lives and reducing injuries in combat than the personal protection body armor equipment I am going to describe for you today.

It is important that we understand the environment in which our fielded systems will operate. We are in a constantly changing environment that requires us to be agile and flexible to combating an ever-changing threat.

The Interceptor Body Armor is the foundation for our modular ballistic body armoring system. It consists of an Outer Tactical Vest (OTV) or Modular Tactical Vest (MTV), soft body armor, groin protector, throat protector and Enhanced Small Arms Protective Inserts (E-SAPI) and Side-ESAPI plates. All of our protection equipment is certified through rigorous ballistic testing that must withstand fluctuating temperatures and extreme environmental conditions. The Army and the Marine Corps use the same test protocols. In addition to testing by the

government, testing is also conducted at an independent ballistic laboratory. I am confident in the unbiased results.

We take a rapid development and fielding approach by initiating innovative modifications to our equipment to improve its protection for the Marine that meets evolving threats and future challenges. After a system is fielded, we continue to look for ways to further improve those systems. We collaborate with industry both here and abroad for design, development, and production assistance; with our sister Services to identify areas for joint activities and testing; and with the Office of Naval Research and the joint Science & Technology community on current and future technologies. Additionally, we turn to the medical community for their expertise to evaluate and make our systems the safest they can be for our warfighters.

The wartime environment constantly changes, and no one is better suited to determine what would be most effective in any given situation than the warfighter. With our modular ballistic body armoring system, we provide body armor solutions that can be configured to meet varying threat levels and mission requirements. Operational commanders are then able to determine what equipment their Marines will wear based upon specific mission requirements and environmental conditions.

Evolution from Outer Tactical Vest (OTV) to Modular Tactical Vest (MTV)

Fully recognizing the trade-off between weight, protection, fatigue, and movement restriction, we are providing Marines the latest in personal protective equipment. A current example is the Modular Tactical Vest or MTV.

Combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan highlighted a need to evolve our personal protective vest system. Therefore, in March of this year, we started transitioning to a newly

designed MTV. The design features of the MTV were developed from direct input provided by Marines and Sailors from One, Two and Three Marine Expeditionary Forces. Marine Corps Systems Command used that input to host an industry day with twenty different vendors to share the required capability we wanted filled. Eighteen of these participating vendors submitted a prototype solution for consideration. From these eighteen submissions, six candidate solutions were selected and included in a Limited User Evaluation. As a result of this evaluation, three candidate solutions were selected for a more rigorous Field User Evaluation. The final optimal solution, which was more than 80 percent of the field user participants, selected the MTV.

The MTV provides a number of enhancements to the OTV. These include a quick release for emergency egress and medical access, increased lower back and kidney fragment protection, integral Side SAPI Small Arms Protective Insert carriers, channels for communication wires, improved weight distribution, increased load carrying capability and rifle bolsters. The MTV incorporates our existing Enhanced Small Arms Protective Inserts, or E-SAPI plates.

The acquisition objective for the Modular Tactical Vest is 60,000 systems. Deliveries began in March 2007, with anticipated completion of deliveries in October 2007.

Enhanced Small Arms Protective Inserts (E-SAPI)

Every Marine in theater today has the Enhanced Small Arms Protective Insert. These inserts provide more protection against a wider variety of small arms threats than its predecessor the Small Arms Protective Insert. It protects against a wide range of 7.62mm rifle ammunition threats. Today, all Marines are issued the E-SAPI prior to their deployment.

Enhanced Side Small Arms Protective Inserts (Enhanced Side SAPI)

Operation ENDURING FREEDOM/Operation IRAQI FREEDOM I/Operation IRAQI FREEDOM II is the first time in U.S. history that all wartime casualties have been autopsied by the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology (AFIP) to determine a cause of death. An evaluation of data collected from autopsies performed on Marines confirmed that side torso protection should be added to our earlier modular personal protection system. Therefore, through a rapid development and fielding effort, we successfully satisfied the in theater requirement for 28,882 Side Small Arms Protective Insert systems early last year (2006).

All Marines in theater are issued the Enhanced Side Small Arms Protective Inserts (Side-SAPI) that will provide the individual Marine greater protection against a wider variety of small arms threats to the side of their torso prior to their deployment. The Marine Corps is currently fielding these plates to the rest of the Corps.

Closing

It is of the utmost importance to the Marine Corps that we provide robust personal protection solutions to our warfighters -- and provide these solutions to them immediately. Working with our nation's dedicated manufacturing base, the Marine Corps continues to be able to provide the best possible levels of personal protection to known and anticipated threats; and we remain committed to aggressively advance our equipment to meet the ever-changing threats.

Working with the Army, the technology base and industry, we are doing everything we can to ensure the safety of our Marines by providing them with the best and most effective force protection equipment. The lives of our Marines, Soldiers, and Sailors are a precious asset. Their preservation through better and more capable equipment has been, and will always be, the

highest priority of the Marine Corps Systems Command. Your support for continued robust and fully funded force protection programs has permitted the acquisition community and the Department of Defense to continue with proactive approaches to counter the threat and ensure our warfighters' safety.

We cannot afford to lose sight of the lessons we have learned about our enemy, and about our own capabilities, through the loss of American lives. On behalf of your Marines, I extend great appreciation for your support to date and thank you in advance for your ongoing efforts to support our brave servicemen and women in harm's way. Thank you.