

American Troops in Iraq Deserve the Best Equipment

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Our men and women in uniform have shown incredible bravery in fighting to complete their missions in Iraq and Afghanistan and have never hesitated to answer the call to duty in America's time of need. Providing these heroes with the best equipment available should never be a contentious issue. However, a recent NBC report has again ignited concerns that the armor currently issued to our troops may not be the best available.

Controversy over the military body armor issued to American troops in combat has persisted since the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan began. At times, many families have felt that their loved ones have not received the best protection available and they felt compelled to go out and spend their own money.

Since 2003, the Pentagon has required personnel in Iraq and Afghanistan to be equipped with body armor. However, as recently as 2005, there were reports of body armor shortages for U.S. troops. In addition, a study commissioned by NBC news which tested the body armor currently issued to troops against a more flexible type of body armor called Dragon skin, has again raised concerns that superior body armor may be available. As a result, I joined a bipartisan group of 40 colleagues in requesting that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) investigate the matter.

Specifically, we requested that the GAO:

- Evaluate the Pentagon-issued body armor against other armor currently available to determine which body armor system is most effective;
- Evaluate the testing procedure used by the military to evaluate body armor products and;
- Examine how body armor policies are applied across the conventional and Special Forces in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Our men and women in uniform deserve the best and most effective resources available to protect themselves in battle and get the care they need when they return home. I will continue to work to make sure there is independent oversight of government bureaucracy so that problems like this are identified, investigated, and fixed.

Congressman Tim Mahoney

Florida's 16th Congressional District