

**DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE**

**PRESENTATION TO THE TACTICAL AIR AND LAND FORCES SUBCOMMITTEE**

**COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES**

**UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**SUBJECT: FORCE PROTECTION ISSUES**

**STATEMENT OF: BRIGADIER GENERAL GARY T. MCCOY  
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DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF/LOGISTICS, INSTALLATIONS &  
MISSION SUPPORT  
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE**

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UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

## **Introduction**

Chairman Weldon, Ranking Member Abercrombie, and distinguished members of the committee, I want to thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to present the status of Air Force requirements for force protection equipment and discuss how we determine requirements for expeditionary Airmen. As the Director of Logistics Readiness, Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics, Installations and Mission Support, it is my privilege to report on our force protection efforts, our successes and our challenges for the future. On behalf of Secretary Wynne, General Moseley and the men and women of the United States Air Force, thank you for your continued, strong support.

First let me begin by stating, the Air Force continues to provide significant support to the Global War on Terrorism. We currently have over 30,000 personnel deployed in support of Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom. Since 9/11, we have deployed over 370,000 Airmen to aggressively fight the war on terror. We have flown over 422,000 (80% of the total Coalition air effort) combat sorties, moved 3.7 million passengers and close to 1.7 million short tons of cargo, and delivered almost 500 million gallons of fuel. We are also still actively involved in humanitarian operations around the globe. In the wake of the Tsunami that devastated Indonesia and South Asia, our Airmen responded immediately by airlifting over 24 million pounds of relief supplies and 8,000 people. Additionally, there are almost 5,000 Airmen performing “in-lieu of” missions with the US Army, including convoy support, detainee operations, protective service details, military transition and reconstruction teams (rebuilding infrastructure in Iraq and Afghanistan). The Air Force has made enormous strides in obtaining more advanced protective gear and equipment for our Airmen, specifically in the areas of combat helmets, body armor and up-armored, highly mobile, multi-wheeled vehicles.

## **Protective Gear and Equipment**

The Air Force has adopted for use by our Security Forces personnel, the Advanced Combat Helmet, used by the United States Army and when not available, the Marine Corps' Lightweight Combat Helmet is used as a suitable substitute. Each of these helmets includes a suspension system consisting of padding and a mesh or sling option as appropriate. The Personal Armor System, Ground Troops is currently the standard helmet for the Air Force; however, to provide additional cushioning, units are procuring the Oregon Aero Ballistic Liner & Suspension System kit. It includes a four-point chinstrap and padding engineered to replace the sling liner in the current helmet. The kit is designed to decrease the risk of damage to the skull or brain injury due to blast forces, fragments, vehicle accidents, and falls. Future plans may require a replacement to our current Air Force standard helmet. At that time, consideration will be given to fielding the Advanced Combat Helmet and/or Lightweight Combat Helmet across the broader Air Force.

In addition to helmet considerations, we have also made great strides fielding improved body armor for our Airmen. The current fielding plan for Individual Body Armor supports our forces deployed to the USCENTCOM AOR and National Military Strategy objectives. Our initial focus for body armor was primarily on United States Central Command Area of Responsibility requirements. Individual Body Armor is issued to all our Service members and Department of Defense personnel assigned in Iraq, Kuwait, Afghanistan, and the Horn of Africa.

The current Air Force Standard for body armor consists of the Outer Tactical Vest combined with two rifle plates called Small Arms Protective Inserts. Beginning in FY05 the Air Force began fielding the next generation rifle plate called Enhanced Small Arms Protective Inserts, which provides similar protection to the National Institute of Justice Level IV+

protection and safeguards against armor-piercing rounds. Personnel deploying into the Area of Operation are issued individual body armor in-theater at one of the three Expeditionary Theater Distribution Centers located at Qatar, Ali Al Salem, and Manas.

Finally, the Air Force is continuing to make progress to improve ground vehicle protection. Our current requirement for up-armored highly mobile, multi-wheeled vehicles is 280. We have met that requirement.

In 2004, we transferred 196 vehicles to the United States Army to assist them in meeting critical shortfalls in executing their war effort; supplemental funding was received in fiscal year 2005 to offset the transfer.

In response to ongoing changes to base security protection requirements and to provide greater firepower and protection against improvised explosive devices, our security forces community is examining the way they conduct base security operations in the Area of Responsibility. They are fielding up-armored highly mobile, multi-wheeled vehicles and exploring the use of M1117s, Armored Security Vehicles, to support air base security operations. The M1117 is designed to provide maximum survivability and provides almost twice the ballistic protection of the current highly mobile, multi-wheeled vehicle (12.7mm vs. 7.62mm).

### **Challenges**

The Air Force is continuing to make significant improvements but even so, there are still challenges to overcome. Our goal is to submit a request for \$61M in Global War on Terrorism supplemental funding to purchase the Advanced Combat Helmet for the Air Force. Additionally, the current highly mobile, multi-wheeled vehicle does not provide sufficient armor or operational capability to protect passengers from improvised explosive devices, landmines, and rocket propelled grenades that are increasingly defeating the current armor configuration with devastating effects. In order to combat this issue and to support their new base security

operation plan, the Security Forces community has submitted an unfunded requirement of \$51.8M in the FY07 Presidential Budget Amendment funding which buys 60 of 115 up-armored, highly mobile, multi-wheeled vehicles and 58 of 89 Armored Security Vehicles. An additional requirement for \$29M will be submitted in the FY07 Global War on Terrorism supplemental.

In addition, the chassis and power train on the up-armored highly mobile, multi-wheeled vehicle are under extreme stress from the additional weight (add-on armor, sandbags, additional steel plating, etc) necessary to provide the protection needed to mitigate the effects of improvised explosive devices, landmines, and rocket-propelled grenades. The added weight has decreased the operational speed of the vehicles during convoys, increased braking distances, caused stress cracks in vehicle frames, and has increased engine and transmission failures.

### **Summary**

Improved helmets and body armor are critical to protecting each and every Airman and we are committed to obtaining more advanced protective gear and equipment to ensure the safety of our Airmen. We are also aggressively committed to acquiring a ground vehicle capable of defeating the continuing proliferation of improvised explosive devices, and will continue to assist the Security Forces community, if needed, in securing funding for the new and improved M1117s purchase. The Air Force is on a continuing path to transform from an old Cold War structure to one that best executes expeditionary warfare. Tantamount to executing expeditionary operations is ensuring our Airmen are given the protective gear and equipment they need to accomplish the mission and keep them alive. Thank you again for your dedication and all you do to support our Airmen.