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Marine Corps Tested Equipment Provides Best Available Solution to the Individual Warfighter

New Policy Issued as Guidance to Safeguard the Warfighter from Non-Standardized Body Armor and Personal Protective Equipment

QUANTICO, Va. – Protecting the lives of all Marines, Soldiers and Sailors is the government's highest priority, and the Marine Corps has outfitted its Marines with the best Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) available. Directed by the Commandant of the Marine Corps, on April 17, the Marine Corps issued Marine Administrative Message (MARADMIN) 262/07 regarding the wear and purchase of armor and PPE. PPE refers to protective body armor, helmets, goggles, clothing, and other gear designed to protect the wearer's body from battlefield injuries.

The intent of the Marine Corps' policy on the wear and purchase of armor and PPE is to publicize guidance to commanders of deployed Marines in combat zones on the requirements and authorization for wear of government issued and approved body armor and other personal protection.

"The Marine Corps has fielded body armor improvements and will continue to provide Marines with the best available solutions," said Col. Ed Smith, Marine Corps Systems Command's product director for Combat Equipment and Support Systems. "Body armor improvements have been incremental based on increased threats and needs of the warfighter."

The new policy ensures that operating forces are wearing the best available personal protective gear. Commanders are offered flexibility to make tactical decisions on the use and wear of approved Body Armor based on enemy threat, environmental conditions and assigned tactical missions. The accountability, uniformity and functionality of the protective gear being issued has met all the testing and validation criteria to meet the Marine Corps' requirements, and Marines are only provided PPE items that have met the government test standards.

Commanders are not authorized to use unit government funds to purchase commercial PPE items that have not met government test standards.

Commercially purchased body armor and protective equipment is generally not authorized for wear unless the combatant commanders make a decision based on the mission profile and threat. As stated in MARADMIN 262/07, wear of a lower level of protection than offered by the government must be approved by the local commanders' higher headquarters.

The Marine Corps and Army work closely with industry to improve current PPE and routinely test emerging technologies to determine their effectiveness and suitability to adoption by the military. Significant advancements of next generation body armor are estimated to take three to five years. The Marine Corps is committed to continue to work with the other services, government labs and industry to push technology to the next stage as part of its long-term effort.

"The needs of Marines have evolved as a result of their missions during the War on Terror," said Dan Fitzgerald, program manager for Infantry Combat Equipment. "It is MCSC's responsibility to procure and sustain our Marines with the best possible solutions to ensure their safety and to enable the success of their missions. We need to prepare for everything, not just some things."

An example of body armor improvements is the new Modular Tactical Vest (MTV). The MTV was created as an interim solution as a response to an Urgent Universal Need Statement by combat operations highlighting the need for operational enhancements to the current vest. Providing enhancements to the existing Outer Tactical Vest, the MTV instills greater comfort and confidence in Marines' warfighting capability.

"Ensuring the safety of Marines during operational efforts is our top priority," stated Fitzgerald. "We will always do whatever we can to rapidly get the right equipment to our Marines. We listen to their experience as they translate requirements to us, and then we ensure they are given the best options available."

For more information outlining the Marine Corps' current policy regarding the wear of PPE, please refer to MARADMIN 262/07:

<http://www.usmc.mil/maradmins/maradmin2000.nsf/37f49138fc3d9c00852569b9000af6b7/038ee0388b22016f852572c00076d885?OpenDocument>.