



Highlights of [GAO-07-911T](#), a testimony before the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

In recent years, a number of reports and newspaper articles have cited concerns regarding the level of protection and the available amounts of body armor to protect deployed service members. As part of GAO's efforts to monitor the Department of Defense's (DOD) and the services' action to protect ground forces, GAO reviewed the Army and Marine Corps's actions to address these concerns.

On April 26, 2007, GAO issued a report regarding the Army and the Marine Corps's individual body armor systems. Today's testimony summarizes the report's findings regarding the extent to which the Army and Marine Corps (1) have met the theater requirements for body armor, (2) have the controls in place to assure that the manufacturing and fielding of body armor meet requirements, and (3) have shared information regarding their efforts on body armor ballistic requirements and testing. The report also included additional information concerning whether contractors or non-DOD civilians obtain body armor in the same way as U.S. forces and DOD civilians given the number of contractors and non-DOD civilians in CENTCOM's area of operation. GAO did not make recommendations in the report. DOD officials did not provide written comments on the report but technical comments were incorporated as appropriate.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-911T.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact William M. Solis at (202) 512-8365 or solisw@gao.gov.

DEFENSE LOGISTICS

Army and Marine Corps' Body Armor Requirements, Controls, and Other Issues

What GAO Found

Army and Marine Corps body armor currently meets theater ballistic requirements and the required amount needed for personnel in theater, including the amounts needed for the surge of troops into Iraq. The Interceptor Body Armor (IBA) consists of an outer tactical vest with ballistic inserts or plates that cover the front, back, and sides. The vest and inserts currently meet the theater ballistic requirements. The vest provides protection from 9mm rounds, while the inserts provide protection against 7.62mm armor-piercing rounds. CENTCOM requires that all U.S. military forces and all DOD civilians in the area of operations receive the body armor system. Currently, service members receive all service-specific standard components of the body armor system prior to deploying. The Army and the Marine Corps provide the DOD civilians with components of the armor system.

The Army and Marine Corps have controls in place during manufacturing and after fielding to assure that body armor meets requirements. Both services conduct quality and ballistic testing prior to fielding, and lots (a grouping of items varying in number) are rejected if the standards are not met. They also conduct formal testing on every lot of body armor (vests and protective inserts) prior to acceptance and issuance to troops. During production, which is done at several sites, the lots of body armor are sent to a National Institute of Justice-certified laboratory for ballistic testing and to the Defense Contract Management Agency for quality testing (size, weight, stitching) prior to issuance to troops. Although not required to do so, after the systems have been used in the field, the Army does limited ballistic and environmental testing to determine future improvements.

The Army and Marine Corps share information regarding ballistic requirements and testing although they are not required to do so. Title 10 of the U.S. Code allows each service to have separate programs, according to Army and Marine Corps officials. Nevertheless, the services are sharing information regarding ongoing research and development for the next generation of body armor.

DOD Instruction 3020.41 allows DOD to provide body armor to contractors and non-DOD civilians where permitted by applicable DOD instructions and military department regulations and where specified under the terms of the contract. It is CENTCOM's position that body armor will be provided to contractors if it is part of the terms and conditions of the contract. However, the officials indicated that commanders, at their discretion, can provide body armor to any personnel within their area of operation.