
**U.S. REPRESENTATIVE CURT WELDON (R-PA) HOLDS A HEARING ON COMBAT
EQUIPMENT IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN - COMMITTEE HEARING**

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**HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE: SUBCOMMITTEE ON TACTICAL AIR AND LAND
FORCES HOLDS A HEARING ON COMBAT EQUIPMENT IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN**

JUNE 15, 2006

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WITNESSES: CAPTAIN BOB MEADERS (USN, RET.), FOUNDER, OPERATION HELMET

MAJOR GENERAL STEPHEN SPEAKES (USA), DIRECTOR, FORCE DEVELOPMENT, ARMY G8

MAJOR GENERAL WILLIAM CATTO (USMC), COMMANDING GENERAL, MARINE CORPS SYSTEMS COMMAND

ROGER SMITH, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE NAVY FOR LITTORAL AND MINE WARFARE

MAJOR GENERAL GARY MCCOY (USAF), DIRECTOR OF LOGISTICS READINESS, OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF FOR LOGISTICS, INSTALLATIONS AND MISSION SUPPORT

[*] WELDON: The committee will come to order. This afternoon the Tactical Air and Land Forces Subcommittee meets in open session to continue our ongoing review of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom force protection issues. We will receive testimony from two distinguished panels of witnesses. This marks the third hearing this subcommittee has held in the past five months regarding force protection initiatives.

The testimony we receive today will provide the status of combat helmets and body and vehicle armor in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Force protection has always been a top priority of this committee and will continue to be a top priority as long as our military is deployed in harm's way. Chairman Hunter and Ranking Member Skelton have provided outstanding leadership and support on this issue and we thank them for that support.

We are finally turning the corner with respect to meeting the body and vehicle armor requirements for our troops. It's been a hard-fought effort and there are still many areas for improvements in terms of reforming the acquisition system and maintaining a sense of urgency, but, overall, we've come a long way. As long as our personnel are threatened, we must do everything we can to provide them with the best protection available.

Regarding body armor, all military personnel serving in Iraq have been issued at a minimum the body armor with enhanced armor plates to meet the threat. The Army and Marine Corps continue to direct their efforts towards supplementing body armor with side torso armor. These side torso armor requirements must be fulfilled as expeditiously as possible.

The committee understands that the Army is in the process of qualifying additional sources for side torso armor in order to meet the requirements sooner. We expect to hear more about this strategy today. We understand the services face a difficult task in balancing the need to protect soldiers and marines while at the same time not adding so much weight as to inhibit their mobility and effectiveness. Just as adding armor to vehicles has a downside by creating rollover potential, adding body armor can reduce personal mobility and increase the danger of the individual.

Regarding vehicle armor, almost 100 percent of the vehicles in theater have factory produced armor and no vehicle leaves a secure area without armor. The industrial base for vehicle armor continues to expand. We expect to hear from our service witnesses regarding the status of transitioning from existing armored vehicles to those with even higher levels of protection. Despite recent press reports regarding the danger caused by rollover potential, I am confident that the additional vehicle armor has saved many lives and continues to help protect military personnel from deadly IED attacks. Driver training and rollover mitigation procedures need to be a priority. We cannot neglect safety. But I am confident that personnel would choose armor over reducing rollover potential by reducing vehicle armor. We can expect to learn more about what's being done to address these concerns. A new issue before the subcommittee but one we have been investigating for several months has to do with combat helmets. We understand that there are primarily three helmets in use by the services with either padded or sling suspension systems. We also understand that the helmet shells used by different services, while of slightly different sizes and weights, provide similar ballistic protection.

However, while available test data is limited, results indicate significant differences in protecting against non-ballistic impact or blast protection depending on whether the helmets use padded or sling suspension systems, with the padded suspension system providing approximately twice the protection against blasts.

Apparently we have thousands of our military personnel who believe the helmet they are being issued does not provide them satisfactory protection. Are they misinformed or is there substance to their concerns? The medical officer of the Marine Corps, in a memo in April of last year, concurred in the official position of the Marine Corps not authorizing the padded suspension

system for the Marine Corps helmet.

He noted that, quote, "Comfort, fit and performance when exposed to cold temperatures and moisture make the padded system unsuitable for operational use," end quote.

This is why after examining this we have brought the helmet issue before a formal session of the subcommittee, because of unresolved differences on the issue. When we asked the Marine Corps why some marines were expressing dissatisfaction with their helmets, the official position was that the Marine Corps helmet provided the required protection. They also expressed their concerns that there was an inappropriate relationship between Operation-Helmet and the primary provider of the padded system for combat helmets. In fact, a senior Marine Corps official accused the Operation-Helmet of, quote, "abetting war profiteering," end quote.

This same official indicates that the padded system being requested by the marines in Iraq for their helmet, quote, "does not work. It reduces ballistic protection of the system and does not address the injuries that are occurring most frequently in theater. The lightweight helmet, the Marine Corps helmet, is superior to any other system available," end quote.

In addition, with all the trips that our members have made to Iraq, we have had no negative feedback regarding helmets from military personnel. However, with a reported 8,000 war fighters, currently 40 to 50 per day, now having expressed a need for a different helmet suspension kit than they have been issued, it's time to get definitive answers. How can so many war fighters be wrong?

The padded system being requested is used by the Army and Special Operations Command. The Marine Corps' own testing indicates that their helmet provides about half the blast impact protection of the Army's (inaudible) helmet. The Marine Corps says its helmet meets the Marine Corps requirement, but if it only provides half the blast impact protection of the Army (inaudible) helmet, we need to understand why this is acceptable to Marine Corps leadership and why it insists on using the sling suspension system.

It is also interesting to note that while the Marine Corps insists on using the sling suspension solution, the Navy Seabees, also a part of the Department of the Navy, after examining the options available, also selected the Army (inaudible) padded suspension kit for their helmet.

There are also issues regarding Army management of its helmet program. We understand that the Army used the same padded suspension system for roughly the first 500,000 production

versions of its new helmet and then changed its testing criteria and now uses three different manufacturers. We want to know whether these differing padded suspension systems differ in quality.

We expect the service witnesses to help us understand the rationale for using different helmets and different suspension systems and the procedures used to properly test these three systems against ballistic and non-ballistic impacts, such as blunt trauma. We also need to know what the medical data shows regarding the kinds of head injuries being experienced in theater.

The final issue we want to address relates to recent media reports quoting service personnel, saying that they do not have adequate medical supplies, specifically specialized bandages that are used as blood clotting accelerants. The services claim that they have adequate supplies and that no unit has indicated an inability to get the required bandages. We've asked our witnesses to be prepared to answer questions on this subject today.

My only comment for now on this is that here again upon examination we find individual service solutions to problems, with the Army selecting its solution and the Marine Corps using a different blood clotting accelerant solution. Where is the jointness and coordination that we hear so much about?

As the threat to our military personnel continues to evolve, force protection requirements must continue to change accordingly. We as a committee need to be reassured that all force protection programs are being accomplished expeditiously, the services are communicating with one another, and that every effort is being considered to meet new force protection requirements. Every day we must be able to confidently say that we are doing everything possible to provide our war fighters the best protection they need and deserve.

We look forward to hearing all of our witnesses today on these important issues. And today we have an interesting panel.

Before I introduce my good friend Solomon Ortiz for his opening statement, one of those individuals who has helped put together a non-profit foundation, Dr. Meaders, will be our lead-off witness. And his story is an amazing story that I will get into before he has the opportunity to speak to us. And joining Dr. Meaders in the audience today with him, and we appreciate her taking the time to be here, but also for her financial commitment to the needs of our soldiers with personal donations well in excess of \$100,000, sitting behind Dr. Meaders is Cher.

Cher, thank you for being here.

With that, I would now turn to my distinguished friend and colleague, Mr. Ortiz, for his opening statement.

ORTIZ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for yielding.

I just wanted to mention a few concerns that our ranking member, Neil Abercrombie, had coming into this hearing, which I chair along with my good friend. Mr. Abercrombie was unavailable, called away.

I am very concerned that the Army and Marine Corps disagree about what kind of helmet soldiers and marines engaged in ground combat operations should wear. Even more concerning is that the two services appear to disagree on how to test helmets and what the standards of protection should be. Why in the world is there disagreement on such a seemingly simple issue?

Three years into the war in Iraq, it is a shock to no one on this committee that the different services tend to go their separate ways on buying helicopters, airplanes or other expensive equipment. In some cases there are good reasons for the services to have different equipment. But in the case of a helmet for ground combat, any argument that different gear is required for the Army and Marines strains the bounds of credibility. It is wasteful and it means that one or the other, either the Army or the Marines, are receiving inferior force protection equipment.

This practice of the services all doing their own thing must end. It is wasteful at best, and in this case may be endangering our troops. How did we get into this kind of bind? I have my suspicions. One possible reason for this situation is that root of all evil, money. All of the military services budgets are under strain due to the war in Iraq, and the way we are budgeting for them through supplementing appropriations, no matter how much some in the Pentagon may deny it, this practice of not fully funding the cost of the war in the regular budget produces lots of bad side effects.

Have testing standards been reduced to save money? Are either the Marine Corps or the Army reluctant to buy a different helmet because of money? We need to know whether this is the case. I am also concerned that if the soldiers and marines in combat cannot get the best equipment available, then what hope is there for the National Guard troops here at home? The National Guard is already at just 30 percent of its required equipment, and I imagine helmets aren't its top priority if it is short of trucks and radios.

I am confident this problem can be fixed. When it comes to providing protective gear to our troops, this committee has consistently asked just one question: how much money do you need? This committee will provide whatever it takes to protect our troops, but you, the services, must tell us honestly what they need.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

WELDON: I thank my friend and colleague.

As I mentioned, we have two panels here today. The first witness we have is the founder of the charitable organization Operation- Helmet.org, Dr. Bob Meaders, who is also a retired Navy captain. His son is a constituent of mine who first brought this to my attention approximately a month-and-a-half, two months ago. How and why he did this is an interesting story that I will let him tell. It's an amazing story.

A family-formed foundation taking none of the proceeds for any administrative costs, using all of the money because of a story brought to him by his grandson, who, by the way, is still serving in theater on this very day.

His organization, consisting of he and his son, Mark, who is also retired Air Force, and his wife, who is either active duty or retired Air Force Reserve, uses donations to purchase and send padded helmet suspension systems to war fighters that make request of them.

It makes no sense of me that our military personnel have to rely on a charitable organization to get the equipment they seem to think they need because the service is not providing it for them. We take our oversight responsibility very seriously. We need to get the facts. If we are not providing the right gear to our military personnel, we need to fix the problem. If our troops are asking in great numbers, as appears to be the case, and I understand there have been 8,000 inserts sent over from this foundation which are being used by our troops, then why don't we issue this to them?

Dr. Meaders is accompanied here today by his wife, LaVera, his son, Mark Meaders, and this son's wife, Carla Jean. And I want to thank them all. They are dedicated and patriotic Americans. I have talked to Dr. Meaders at length and he said, "Congressman, I want to get out of this business. I want to go play golf again." But we appreciate your leadership.

We also want to thank Cher for coming. How did Cher get here? She went on C-SPAN and called in as a citizen when Dr. Meaders was on and said, "I want to contribute. I'm a part of this." And my understanding is that she has personally contributed over \$300,000 to Operation-Helmet, which has provided thousands of inserts for our troops in theater.

Now, let me say one additional thing about this hearing. It's especially poignant today because Sonny Bono and his wife, Mary, have been members of this committee. I met Sonny when he first came. He was a member of our full committee and my subcommittee. We were good friends. In fact, the weekend before he was killed in a tragic accident, he was coming to my congressional district for an event for me. As you all know, Sonny died from a traumatic head injury.

Sonny's concern on this committee, as was Mary's when she served on this committee, and Mary is here with us today, an outstanding member of this body, was focused on the protection of our troops. They spent their hours here working tirelessly to make sure back then that we had proper protection. I, with my colleagues here, attended the funeral of Sonny Bono and the tragedy that we had heard when we got the news that Sonny had died. Cher gave the eulogy there and, obviously, I had never met Cher, but I sat in that church and listened to that eulogy and can tell you to this day it is perhaps the most emotional speak I have ever heard. It wasn't a written speech. In fact, she said that when she got up there, "I can't use my notes." It was from her heart. She talked about the Sonny Bono that she knew.

And so it really is a special irony and really a great tribute that Cher would return to this hearing room with Mary Bono sitting here at the dais, who served on this committee, and with the memory of Sonny Bono in all of our hearts and the great work that he did on behalf of the support for our troops.

And Mary is joined today by Steve Buyer. Steve is not only a friend of Mary's, Steve is the chairman of our Veterans' Affairs Committee. Steve has served on this committee, Steve has served in theater and still is a reservist. Steve understands the needs of our military and the results of our military when they become veterans better than any other member of this institution. So, it is an extreme honor to have the chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee and former member of this committee come today to show you, Dr. Meaders, how serious he takes this issue. Steve has been doing significant work on the helmet issue and he will have some questions for you. We are asking special approval today to have the chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee sit as a full member of this committee, with Mary Bono and other members, so that they can join in the questioning.

So, this is what we told you we would do a month ago. We do work quickly. Government does respond. And we want you to know that our support for the war fighters is unwavering. There is no political consequences here. We're going to do the right thing and we'll put whatever amount of money is necessary. That's the role that Democrats and Republicans on this committee and in this Congress have consistently taken.

Our second panel today includes witnesses representing the military services, and we have distinguished leaders of our military. From the Army, Major General Stephen Speakes, director for force development, Army G-8; Marine Corps General William Catto, Marine Corps Systems Command -- General Catto, welcome back. Representing the Navy, Roger Smith, deputy assistant secretary of the Navy, littoral and mine warfare. Roger, welcome back in your new capacity. I'm not promising to go easy on you, but we know that you can handle it. Representing the Air Force, Major General Select Gary McCoy, director of logistics readiness, office of the deputy chief of staff for logistics.

We thank all of you for joining us. We look forward to your testimony. We'd like to proceed with the first panel's testimony, but without objection I would say that all of your written statements will be included in the record, including yours, Dr. Meaders. We would ask that you summarize whatever comments you want to make and then we'll allow members to ask questions. We will operate under the five-minute rule. With that, we will turn the forum over to you, Dr. Meaders, for whatever statement you would like to make. And, again, welcome, thank you for being here. But, more importantly, thank you for your service to the country and thank you for in your retired years coming back and responding to your grandson's request for help. And I would ask you to go into that story for us here today so that all of us can share in the outstanding American story that you represent. Thank you.

MEADERS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, honored members of Congress and all the military here. You are needed, wanted and loved by the American people and we offer you all of the support that we can.

This whole thing started out as a single event mission. My grandson, who is now a marine sergeant, he at that time was a young lance corporal in training in 29 Palms, California, for convoy duty, and a gunnery sergeant just back from Iraq gathered the troops around and said, "Look at my helmet. It's got on upgrade to it, and if you're smart you'll get one for yourself. It might save your life, like mine."

And my grandson called me up and said, "Opa, please check this out. See if this is for real or

not."

So, I went to my various old friends in the Navy and in the Army Aeromedical Research Lab and several civilian groups doing blast research and they said yes, this is good. As a matter of fact, when we were deployed over there, we had these in our helmets.

And at that time, we were talking about the PASGT helmet, which was this particular helmet, the problem of which is the nylon strap that separates your head from the helmet. There is nothing between the helmet and your head except air and that piece of nylon. This helmet is great at deflecting bullets, but with this between your head and your helmet, when a blast force strikes this helmet, or large fragments from the blast force, or you're getting tumbled down the road or inside your vehicle, this helmet slides over, contacts the skull in an area about the size of a ball peen hammer and will cause skull fractures, intercranial hemorrhages of various sizes, brain bruising and can lead to long-term disability or death.

So, without further ado, we purchased some of the kits that turn that helmet into what looks like a very good NFL helmet. And these helmet kits that we purchased are filled with shock-absorbing pads that are velcroed to the surface. And these pads are fairly sophisticated ones. They're not just your ordinary kitchen sponge. They're a combination of slow and rapid crush foam. The rapid crush foam allows the helmet to deflect momentarily when struck by a missile. The slow crush foam absorbed the energy and spreads it out over a larger area of the head, so that instead of getting hit by a hammer you're getting shoved by the palm of your hand. It makes a tremendous difference in the survivability of a blast evolution.

So, we sent my grandson a few kits, enough for his rifle team, and they put them on and wore them for a couple of days training, called back and said, "Opa, these are wonderful, but we feel like we can't wear these unless we can get them for our whole company." So, we swallowed hard and said, "Well, how many of those do we have to come up with?"

He said a hundred. So, we went around, knocked on doors, gathered up the money and sent them 100 by the time they got in country. And that was our only mission at that time.

Then in country, the other troops saw them being able to run across the sand without having to hold their helmet in one hand and their weapon in the other. When they would fall to a prone firing position, they didn't have to stop and slap the helmet back when the other guy behind the berm was standing there in a stationary position. When they wore night-vision goggles, they didn't have to hold them up to keep their eyes uncovered. And, strangely enough, they found them sleeping,

using these helmets as a pillow, using the internal padding.

So, we began getting requests from other units nearby and as word spread from mouth to mouth, it obviously was going to be a much larger job. So a very generous lawyer there in Texas said let's just set you up as a corporation and then we'll do a 501(c)3 and people's donations can be tax deductible. And off we went.

So, from an initial standpoint of a hundred, as of today, like I say, about 8,700 have gone over to the troops, which is a drop in the bucket compared to what is needed, but I hope it makes some difference. And if we all just get together and save one life, we've done a good thing.

The Army, sometime back, I got a call from the Army chief of staff's office, and they said Dr. Bob, we are purchasing helmets that have these pads from the factory installed. So you don't have to do that anymore. So, that left me with just the marines who were wearing this old style of helmet, with the Navy Seabees, who were beginning to evolve into a new duty of running convoys, and Air Force guys.

The Army was spread too thin, so they said you drive your own trucks and get your gear from point A to point B. And that exposed them to the IEDs, suicide attacks by vehicles, and sometimes when the over-armored vehicles start rolling over, you rattle around like a BB in a tin can, and your head slams up against the side of the vehicle and, once again, helmet-skull contact and sometimes fatal results.

And even non-fatal results if you get hit often enough like that with a sharp blow rather than a push. You develop chronic traumatic brain injury with neuro-cognitive problems later in life, when you can't remember -- well, I can't now, sometimes -- your wedding date or your home address or what you're doing when or the relationship between things. It's called executive functions -- start going by the board.

So, we were very fortunate to have the general public, the marine families, especially, pitch in and begin helping, and word spread generally throughout the country by means of television, radio, newspaper articles, and great citizens like Cher, who stepped forward and said, "How can I help," saying you know, "It's not about me, it's about what can we do for the troops and what affect can we have." The only thing that really changed was that when the new marine helmet came out, that is similar in size and shape to this one except it has much more bullet resistance -- it has 30 percent more bullet resistance, so it's a darn good helmet -- but the suspension system is this one which, likewise, is suspended in such a fashion that in a blast evolution the head can rock

back and forth and allow the helmet to contact it. And your head becomes a clangor in a Kevlar bell and it will do significant injury to you.

So, we thought we would be able to step down from that when the new helmet came out, but we looked at that and said, well, maybe we'd better do some studies. So, we did some studies in private labs and found that the blast resistance was not much better than the old helmet while the bullet resistance was excellent.

So, we set off to begin trying to convert a really good helmet into a great helmet by just inserting the pads. And since then the program continues apace, and folks keep donating money and we keep sending the kits, and that's where we are today, Mr. Chairman.

WELDON: Thank you, Dr. Meaders.

I'm going to allow us to operate under the five-minute rule, including the chairman and ranking member, so we give everyone a chance to ask questions. So, I would ask that the five-minute light be put on.

And let me, just for the purpose of your first appearance before Congress, the empty seats don't indicate a lack of interest. This is a subcommittee of the full committee, so on this subcommittee you don't have all the members. And, so, other members are in other hearings, there is a markup across the hall, plus we're debating on the House floor and a lot of the members are there. So, I don't want you to think that somehow the empty chairs are an indication of a lack of interest. That's not the case. In fact, we have a great representation of members from both parties today, which indicates a strong interest in this issue.

Dr. Meaders, you were a Vietnam veteran, correct?

MEADERS: Yes, sir.

WELDON: And you also were a medical professional in the military, correct?

MEADERS: Yes, I was a Navy doctor.

WELDON: And did you not focus on head injuries and injuries with the eyes? Wasn't that your specialty?

MEADERS: Well, as an ophthalmologist and a flight surgeon, I saw a lot and would help do facial reconstructions in people that had significant facial and head injuries.

WELDON: So, your expertise in the military was in fact in the medical area which dealt with head injuries. It wasn't something you had not known anything about. You knew something about this.

MEADERS: I don't want to put myself across as a brain injury specialist, because I'm not. But on a practical level, we saw them and we treated them and we saw the devastated effects of them. And seeing one is enough to last you for a lifetime. And if there is a way that subsequently we can do something to prevent it in the first place, then, good.

WELDON: And as I mentioned in the opening statement, and I want to repeat this for my colleagues and for the public, all the money you raise for this foundation, you put out the backdoor to buy the inserts. Isn't that correct?

MEADERS: Yes, sir. We don't take a dime in salary or expenses that way. When we travel up here, it's on my own dime. And my son, Mark, does the same thing. He goes around, talks to people. You know, money doesn't do any good in a bank or in your wallet or stuffed somewhere where it doesn't protect you. But the helmet kits save lives.

WELDON: And you don't have any vested ties to any vendor, do you?

MEADERS: Well, Oregon Aero sent me a T-shirt and a ball-point pen and a cup for my birthday. But aside from that, no.

WELDON: And it was pretty outrageous for me to hear that someone would actually lay out the premise that somehow the purpose of you doing this was somehow being tied to a vendor. You're probably as disgusted as I am that someone would even suggest that.

MEADERS: Yes, we have purchased from several vendors, and we winnowed it down to the one, basically, that I would want on my head if I were frontline combat troops, and I would want on my grandson's head.

WELDON: And, correct me, weren't these vendors also approved by the military?

MEADERS: Yes. Oregon Aero was authorized by the Marines for this particular helmet, for the PASGT helmet, authorized but not funded, I think, was the way that it was put.

As far as the new marine lightweight helmet, there has been disagreement about its use, so we -- that's why we undertook some of the studies, to make sure that if we replaced this with the pads, that, number one, it would do no harm, and, number two, that it would do some good. And that good, we hope, is decreasing injuries from blast evolutions in which the blast is survivable and there is no fragment or bullet penetration of the brain, and we can diminish the concussive injuries to the head.

WELDON: How much have you raised in total from donations from the public?

MEADERS: I would say somewhere around \$800,000 or so. I don't keep a lot of dollar numbers in there, although we've got a CPA that does that. We figure it by the number of troops that got their head in a better bucket.

WELDON: And I know that we're not here to do this, but you might want to just acknowledge your largest donor to that fund.

MEADERS: Yes, exactly. Cher has been a major contributor, just a wonderful supporter, and, like I said, she came to me and said this is not about me. I'd love to come up there and sort of hold your hand while you're in front of the committee. I said that's great, I'd love it. And, you know, she's been a great PR person and is now our celebrity spokesperson to get the attention of people, because so many say if I had known about this, I would have been a donor a long time ago.

WELDON: Is it true that you and her are going to do a gig together?

MEADERS: I refuse to answer on the grounds it might intend to get my head knocked around.

WELDON: One final question before I turn to my colleagues. Can you summarize some of the e-mails you've received from military personnel requesting the kits and the feedback of some of those that have used the kits, if you could just summarize that for us.

MEADERS: Yes, sir. We've had just e-mail after e-mail from the troops that know they want it and have heard about them, and anecdotal things about how they perceive the benefits from them.

Just recently we got a -- as a matter of fact, we got a telephone call the day before yesterday from a young corporal who is in the Camp Lejeune Naval Hospital recovering from shrapnel

wounds to his neck and shoulders. And he called me up and said, "Doc, can I have a new helmet insert?"

I said, "Well, sure. What happened to your old one?"

He said, "Well, when the rocket hit the wall behind me and exploded, it shredded my helmet completely and filled my shoulders and neck with shrapnel. They're taking care of that. But the good news is, it didn't hurt my head at all. It just destroyed the helmet and the pads probably saved my life."

And we hear that type of story over and over. People ejected from the up-gun on a Humvee or being blown out of a truck, tumbling down a road, slapping heads and heels, and being able to get up and get back and help the rest of the guys out of a burning vehicle and/or mount a perimeter defense for whatever is going to follow.

So, it is -- anecdotally, we say, yeah, it works, and it's a hard thing to prove, I guess. You know, if you stood up 10 guys in a row and hit them, each one a little bit harder, until one of them died, then you could say this is the level of protection that we need. But, so, we have to go on information from the Brain Injury Association, who is here with us today, from the National Football League, that mount G-force meters in their helmets and show just how much people get whacked in the head, and soccer players that mount them in their headbands.

So, there is pretty good information out there about what levels of impact forces will result in headache, loss of consciousness, and ultimately fatal injuries.

WELDON: Doctor, you and your family are the outstanding example of what Americans are all about, and we appreciate your commitment to the country and the work that you've done through the foundation.

With that, I'll turn to my good friend and colleague for his time. He's the ranking member on this committee and a good friend of mine, from the state of Hawaii, Mr. Abercrombie.

ABERCROMBIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I wanted to thank you, Representative Ortiz, for picking up for me here, because I was not able to be here in time.

Doctor, that was not a slight to you, I assure you. It was a logistical problem I had getting here.

Some of this you've, I think, answered, but I want to get a little bit more specificity, because I can assure you the chairman will put specific numbers and policies into effect should he move forward in this area and we need to make sure that we have our facts correct.

I've read through all the testimony but I'm still not quite sure from all of it, and I'd like your opinion or your judgment. Why are the Army and the Marines using different helmet systems? I'm still not clear, after all of the reading in here.

MEADERS: Well, it's beyond my pay grade to make those decisions for the Marines.

ABERCROMBIE: Has someone discussed it with you? Could you give an observation then? If you can't, that's all right.

MEADERS: The people that discuss it with me are the troops out in the field. They say, you know, we've got a great helmet for bullet protection, and that's what we thought we were going to be facing. And the evolution of IEDs, suicide vehicles and vehicle rollovers that slam us around inside are something for which we weren't prepared and we would like to take care of that. So, that's what we do.

ABERCROMBIE: So, you haven't gone into the question of why there may be a difference in...

MEADERS: No, sir. That's not my decision.

ABERCROMBIE: OK. You mention that you hear this quite a bit. Do you actually have figures on how many requests you've had for the padded helmet liners? Are you able to keep statistics? Or is your organization not quite up to making those...

MEADERS: I can show you. This is three-weeks worth of requests right here.

ABERCROMBIE: OK.

MEADERS: From the troops out in the field. And...

ABERCROMBIE: So, you are keeping records, in effect, of their requests.

MEADERS: Yes, yes. We keep every single e-mail that comes in. Every dollar that comes in, we get the name, address of the person. And some of the donations will come in saying this is in

memory of Colonel XYZ or...

ABERCROMBIE: So, if the staff works with you, it will be more than just anecdotal or...

MEADERS: Yes.

ABERCROMBIE: ... verbal recollection. You have some paper trail, so to speak.

MEADERS: Yes, we do.

ABERCROMBIE: Thank you.

And do you have -- I'm really going to be asking the same question over again as to why they're using different systems, and we'll maybe get to that in the second panel.

I just wanted to indicate, in the chairman's reference to what you term celebrity spokeswoman, I was amused to hear a conversation this week that had Mr. Redford, Robert Redford, on it, and he was asked the same question about what makes it that someone who is -- why should we pay attention because someone has a celebrity status of some kind. Why should we pay attention then?

And he said, I thought that was handled, at least for the Republican side of the aisle, when Ronald Reagan became president.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I'll turn it back to you.

WELDON: Thank you, Mr. Abercrombie, for your great work and your leadership on this committee.

I'll turn to the gentleman from Nevada, Mr. Gibbons.

GIBBONS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And, Dr. Meaders, thank you very much for your presence here today and for your testimony and for the great work you're doing for the men and women.

I am stunned, stunned that our military doesn't have the foresight to see the need for an insert

like this and has not seen the need for an insert like this over the years. We have looked at or watched the evolution of the National Football League and their helmet systems over the years. They have been out front, leading the way. You would think that some of the knowledge base, the institutional knowledge base of helmet design and protection of the head would have been transferred from those professional institutions to our military.

My question would be, are any of the efforts, the work that you've produced, protected either by patents or some type of proprietary restrictions?

MEADERS: No, sir. Everything we do is out and above board.

GIBBONS: So, there is absolutely no excuse for any company, any organization, to say we couldn't do this because it was patented?

MEADERS: Yes.

GIBBONS: You know, cost versus performance has always been the bottom line of what I've seen in the military, but in this case the cost is the ultimate brain injury, which is far more expensive than the cost of an insert, if it is more expensive, than the sling pad construction helmet.

So, do you have a difference in the cost between what a sling pad or a pad sling, whatever that system is for suspension, sling suspension versus pad suspension would be for a helmet?

MEADERS: Well, the pad system that upgrades the new marine helmet is \$71. And that replaces what's in there. So, I don't know what that costs if you were to say from the factory, don't put that in but put this one in.

As far as the helmet that the Air Force convoy and the Marine Seabees and some of the coastal patrol boats are using, which is the old helmet, it needs more work to be upgraded to a very safe helmet. So, that's about \$99. But, once again, I don't know what it would be if you got it directly from the factory without that originally so you don't have to replace anything.

GIBBONS: So, in order to incorporate your pad protection or your pad suspension, it would require for an original helmet without the new upgraded sling suspension about \$100?

MEADERS: Yes, sir. Now, understand, we don't manufacture anything. All we do is purchase

them and send them.

GIBBONS: Yes.

WELDON: Would the gentleman yield on one point?

GIBBONS: I'd be happy to yield.

WELDON: You might want, as a follow-up to Mr. Gibbons' question, comment on the set-asides. I think you had indicated to staff that that's been a problem in the past, where there are requirements for set-asides in producing these pads by certain groups.

MEADERS: I'm sorry, would you... WELDON: The set-asides. I think staff has told us that you discussed with us the problem that has occurred when there are forced purchases through certain groups that might lead to an inferior capability.

MEADERS: Well, as I understand it, there is what is called a JYJWOD, where you have to purchase certain materials manufactured by the National Institution for the Blind and Severely Visually Handicapped. And sometimes that's very difficult to do with a complicated manufacturing process. I'm sure that they can always be included in the process somewhere along the line to help them get the funding they need for the wonderful work that they do.

GIBBONS: Have any of the other services or even the leadership of DOD come to you and talked to you about this system, about incorporating the results of your effort, your information, into their new purchases of helmets?

MEADERS: No, sir, I can't say that I've been approached like that. I would love for them to take it over so I could quit and go play golf.

GIBBONS: Well, that's what's surprising. Obviously, it's working. The word of mouth that's out there in our military among the troops is very effective in terms of awareness today of the improvement in their helmet by what you have done, or what you have provided them, and it stuns me again that the industry that's responsible, the Department of Defense, which is responsible for that industry and the soldiers, haven't taken the opportunity to improve the helmets they have out there.

To me, I think there is a clear choice here. We either protect the lives of our soldiers or we don't

send them. And if we have the ability to protect them, we ought to do everything possible to do that.

Again, I want to thank you for what you've done. You've certainly enlightened our committee and we're very proud that you took the time and the effort out of your years of hard work and dedication to this country to do one more thing for our troops. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

WELDON: I thank the gentleman.

The distinguished gentleman from New York is recognized. Mr. Israel?

ISRAEL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Doctor, thank you so much for your service and your sacrifice. And let me also thank Cher for the critical work that she's doing and for lending her celebrity status to this effort. You know, there is a saying that politics is show business for ugly people. And, you know, this panel is probably graphic testimony of that. But Cher's presence here is extremely important -- who said speak for yourself? Cher's presence is very important because it does help draw attention to this critical issue. I would imagine, as was stated before, that if we were having a hearing on this issue without the presence of a celebrity, we would not have the number of photographers that join us today.

There is lots of talk about sacrifice in the global war on terror, Doctor, as you know. People say that America is fighting a war in Iraq. America is not fighting a war in Iraq; 130,000 Americans are fighting a war in Iraq. The rest of us are watching it on television. And we're going to pass a resolution at some point this evening that honors our troops, but somehow when it comes time to actually sign the check and make sure they get what they need, we fall short or it's too late.

So, this is essentially a matter of priorities. If we can find \$2 billion in tax cuts for the richest oil company executives on earth, we should be able to find the money so that everybody in theater gets that equipment and so you don't have to spend your time and your dime, as you said, raising money for that.

Mr. Chairman, I have some specific questions about another force protection issue, and that is coagulants, for the second panel, so I will yield back my time and save my time for the second

panel. Thank you.

And thank you, again, Doctor.

MEADERS: You're welcome.

WELDON: I would thank the gentleman.

And I would just note for the record that this committee, with Democrat and Republican support, has consistently put more money in that even Democrat or Republican administrations have requested, consistently, to make sure that our troops are protected. I don't think we've ever had a question where individual personal protection was not funded by this committee, and I take great pride in both Democrats and Republicans leading that effort.

With that, we'll go to the distinguished gentleman from Texas.

Mr. Conaway?

CONAWAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And, Dr. Meaders, thank you for being here today and for your work.

I'm going to yield to my good colleague and friend, Steve Buyer, from the Veterans' Affairs Committee.

BUYER: Thank you very much, and thank you to my colleagues for allowing me to be here today.

WELDON: I have to -- excuse me one moment, Steve. I have to get unanimous -- after a conversation with the minority, I now ask unanimous consent that Mr. Buyer, chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, be allowed to participate in today's Air and Land Subcommittee hearing and be authorized to question the witnesses.

Mr. Buyer, we recognize at this point -- at the conclusion -- but, obviously, he's been yielded to, so that's fine. Hearing no objections, so ordered.

BUYER: Thank you very much.

Those of us that serve on the Veterans' Affairs Committee, and Mr. Simmons was on the committee for a while. We are dealing with the consequences of war. So, when we started dealing with many of the blast injuries, we then -- Congress created four poly-trauma centers. There is one in Minneapolis, Richmond, Tampa and Pao Alto. And now we've gone to second tiers. So, we are taking care of the men and women who are suffering from these injuries. And the helmet has come to an issue.

And what I don't know, sir, is whether the apparatus which you're describing is going to be the solution. Some of the results that we're dealing with are obviously some of the blindness. We're dealing with hearing loss and the traumatic brain injuries. But we have also caused this. It wasn't just the helmet in and of itself because when we've done everything we can to purchase body armor, because, when there was a blast, part of the torso would absorb a percentage of the blast. Now when we put on the body armor, what is exposed are the extremities. Part of the blast, when it hits the chest, a percentage of it goes up into the face. So we then deal with the maxillofacial, the nasal, the eyes, the ears. So, when we have a concussion, we also have this reconcussion.

So, this helmet, while the force goes up into the helmet that is strapped on, there is through release of the energy. So, the energy goes up, it settles back, and where it settles back is the pressure upon the brain.

Now, I'm not a neurosurgeon, and I know you aren't either. And what we're desiring -- first of all, let me compliment you in trying to seek a solution, because that's what we're going to do. And, Mr. Chairman, we thank you for this hearing on a bipartisan basis to proceed on this issue. We're going to do the same thing on the Veterans' Affairs Committee, and it's whether or not we're going to dedicate research dollars to do just that.

And what I don't want to do is I don't want to have redundancy. That's why I came here today is, you've got research dollars, we've got research dollars. And somehow we need to come together on how we provide the research to make sure that the helmet is right. Because the key is how do we manufacture a helmet that does not compromise the integrity of its purpose yet has some form of ventilation system that allows the energy to disperse.

MEADERS: Yes, sir.

BUYER: And therein lies our challenge. And I'm sure you have to have examined part of what I've discussed, correct?

MEADERS: Yes, sir.

If you'd like a response, I've talked to several mining companies in France and Israel and some in the Netherlands that do this commercially. And they just quit wearing helmets. Instead, they use a blast deflecting shield. But I posed the question to them. If you compare the scoop effect of a hollow helmet with nothing but air between your head and the shell versus the scoop effect of a helmet in which probably 80 percent of the air is now occupied by these pads, if you will, what effect does that have on the, as you say, the impact and the reimpact.

And they said, you know, we've never thought about that, so we always just use the old style helmet. And they said, but we're going to look into it.

So, at this point in time, no one really has the answer yet.

BUYER: I don't want to be as hard on DOD as some may, because we here in Congress have also caused part of that problem. There is a demand of the American people to do everything we can to do force protection. So we here in Congress do what we can, yet we are also causing new types of injuries in furtherance thereof.

So, as we do this, this cause and effect, we have to follow it. Now, DOD also needs to be highly responsive to that. And Mr. Simmons and I were just talking about how easy it is for other countries. We've got these sophisticated acquisition systems. You can go out and you can make immediate change and get it to the force faster than what DOD can through acquisition. They can't buy it until it's researched to death.

MEADERS: True.

BUYER: And, so, therein lies our challenge. And I want to work with the Armed Services Committee on this. And I appreciate the indulgence of my colleagues. And, thank you, sir, for your leadership.

MEADERS: Thank you, sir.

WELDON: The gentleman from Texas still has time.

CONAWAY: I yield back the time.

Once again, thank you, Dr. Meaders, for your hard work in this effort for our troops and for Steve's comments. I yield back.

WELDON: I thank the gentleman.

I thank the distinguished chairman for being here.

The gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. Brady, is recognized. BRADY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to thank the doctor and his family for bringing this issue to light to this committee. It's almost embarrassing that we didn't think of it ourselves, but we tend from time to time to need to be prodded along and bring issues to us.

You know, war changes. When we first went into this war on the ground, we thought we would be getting shot at. And the helmet, as you said, is a great protective piece of equipment. But now we're getting blown around and our brains and head are getting banged around and what you have now hopefully puts our men and women a lot safer.

And I'd like to thank Cher also, because of the celebrity status which, as my colleague did say, we do need, and it brings a whole lot more light to an issue that needs to have that happen. And I thank her for her concern for the men and women in harms way as we sit -- we're sitting here, nice and air conditioned and pretty safe. We walk through metal detectors and dogs go around our cars and we're pretty safe, but our men and women aren't. And we need to do our job to make sure that they're safe. So I thank you for that. I think you're a great patriot.

We've got a great bipartisan committee. I'm really glad to know we have two bipartisan committees, with our chairman of the Veterans' Committee telling us that he has some research dollars to put in. We have a great chairman that is always out there fighting for our men and women, and we have some money to put in. And, hopefully, by doing that and having this hearing we can get you back on the golf course, Doctor, where you deserve to be at. So thank you very much, and thank you again for being here.

MEADERS: Thank you, sir.

The response across America has been, regardless of how we feel about the war, we love, respect and want to support our troops, and that's the wonderful thing that's brought this all together.

WELDON: First of all, I want to thank the gentleman for his questions, and just note for the record he is a labor leader from Philadelphia, so if anyone knows about the need to protect the head from construction injuries, our good from Pennsylvania is that person. He's an outstanding member of this committee as well and I thank him for his line of questions.

With that, I'll turn to the distinguished gentleman from Carolina, the number one leader, Walter Jones, on all the veterans' issues for us.

Walter, you're recognized for five minutes.

JONES: Mr. Chairman, thank you very much.

And I guess when I see Cher, I was elected in 1995 with that class of Republicans. About 70 of us came here, storming, and the first time we had an Armed Services meeting here, we were here late at night and, I'll tell you, your husband -- former husband at that time -- he kept us up all night, kept us awake, and he was just a great guy and we will always remember him as long as we have life. That I can promise you.

Dr. Meaders, I want to say thank you. I have Camp Lejeune Marine Base in the district that I represent, the 3rd District of North Carolina, and I'm like everyone else, I guess. You know, the Department of Defense has a tough job, whether we're at war or peace time, but especially in war time, to make sure that the troops get what they need to have to protect themselves. But how many -- you said you raised roughly \$800,000? I'm sorry, I was in and out.

MEADERS: Yes.

JONES: And you have had how many requests for helmets from those who are serving? Liners, I mean.

MEADERS: I'm not sure I understood your question, but we manage a waiting list of about 1,000 to 1,200 troops, all the time. When someone like Cher steps forward and says, "Here, I'm going to help you wipe that out," the more kits we send out, the more troops learn about them and the more requests we get. So, it's a never-ending process with the turnover of troops and the spread of the word.

JONES: Since you've started this effort. And, again, everyone that's helped you, including Cher,

God bless you all, have you been contacted by the Department of Defense or by the Marine Corps? I mean, has there been some communications to you that, you know, Doctor, we understand that you're getting X number of requests from the battlefield? Did you get any inquiries from the Marine Corps, the Department of Defense, as to this effort and, you know, what kind of information you are getting from the troops?

MEADERS: No, sir, we've not had any direct communication saying, you know, how many are out there and why are they asking. That's not been our focus.

JONES: I understand.

MEADERS: Our focus is just to put the heads in a safer helmet and go.

JONES: Well, I'm not being critical, because God bless them all. But I will tell you that I heard about your effort on -- I'm a conservative Republican, but from time to time I listen to Air America, and I really think I've gotten to be a fan of Randi Rhodes. I don't agree with her on everything, but I listen to her quite frequently. But, that's when I first heard about it. And I guess, again, we could find out with the next panel, but I would think with such a national effort and a national concern about our troops having the proper helmet liner, that you would think someone from DOD would have made an inquiry, just out of curiosity if nothing else.

And I'm not being critical, but I again just want to say to the chairman and the ranking member that I'm pleased that we're having this hearing, that we're having an opportunity to really say thank you to you and others for your patriotism to this great nation and to help our men and women in uniform to be better protected. And so I look forward to hearing from the next panel.

I yield back my time, Mr. Chairman.

WELDON: I thank the distinguished gentleman.

Mr. Bartlett is recognized.

BARTLETT: Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman, as I sit here listening to this testimony, I asked myself with wonder how many other places in the world this might happen. You know, this is really a great country and I think that this happened in our country -- and I doubt that it could happen anywhere else -- because of the

enormous respect that we have for the rights of the individual.

It was the primary reason that our founding fathers came to this country and they embedded in our constitution their conviction that the rights of the individual are preeminent to all other rights. And there is no other constitution, there is no other bill of rights in the world that gives such rights to the people. And I think that that created a milieu, a climate in which this kind of individual activity can go on. And I want to commend you, Doctor, for doing this. And I don't think there is anywhere else in the world where people feel such a personal responsibility that would induce somebody like Cher to step forward and give not just her money but her enormous influence to this.

So, Mr. Chairman, I want to commend the doctor for doing this. And I just believe that the climate that permitted this, the rights of the individual -- you know, I'm a little more concerned about the threats to those rights than I am about the threats of Al Qaida. And I think when we fight this war we have to be very, very careful that we don't permit our zeal to catch terrorists to erode these incredible rights of the individual that are so important. And I don't think we'd be sitting here today, sir, having this testimony except for our great constitution and our great bill of rights which establish this milieu, this climate, where this kind of thing can take place.

Thank you for this hearing. And thank you, Doctor and Cher, for your contribution to what makes America great.

MEADERS: Thank you. Thanks go to all the military people that are past, present and future, who are out there making it possible for us to do this. And the American people that gathered together to say how can we help.

WELDON: I thank the gentleman for his questions. I would just acknowledge, Doctor, he is also a Ph.D. He is a physiologist from Johns Hopkins University. Mr. Bartlett has 20 patents to his credit, including patents dealing with breathing systems. So he is very much concerned with issues like the one we're talking about and is an outstanding expert. After consultation with the minority, I now ask unanimous consent that Mr. Simmons, a member of the **House Armed Services Committee**, be authorized to question the panel members at today's hearing. If there are no objections, I'll now recognize Mr. Simmons for five minutes.

SIMMONS: I thank the chairman for holding this terrific hearing and I thank the members for allowing me the courtesy to make a few comments and ask a question.

Like you, Doctor, I'm a Vietnam veteran, and I say welcome home to you. I really appreciate the efforts that you've made.

A couple of years ago I went to Iraq and I discovered that with the changing combat conditions, our Humvees were improperly armored, and I took it upon myself, with the assistance of members of this committee, including Chairman Weldon, to go out into industry to see what was being done to provide up-armor for our troops, as well as body armor. And what I discovered was there was a substantial amount of creativity out there, but the red tape and the bureaucracy that we encountered was very substantial.

Clearly, the cost of up-armored Humvees and even of body armor substantially exceed the cost of the inserts for helmets. And so this subcommittee and the full committee had to reauthorize and we had to reappropriate dollars for that purpose. It took about two years.

But what I learned from that experience was that we have the very best men and fighting men and women in the world in our arms services. It's an all-volunteer force and they're highly motivated. But sometimes the bureaucracy and the red tape prevents the system from being nimble and flexible. Nimble and flexible. And even though private individuals and the members of the free market system wish to participate, it's hard to move forward.

And I would just congratulate you, congratulate Cher, and all of the other contributors to your effort, because I know first-hand from wearing the helmet for over 30 years that it's got to be right. It's got to work right. And I also remember the lesson my father taught me when he first taught me how to shoot back when I was 10 or 12 years old. With a 410 shotgun, you don't have to snug it next to your shoulder. But when you pick up that 12 gauge, you'd better snug it on your shoulder or you're going to be badly bruised. And that's exactly what you're talking about. If you get pinged with a round of 7.62 ammunition, it doesn't matter. That helmet is going to work. But if you get hit with a blast and you don't have something to cushion the blow, you're going to be seriously injured.

And so I thank you for having the inspiration, and your supporters for having the patriotism to participate in this. And I will tell you, as somebody who is concerned about our veterans, who has served for four years on the Veterans' Affairs Committee with Chairman Buyer, and is on this Armed Services Committee, we're going to fix this and we're going to fix it right away.

MEADERS: Thank you, sir.

SIMMONS: And I thank you for your citizenship and patriotism.

And I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

WELDON: I thank the gentleman for his comments and for his commitment also to the welfare of our troops.

I now ask -- after consultation with the minority, I now ask unanimous consent that Mr. Wu, a member of the Science Committee, be authorized to question the panel members of today's hearing. If there are no objections, I will now recognize Mr. Wu for five minutes and welcome him to the committee.

WU: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you very much, Dr. Meaders, for all of your good work.

My questions will primarily be for the next panel. There is an activity pro-school and peace movement in Oregon. You'll see bumper stickers all the time that says, you know, wish that when the Pentagon were going to war they had to hold a bake sale to do that. I think that is meant as a joke. I certainly don't believe that. And I commend you for your work.

But the question that I will have for the next panel is that we have appropriated money, with Mr. Brady's help, with Mr. Murtha's help, for the specific helmet liner kits that you're talking about. And we have appropriated several million dollars a couple of years ago and we asked for \$5 million for this year. And I'm wondering where that money has gone, because it is more than an issue of what is happening with taxpayer's money. It is a matter of what is happening with soldier's lives on the field. And I'm very, very concerned about where the money that we have already appropriated has gone and where the money will go that we are highly likely to appropriate now.

But I commend you for your work in the private sector meanwhile.

MEADERS: Thank you.

WU: Thank you very much. I yield back to the chairman.

WELDON: I thank the distinguished gentleman for his service.

And it now gives me a great deal of pleasure to recognize a very special person who has served on this committee for a number of years and who was one of our best members and most committed members to the health, welfare and safety of our troops, and I had the unfortunate pleasure of meeting her at a very difficult and emotional time for her, but she's really risen to become a star in this country and we deeply appreciate her involvement here.

After consultation with the minority, I ask unanimous consent that the gentlelady, Mrs. Bono, a member of the Energy and Commerce Committee, former member of this committee, be authorized to question the panel members at today's hearing. If there are no objections, I'll now recognize Mrs. Bono.

BONO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to very much thank you for including me in today's hearing and, to our witness, it's not a question. It's a simple congressional point I'd like to make. And that is to first of all thank you for your initiative. That so often our answers come from the American people, and clearly that is the case with what you've done here today.

I, of course, have to welcome Cher to Washington, D.C. It's a pleasure to have you here. A lot has been said about Sonny. This is not about Sonny, although I do know that he would be extremely proud and support what the good doctor is trying to do today. There is nobody in this country that Sonny loved more than any man or woman in uniform who devoted themselves to protecting our country. So, with that, if anybody can be on the record for him, I'd like to do that.

But, 29 Palms is not in my district, the marine base, but it is near and dear to my heart. It is in my sphere of influence. I spend a good deal of time up there and with our marines and consider it a longstanding commitment that whatever I can do for them I will continue to do.

I've missed this committee dearly. I'm across the hall currently in a markup. My heart is still with this committee, Mr. Chairman. If I can make it back, I would love to.

So, again, I would like to say we are here. I think you're hearing unanimity amongst us, which is kind of rare, especially this year. We support what you're trying to do and I hope that the people behind you, up in the Pentagon, hear very loudly that we would like to help you in your efforts.

And, again, Cher, thank you for what you've done. I'm glad you watch C-SPAN. You would think

you would have better things to do with your life than watch boring old us. But thank you very, very much. And, again, thank the witness for being here today.

WELDON: I thank the gentlelady for her statement and for her outstanding contribution to this institution and America.

Well, Dr. Meaders, you did well in your first appearance before Congress.

MEADERS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

WELDON: You wowed them, I guess, is the word I would say. No negatives, all positives, and some questions, legitimate ones, raised by our good friend, Mr. Buyer and others. And we have the same concern, because we want to make sure that what we're doing, as you do, is in the end right and proper. But, you know, no one can question your patriotism and the service of you and your family to the country. You're an amazing group of people.

And with that, I'd like to ask you, your wife, your son and his wife to stand up, along with Cher, so that we can give you all a special round of appreciation as you leave the witness table. Please all stand so that we can recognize all of you.

(APPLAUSE)

With that, we'll convene our second panel of distinguished witnesses. If you would all take your places at the table and we'll line up the name tags.

I've already introduced each of the members. So, their statements have already been submitted for the record and have been accepted without objection. We'll go right down the line. I deeply appreciate you all being here but, more importantly, your service to the country.

Since I've already introduced you all and since you're not strangers to this committee, we welcome you back.

General Speakes, we will let you lead off. Then we'll have General Catto and then Mr. Smith and then General McCoy. Again, I want to thank you all for your service to the country. We deeply appreciate it.

General Speakes?

SPEAKES: Sir, thank you very, very much.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Abercrombie, members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear in front of you today and thank you, too, for your ceaseless support of the American soldier, the American soldier who is at war today representing our country.

The Army's number one concern is force protection. We'll talk to you about it today. We'll talk about our programs. We'll talk to you frankly about what our challenges are and what we have in the road ahead to continue to improve the force protection for our soldiers.

One of the challenges raised today has been whether or not our programs are joint. We believe in the Army that we're a member of a joint team. We believe that the jointness that we are displaying daily is something that you should have visibility on. I would point, for example, to our work at tactical wheeled vehicles, where we and the Marines are embarked upon a joint program that has great promise here for the future.

I would point to our work with the joint IED Defeat Organization, in which we are linked with a joint organization with the other services, particularly the Marine Corps and the Navy, as we work to provide better protection for our soldiers as we look at the greatest threat we're facing now, which is IEDs.

So, those are but two examples where we see the need and we understand your guidance that we be joint and that we work for common solutions as we look at a battleground that is increasingly challenging for our men and women who are deployed forward. Everywhere we see an enemy that is more complex, who puts more challenges in front of us and who insures that the answers of today may be challenged tomorrow by the way the battlefield will appear then. So we continue our relentless approach to improve force protection to make everything we can for our soldiers better so that they may survive and operate with total confidence.

No one solution will fit all circumstances as we look at the spectrum of conflict from Afghanistan and Iraq and then we see some of the challenges here at home as we undertake homeland defense. We see a very sophisticated array of capabilities that we've got to provide soldiers.

The focus then is to provide commanders the tools so that they can make decisions about how they protect their soldiers given the operating environment that they see.

Our force protection approach includes a reliance on several time-honored characteristics. First of all, good training. Good training is linked by what we call TTP, the techniques, tactics and procedures that enable us to be effective and successful in a conditioned response in a very, very adverse environment. And then the other thing I mentioned earlier was the ability to give commanders the equipping option so that they can find the best solution for the environment that they're operating in.

You've invited us here today to talk to some specific issues, and we'll do that. We'll talk about body armor, we'll talk about the Advanced Combat Helmet, and we'll talk about our armoring efforts, and I want to go into specific detail on that.

I'd like to begin by talking a little bit about integrated body armor. To do that, I thought rather than have me talk, what I'd invite, with your permission, sir, is a combat veteran who works here in the National Capitol Region in our program, soldier Sergeant First Class Lutz. He's here to my left. He is a combat veteran with a year in Iraq. He was a part of the 2nd Infantry, a Stryker brigade that spent a year in Iraq. He, right now, is equipped as or soldiers in the combat zone are. And what I'll do is start by talking about our body armor.

As you look at the suit of body armor he's got on, what I want to do is detail for your some of the improvements that you have been directly responsible for that we now see in effect across the soldiers that are deployed. First, as you look at his body armor, in his outer tactical vest, front and back, you have what we call a SAPI plate. That SAPI plate now has gone through a second iteration of change here in the last two years in which we've replaced all the SAPI plates that once started this land combat with a new set that is greatly enhanced in terms of its protection.

I would now like to draw your attention to his side and shoulders. As you look at the top, on his shoulders, what you see is what we call the DAP, the deltoid axillary protector. It is designed to protect an area that we saw on results of combat was something we needed to fix, which is our ability to protect the upper shoulder. And so now we have that across all of our soldiers.

The other thing you see, underneath his arm is the side area, what we call the axillary area, and that was another area where commanders told us that increasingly they were seeing evidence that we had side shots that were having an impact on our soldiers. And so what we are now in the process of doing is fielding a carrier with an E-SAPI plate in it, which affords our soldiers protection from the side. We have 20,000 sets of that fielded. We are on track right now to close out that requirement by December of this year.

So, that gives you a quick profile of the kind of improvements that we're seeing right now in the basic integrated body armor. Now, the liability, obviously, is it is 31 pounds right now for a medium-weight soldier. That's a lot of poundage. The liability is that we don't have any other way to go. Right now, the kind of protection you see there is the very best that science and technology can afford us. We continue to improve and work with everything we can to try to find new technologies and new opportunities.

Just this spring, for example, our acquisition authority put out a new request for ideas, and we're in the process of evaluating those ideas, and that evolution should be complete this summer. So, we don't mean to imply that this evolution of body armor is something we're satisfied with or that will be in effect a year or two years from now. We will improve and will continue to make soldiers safer.

The other thing I'd like to do is address very quickly the issue of headgear. What I'd like to do is start -- Sergeant First Class Lutz (ph) is wearing the time-honored helmet that we've worn in the Army since the 1980s and it is known affectionately as the Kevlar helmet or the PASGT. Now, the PASGT had some liabilities that we wanted to deal with. Let me address them.

As you take a look at what Sergeant First Class Lutz (ph) is wearing right now, you see fairly typically he's got his night-vision equipment on him. And so the night-vision equipment is something we've added over the course of the last 15 or 20 years and it weighs a couple of pounds. So, what it has is the impact of pulling the helmet down. And because of the way that helmet is suspended, which is the way that essentially has been in effect for the last 30 or 40 years, essentially since Vietnam, his helmet is not really very secure or stable on his head. It's particularly noteworthy, for example, when he turns and has to engage in an urban environment, when he's looking up, or he's prone, where he's trying to look out to his front -- I'd like Sergeant Lutz to demonstrate that for you now so you see the limits of this helmet.

What you see is that he doesn't really have good vision up above him. And then the other thing you see is that as he starts to move toward a more prone position, the extended area of the helmet to the front does not facilitate it.

Sergeant Lutz, nobody can see you down there too well, I'm afraid.

The point there is that we've got severe limitations right now to the ability of that time-honored helmet, good though it was in the Eighties and Nineties, to do its job today in the city's completed battlefield.

So, then what we did is we moved to a new helmet, and that is the ACH, which is drawn from the Special Operations Command. In the late Nineties, the Special Operations Command set to work to find some improvements to this helmet that we now see as the Advanced Combat Helmet, which is what Sergeant Lutz is now donning. It has a very different suspension system in it, but it also has other improvements.

It has improved ballistic protection on the actual outside shell of the helmet and it also has a slightly different design. If you notice, it is about 8 percent less in terms of total area. That was specifically designed to give the soldier additional ability to see to the flank and above him and also to operate now where he's got body armor on with the collar protection, which is something that we had to deal with to give soldiers freedom to operate.

So, this helmet now is much more effective for operating in today's complex battlefield and the suspension in it is a pad-based system, which we believe is much more effective at resisting concussion, which is another area that we saw a problem. So, we began fielding this in 2002 and we have now been fielding this to our soldiers across the Army for the last several years. We now have over 600,000 sets of this helmet out across the Army.

So, we're very grateful for the support that it took to make this overall ensemble work and, once again, it's something that we will continue to improve. But that gives you a quick profile of where we are.

The next thing I'd like to highlight very quickly is what we have done with up-armored Humvees. Up-armored Humvees continue to be an area of great concern. They are the primary combat platform that soldiers are using in Iraq. We are in process right now to continue to move to a totally level one solution. In other words, a factory installed gold standard Humvee is the coin of the realm that we're striving to attain across the Army.

But we're on track right now to essentially meet all requirements from the combatant commander by spring of next year, which will put about 18,000 up-armored Humvees forward in the combat zone. That's a huge investment that you supported us making. We think it has material improvement in the overall safety of our soldiers. And that Humvee is being improved daily. And the subject of what we're doing with that is obviously very closely held, sensitive information that we're prepared to go into later on this afternoon in the closed session.

The other area that I'd like the address is something that has been drawn to our attention, which

is what are we doing right now with the ability to render first aid to soldiers. And the specific issue is that we have discovered over the last several years that we have significant improvements in our ability to essentially stop blood from flowing by enhancing its clotability. We have two basic programs underway that I'd like to highlight. And first I would like Sergeant Lutz to get up. If you take a look at him right now, on his right front, he'll point out to you the improved first aid kit that we're providing to all soldiers. In that improved first aid kit is some pretty sophisticated equipment, among it some improved equipment that enables you to better apply triage to soldiers.

We're now in the business, for example, of allowing soldiers in the combat zone to actually apply tourniquets. We've found that's very, very important as a lifesaving step when we have traumatic injury. And the other thing that we have is bandages now that enhance clotting when we have a wound. There are two kinds of bandage that are now approved by the Office of the Surgeon General. Both of them are FDA certified. One is HemCon and one is QualClot.

Over the course of the last year, effectively since September, we have been fielding those solutions to the field. So, at this point what we have is a fielding solution that says we're trying to field one to every soldier forward in the combat zone, three to each combat lifesaver and then five to combat medics that are forward with our deployed forces. At this point, based upon my conversations with our leading authorities in Iraq, we have approximately 65,000 individual bandages that are forward in the combat zone. We have another 16,000 that are actually in the combat zone being issued. That leaves us with about 99,000 that we still have to issue just to fix the forces in Iraq.

We're also in the process right now of conducting detailed work with commanders in Kuwait, in Afghanistan, to insure that we have the same basic flow provided to them as well. So, at this point, although our programs are not where we want them to be, we don't have it to every soldier as we want, we understand the commitment. We're making the commitment right now that we'll get it done. We'll report to our leadership. General Schoomaker specifically has drawn this as a point of attention and concern for him. And obviously, ladies and gentlemen, we'll report to you.

We recognize the commitment and we'll make that improvement.

This is a very quick summary. I wanted to highlight to you the importance of this to us and our continuing commitment to engage in a dialogue. We thank you for our support. I would also entreat you that your support, which you've repeatedly referred to, for stable and continued support of soldiers in the area of force protection is absolutely vital to us.

Thank you, sir, for your attention. We await your questions.

WELDON: Thank you, General.

General, the floor is yours.

CATTO: Thank you, Congressman.

Congressmen and distinguished members of the subcommittee, it's my honor to return to you again today to update you on the Marine Corps' force protection efforts.

As I complete my final week as a Marine Corps senior acquisition officer, I want to personally thank you, Chairman Weldon, for your continued support of our war fighters since we began combat operations in Iraq three years ago. Without your leadership and personal interest in how our marines have been equipped for combat, the strong support of this subcommittee to insure that appropriate resources were available to the Marine Corps, I would not be able to provide you with the positive report that you will hear today in this testimony.

As I told you in February, the Marine Corps's overarching strategy since the start of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom has been to ensure that 100 percent of the Marine Corps' force protection requirements are met with the best, most capable systems available in the world today, and we have succeeded.

The Marine Corps is committed to aggressively matching our equipment to changing threats. Our ability to rapidly modify our vehicle armor systems is a testimony to this commitment. For example, all of our Humvees that are not being replaced by the M11-14 have now been armored since December of 2005 with the marine armor kit, the best armor kit availability.

We were also able to fulfill the requirement for armoring all of our MTBRs in May of this year, CHB is five months ahead of schedule. And by the end of next month, July 2006, we will have 100 percent of our operational requirements for M11-14 complete.

Providing personal ballistic armor protection to our war fighters is critical to ensuring their safety. Our individual protection vest system, combines the interceptive body armor system is a modular system that includes the outer tactical vest, the small arms protective inserts for the torso, back and sides. Working together, these systems provide the best possible levels of personal protection to known and anticipated threats. This is why 100 percent of our marines have had this

improved personal protection equipment as they rotate into theater.

In support of the Corps's critical requirement to focus on protecting our marines from the effects of ballistic, projectile and fragmentation impacts and penetrations, we've replaced our 25-year-old personal arms system ground troops helmet, known as the Kevlar helmet, with a lightweight helmet.

This helmet provides greater overall coverage of the skull, weighs less when compared with the standard Kevlar helmet. Coupled with the ease of determining correct fit into the suspension swing, a lightweight helmet provides the protection capabilities against fragmentation threats and 9 mm bullets for our marines in combat. We're doing absolutely everything we can to ensure the safety of our marines by providing them with the world's best and most effective force protection solutions.

To my knowledge there are simply no commercial products more capable than the equipment being issued to our marines today. However, we continually conduct market research and commission studies to identify emerging solutions that offer greater levels of force protection. In instances where we find more robust capability, we pursue every action available to get our war fighters the best equipment as rapidly as possible, and with your continued support we can insure our marines remain ready for the current fight and any future fights.

I would be happy to answer questions if either you or any of the members may have them.

WELDON: Thank the gentleman for your testimony.

Is this your first appearance here now, Mr. Smith?

SMITH: First appearance before the Tactical Air and Land Subcommittee.

WELDON: Great to have you.

SMITH: I had the opportunity to appear before another subcommittee.

WELDON: Mr. Smith worked on this committee for years and was very well respected. Now he sits on the other side, but it is good to have you here. You're a great American. Thank you.

SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the committee. Thank you for

having me here today to represent the Navy and to discuss with you the individual protection equipment that we field to our sailors.

We have 11,000 Navy officers and sailors deployed in the Central Command area of operations today. About 8,000 of those are individual augmentees to ground units and joint staff requirements.

The Navy procures and fields protection equipment for these personnel through various procurement agencies in several different configurations for a number of different mission requirements which are determined by the combatant commander. The mission requirements include Navy expeditionary forces, as I discussed, individual augmentees assigned to ground forces, and for shipboard antiterrorism missions.

Our Navy expeditionary forces include our naval construction force, or the Seabees, as well as naval coastal warfare forces. The individual protection equipment that's procured is filtered to these deploying units to meet the threat that the units will be operating in. The IPE for our naval construction forces starts with the personnel armor system ground troops, or PASGT, Kevlar composites helmet that was earlier discussed and demonstrated, and the standard outer tactical vest that was also demonstrated, with either front, back and side small arms protective insert plates, or SAPI plates, or enhanced SAPI plates, like the Army and the Marine Corps.

We've also procured 9,533 of the ballistic liner padded helmet suspension systems for the PASGT helmet. The helmet suspension systems are distributed to the deployed Seabees, to the Seabee readiness groups located at Port Hueneme, California, and Gulfport, Mississippi. Seabees are also issued these pads prior to their deployment to OIF or OEF.

The expeditionary forces that are assigned to the Marine Corps, they receive the type of equipment that the Marine Corps actually fields, and those would be forces such as dentists, doctors, our religious personnel, that support the marine expeditionary forces.

Our naval coastal warfare and visit board search and seizure and enhanced maritime interdiction operations forces, those folks actually get IPE that is a specialized type of cut that is unique for their boarding missions to provide additional mobility and also safety for boarder-born operations. The forces wear a similar cut helmet to the Army Advanced Combat Helmet. It has a web-type sling system, and also the vests are flotation vests that provide ballistic protection as well.

Our acquisition community and our fleet forces right now are currently evaluating the

requirements for some additional types of padding systems in the helmet. And we're working with the fleet to work those issues out.

Our individual augmentees, as I said there is 8,000 of those personnel, the Army actually trains and equips those forces before they deploy. If they're assigned to specific Army units they go through Fort Jackson, South Carolina and the Army's program executive officer soldier, or PEO soldier, actually fields their gear to them.

We have, in lieu of augmentees that support joint force staffs and requirements and they actually go through other army training and doctrine command sites, and they're issued the same gear by the army PEO soldier.

In closing, I want to thank you again for the opportunity to testify and tell you that the navy procures and equips its forces with the best available IPE. It's tailored to our maritime and joint mission requirements and we continue to conduct market analysis as required to make the resource sponsors in the fleet knowledgeable of the improvements in the equipment.

I stand ready for your questions.

WELDON: Thank you very much.

General, the floor is yours.

MCCOY: Chairman Weldon 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 protective equipment for our expeditionary airmen.

As the director of logistics readiness, deputy chief of staff of logistics installation mission support, it is my privilege to report on our force protection efforts, our successes as well as our challenges for the future. And on behalf of Secretary Wynne, General Mosley and the men and women of the United States Air Force, thank you for your strong support.

The Air Force continues to provide significant support to the global war on terrorism and we are extremely proud of our airmen's contribution to the war efforts. We currently have over 30,000 personnel deployed in support of the global war on terrorism and leveraging the ability and the responsiveness inherent in our air and space expeditionary forces, our airmen have also been actively involved in humanitarian operations at home and around the globe and deployed in

support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom and other contingencies. And, in fact, since 9/11 we've deployed over 370,000 airmen aggressively fighting the war on terror.

We have flown over 422,000 combat sorties, moved 3.7 million passengers and close to 1.7 million short tons of cargo and delivered almost 500 million gallons of fuels. Additionally, the Air Mobility Command started committing C-17s and directed (inaudible) in 2005 to help mitigate convoy operations over land. Cargo delivered by air increased by 200 percent from November of 2004 to November of 2005 and, moreover, the number of passengers delivered by air increased by 14 percent in the same timeframe.

Now, this purposeful increase in cargo and personnel deliveries amounted to about 18,000 truck equivalents and over 17,000 bus equivalents via airlift, and this was between February of 2005 and January of 2006. And, additionally, we're using C-130 aircraft, flying an average of 140 sorties per day supporting cargo and passenger movements in the CENTCOM AOR. And, as you know, the Air Force has undertaken a great number of various nontraditional roles and missions in Iraqi Freedom and in Enduring Freedom.

Today there are nearly 5,000 airmen performing in lieu of missions with the United States Army, including convoy support, detainee operations, protective service details, military translation and reconstruction teams who are rebuilding the infrastructure in Iraq and Afghanistan. We have made enormous strides in obtaining more advanced protective gear and equipment for our airmen, specifically in the area of body armor, combat helmets, up-armored high mobile multi-wheeled vehicles.

We take the safety and the welfare of our airmen very, very seriously. Improved body armor and helmets are critical to protecting every airman. We are committed to providing the most advanced protective gear and equipment to ensure the safety of our number one resource, our airmen.

Thank you again for your strong support to the United States Air Force and I am honored to have this opportunity to appear before you today. I offer my written comments for the record and I look forward to our discussion on this important subject.

WELDON: Thank you, General, for your testimony. Thank you for your service. And thank each of you for being here today.

Let me start off by asking some questions of somebody who just got back from theater.

Sergeant Lutz, can you grab that microphone there for me? Where are you from, Sergeant?

Simi Valley, California. It's great to have you here and thank you for your service.

When were you first deployed to the theater? 2003. When you were first deployed, did you have the old helmet with an old insert or the current helmet? The new one? So you never wore the old helmet?

Can you tell us in your own opinion the difference between the two since you wore both of them? Can you lift that up, maybe lift it up and hold it in your hand? Yeah, like that. Try another one. There we go.

LUTZ (ph): Yeah, a PASGT helmet limits your visibility. Fighting in combat in Iraq is a three-dimensional battlefield. It's not the standard (inaudible) gap in Germany where the enemy is directly in front of you. I'm in Iraq in a Stryker vehicle. You have to constantly look up, down, left and right. The old PASGT helmet limits your visibility to look up.

The Advanced Combat Helmet, granted it is a little bit less protection-wise, but it is a lot more comfortable. It allows the soldier to see more areas. It allows him to hear better than the old PASGT helmet. It allows him to differentiate where the shot is coming from compared to the PASGT with limited -- he's trying to seek where that enemy fire came from.

WELDON: The old helmet that you had, that you wore in the past, did it have the current insert that we're discussing today? Or was it an old insert, the type that we've referred to?

LUTZ (ph): It's the old sling system insert, sir.

WELDON: And, so, comparing the inserts, give us your own impression, I mean, as a soldier that was out there on the ground. Tell us.

LUTZ (ph): I would honestly tell you, sir, it's like going from a -- not to ping any manufacturer -- it's like driving a Yugo to driving a Jaguar.

WELDON: That much of a difference?

LUTZ (ph): Yes, sir. It is a lot more comfortable. It does not weigh anything on your head. It feels a lot more comfortable. The old PASGT after awhile would start to ping in the middle of your

forehead and give you headaches. And what we used to call Kevlar hair. You would rub your hand through your hair after awhile and it would just hurt. The Advanced Combat Helmet does not do that.

WELDON: The liner is part of what we're focusing on today as well as the helmet, because we're ordering the new helmets. But it is a question of whether or not we transition these liners, which is what Operation-Helmet has been doing. Did you feel more comfortable and safer in the new liner, with the new helmet? LUTZ (ph): Oh, yes, sir. I felt that it was a lot more comfortable. I actually know one soldier that was in Bravo Company 123 that was shot dead center in the middle of his forehead, through his glasses, when we were in Tal Afar, and he walked away just fine.

WELDON: Amazing. Your problem with heat absorption, that's been one of the questions or comments raised about the insert. Was it a problem, when you wear the new insert, with heat absorption?

LUTZ (ph): We had no problem, and most of our dismounted patrols in Iraq are in Mosul, because our vehicles were too big to go down the streets. Most of our patrols were dismounted. They were anywhere from two to three hours long.

WELDON: Did you have the problem with the helmet sliding down on your forehead with the old insert versus the new one? And, if so, what was the difference between the two?

LUTZ (ph): The old PASGT helmet, regardless of what type of (inaudible) you have, and I had on my helmet the PVS14s, which are a little bit lighter, the PVS7s would always fall down the front. If you had on miles (ph) gear, which you had to have on the back, it would always push it forward, and it was just uncomfortable to wear.

WELDON: Now, you served in theater. Were you serving in an area where there were marines also?

LUTZ (ph): No, sir. I was in northern Iraq.

WELDON: Northern Iraq, so no marines around. Have you seen the marine helmet?

LUTZ (ph): Yes, sir, I have.

WELDON: Ever worn it?

LUTZ (ph): No, sir, I have not.

WELDON: Is it a sort of style similar to what you wore when you first -- when you talked about that old helmet that you had?

LUTZ (ph): I do believe it is the same sling style system, yes, sir.

WELDON: OK. We appreciate your service to the country and your anecdotal comments are very helpful, because in the end what we're about here is helping you have to best equipment that money can buy. And, again, we deeply appreciate your service to the country.

LUTZ (ph): Thank you, sir.

WELDON: General Catto, I've got to get into this unclassified report on the comparison of the lightweight helmet sling suspension versus the BLSS, and according to the non-ballistic impact testing, the test results show that the lightweight helmet, the sling suspension, I guess, withstands 157 Gs versus the model that I guess the doctor has put forward that withstands 79 Gs. That's a ratio of almost two to one better. Can you explain that, why you wouldn't want that for the soldier?

CATTO: I think, Chairman Weldon, we need to define this thing a little bit differently.

There are three issues that we're concerned about with any combat helmet. The first is ballistics and fragmentation, and that is either a bullet or a piece of fragmentation that hits the helmet and what kind of protection do you have. And I would tell you that I think both the Advanced Combat Helmet and the lightweight helmet, in terms of just the helmet itself, they're made of the same kind of equipment and they're basically, in terms of the material, the same.

And the Marine Corps has no criticism of the advanced combat helmet. In fact, we buy that helmet for our reconnaissance folks and for our people that are in the Air Naval Gunfighter and Liaison Crews, because they're guys that do either direct operations that need that kind of capability that the sergeant talked about, and parachute ops, so that when they fall or have the kind of blunt force trauma that they may have through parachute ops, that's a very good helmet. And I think that that needs to be clarified, we do use the helmet and think that the ACH is a good helmet.

But you've got the ballistic piece that I talked about. Then you have the trauma caused by a

crash, whether it's in a vehicle or being hit with an object other than a fragmentation, because the velocity that you get hit with is different. Or you have the third piece, blast, which is the result of concussion and the percussion that Mr. Buyer talked about and the results of that.

And so all of those things are threats to us. Now, from a standpoint of the Marine Corps, the lightweight helmet was, for us, competed for in 2002, and at that time the threat was primarily thought to be ballistics. Now, if you look at the liner that we have in the lightweight helmet, it's an order of magnitude better than the old Kevlar helmet in terms of the way it sits on, the fit, that fact that it does not move around and it's a very solid helmet.

The issue that we have is interesting in that I have neurosurgeons -- I have neurosurgeons that say it's important to maintain that distance so that when you have a ballistic impact on the helmet, the force is not transmitted to the cranium of the marine or corpsman wearing that helmet. As we've talked through this, I've heard you say to me twice that you want facts and then you've said you want to do the right and proper thing, and we agree with that.

Mr. Abercrombie spoke to facts. Mr. Buyer talked about the medical research. Mr. Simmons said it's got to be right. Well, here is the issue in my mind. Dr. Meaders, who is a great American, talked about studies. I've never had access to the studies that he has. If he would forward them to me, I promise you we will give them full measure and look at them from a medical standpoint.

We asked the Oregon Aero folks, who provide the helmet inserts, to give us access to their studies, that they say the pads are better, they have not provided them to us. So, what we did in March of this year is I went to the University of Virginia, the Center for Biometric Studies, and commissioned a study for them to give me rigorous data on what are the results when this helmet is struck by a ballistic impact. And so what I'm going to have within the next two months is rigorous data from a medical facility that tells me what the results on that helmet are.

If they come back to me and they say that either the liner that we have in the lightweight helmet is inadequate and the padded system is better, the first thing I will do is recommend to the commandant that he move to the upgraded system, and I will come to you and ask for the funds to do it.

The issue in my mind is something that all of you in your wisdom talked to initially, is what are the facts. I don't know and we're trying to get to that issue. And when we have them, we will make the decision. Because my responsibility is to ensure that there are no unintended consequences here and that we're doing the right things.

WELDON: General, I don't want to dominate the time here. I want to give my colleagues a chance. But I just, you know, I think you're talking about the impact and we're talking about the protection of the head from rollovers and other incidents we're seeing. But I have an impact attenuation study on Marine Corps helmets dated 1 August '03 from the Marine Corps team at (inaudible) and in the conclusion and recommendation, it ends up by saying, "The all foam pad suspension system of the Mitch is superior for impact protection."

CATTO: Congressman, I would agree with you. It is superior for the crash protection. Remember, I talked a little bit about we use mission specific helmets for our recon folks and for our (inaudible) folks. The issue I have is I have to tailor a helmet for the specific mission and, to date, we think our most significant threat is the ballistic threat, not the crash that you might receive in automobiles.

Now, I've gone to the combat trauma registry and asked for them to give me the data on where are we getting these injuries. Are they for the most part from ballistic incidents, fragmentation, vehicle accidents? When you say it's an IED issue where a marine or soldier is injured, we don't have the data today that can tell us was he hurt by the percussion? Was he hurt by the fact that he bounced around in that vehicle because of the concussion? Or was he hurt by fragmentation?

So, I mean, it's an issue of getting back to -- I need more data and I need the specific facts before I make that decision.

WELDON: General, I thank you. Before I turn to the Army, I just would say that what is a little hard to understand is that we currently have, my understanding is, 6,000 marines that are in theater that are using the pads provided by Operation-Helmet because their choice on the ground in theater was that that helmet and that insert provides a better level in their opinion of protection and comfort.

That's hard for us. You have to understand that. We'll put the money on the table, but it's hard for us to recognize that. So, I turn to the general and I say, General, you made a decision to outfit the entire Army with this pads system, did you not?

SPEAKES: Yes, sir. The decision...

WELDON: Now, you just heard what the general said here, and I don't want to pit the services against each other, but we're in a bind here. We want to give the best. So, would you comment

on why the Army made the decision to go, because you have similar types of experiences with our soldiers.

SPEAKES: Yes, sir. And, as you mentioned, what we have is different decisions at different times, and I think that was a part of the overall factor of what decision was best at a particular time.

Reviewing the chronology, what we had over the course of the late Nineties was Special Operations Command working on the Mitch helmet. And the Mitch was designed to do a couple of things. First, improved protection to the shell itself, improved ballistic protection. And then the other issue that I think is relevant, and Dr. Meaders talked about it, is the concept of sports injury. And the concept of sports injury said that in addition to the basic ballistic characteristic of the shell, the other issue that we were concerned with was the ability of the suspension system to transfer or shield the skull from the shock of a blow of something coming external to the helmet.

And so, the testing that we did indicated that if you take a look at a typical football injury, what you have is somewhere around 40 Gs worth of impact. And that's the typical contact that the authorities that have done the testing for us indicate a typical contact on a football field is. Then, as you take a look at the number of Gs that will cause permanent damage, or at least injury to the brain, what we're looking at is about 95 Gs. We believe right now that our helmet, the ACH, comes in and resists the typical impact to the tune of about 78 Gs. In other words, it is effective enough where it will present adequate resistance to the typical modeled threat that we saw, such that you won't have a brain injury.

And, so, that was the critical issue. And we compared it to our PASGT, the old helmet that we had, the old PASGT was up somewhere around 150 Gs. In other words, transferring a lot of blunt force trauma to the brain. So, that was the basic characteristics that we've used as we made the evaluation back when we decided to evaluate and then adopt that helmet as the Army standard, which happened back in 2002. And then we began full fielding in 2002, 2003 and 2004.

So, it's a combination of the ballistic protection, and that is a significant improvement because we made substantial enhancements to the actual shell. And then the improved pad suspension system, which we believe does have significant benefits in terms of the ability of that helmet system to resist impact and shield the brain from those impacts. Those are the factors that we understand, sir.

WELDON: Gentlemen, the dilemma that we're in, wanting to provide you and our troops the best,

is you understand we have two soldiers perhaps on the ground in the same theater, fighting the same enemy, with significantly different head protection. We're not the ones that can pick or choose, and we rely on you to do that. As a request, we've got 8,000 soldiers, 6,000 marines, using a system voluntarily of inserts provided by a private foundation. You have to understand the confusion we have here. If that's the system that the military at the level of the sergeant over here wants, we want them to have it, and we'll pay for it. And that's our frustration, General.

CATTO: Mr. Chairman, and you know we've talked to this now for three years, and I am in violent agreement with you. The Marine Corps will tell you that we have these questions also, and that's why we commissioned the study in March. And, if you remember, you go back in history, we talked about this very kind of issue with body armor where we had had questions, commissioned the study, and then that was the evolution that brought us to the side SAPI plate.

But what I want to bring everybody back to, there is three issues here. There is ballistic protection, there is crash protection, and then there is a protection from the results of a concussion or percussion. We don't know about the blast piece, the concussion, and we have to - - we need research for that. But all I've heard for the ACH from everyone is that it's better against the crash and it's more comfortable. I have to have the rigorous data that tells me what's the best solution for blast, for concussion, you know, that piece, for crash and for ballistic protection. And that's why I say, I need to help on the research to get to that.

WELDON: I understand, General, but you would not sit there and say that the Army is not looking at all three of those criteria for their helmet, I would think.

CATTO: Absolutely not. I never have a bad word to say about the Army, because we use the same research facilities. We ask the same questions. We share the same engineers. When I get this study, I will share it with PEO soldier and my Army counterparts. And I'm not even sure General Speakes is aware of this. The Army has just started a study, I'm told, last month, to look at the same thing. And, again, we will share the results of this.

WELDON: When will your study be done?

CATTO: Ours is supposed to be done, I believe, in September. We may have preliminary results before that.

WELDON: I think we need to get preliminary results before that only because, I mean, the Army is already using the helmet. They've obviously addressed all three areas that you just said were

the important element for the Marine Corps. The marines have voted with their mouths and are telling Dr. Meaders send us the helmets.

CATTO: I would go back and say I need the facts. I don't have the facts. I don't have the fact on what is happening in the combat trauma registry for what's really happening to our guys. And I think that, if you remember, the Marine Corps has not said we cannot use those pads, and that's the only piece of gear that we've said can be an optional piece for the commanders.

Remember when we worked through Dragon Skin?

WELDON: Yes.

CATTO: So, we have the same kind of issue.

WELDON: Well, let me say this to you. It will not be a question of money.

CATTO: We know that.

WELDON: You know that. I don't want anyone in America to think we will not provide this equipment. And Dr. Meaders has stepped up and done something with his foundation and, to be honest with you, General, there are some e-mails that I want you to look at that came from some Marine Corps personnel that are absolutely outrageous.

CATTO: I have seen that e-mail. And, as you know, in every big organization, and everyone that's an executive, things happen that you would be unhappy with.

WELDON: Right.

CATTO: I did not like the tone of that e-mail and that has been taken care of already.

WELDON: I appreciate that and I know Dr. Meaders does as well, because, look, he has no agenda here.

CATTO: As I think he would tell you, because we didn't get a chance to talk earlier, I thanked Dr. Meaders in the anteroom for what he is doing. And this is not "not invented here" or "we're unhappy with this." We all want the same thing. But I reemphasize, I need to have the facts. And that's my responsibility, as you know, and I think you can help us with that.

WELDON: Well, again, we think the facts are there with the Army, but if you -- I would just say we want you to do this as soon as possible. I mean, this is a top priority.

CATTO: And we concur with that. That's why we started the study.

WELDON: The gentleman from New York is recognized.

ISRAEL: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. And thank you for the passion that you bring to this critical issue.

Mr. Chairman, I want to shift the focus from helmets that are designed to protect our forces from injury to the coagulants that could save them from bleeding to death after the injury.

General Speakes, I deeply appreciate your candor in acknowledging that there have been some difficulties in fielding the coagulants. The DOD has said that about 50 percent of the fatalities are the result of blood loss and arterial coagulants are literally lifesavers. The Army has had a policy that every service member in the theater would have at least one coagulant.

This is an example, as you know, General, of one of two products that are used by the military. This is one example. This is an example, General, of what happens when things go wrong. This is my -- one of my daily newspapers on Long Island, front page story, June 8, "Blood clot bandages, frontline shortage. Some troops calling home to ask for lifesaving dressings."

I'd just like to take you through a very brief chronology because our time is limited and then I have some questions.

General, on June 1, one of my constituents, Doreen Kenney (ph), whose son, Jacob Fletcher (ph), was killed in Iraq, visited my office, and she reported that she was receiving e-mails from service members in the theater asking her to please send them arterial coagulants because they didn't have any.

That day, my office contacted the Army and the Navy and asked about any known shortages. The response that day was that no one was aware of any shortages, but that they would investigate. We remained in contact with the department as they attempted some fact finding.

One week later, this newspaper story appears. We transmitted it on June 8 to the Army and to the

Navy. The very next day, Friday, June 9, the Army signed a \$3 million contract with one coagulant company that had been funded by Congress the prior December. Congress funded \$3 million to contract for coagulants. The day -- one day after my office called, one day after we submitted this "News Day" story to them, the Army contracted for those coagulants.

The same week, the Army began negotiating with another company to increase the coagulants, the arterial coagulants. On Tuesday, June 13, and this is one of the things that I have a hard time understanding, despite the fact that the Army signed a contract a few days before, on Tuesday, June 13 we received this e-mail from the Army. And I'm quoting. "Army has sent over 200,000 blood clotting bandages to theater. This exceeds the requirements for one bandage per soldier."

So, the Army is telling us on June 13 that all the requirements have been fulfilled, and yet the Army, only days before, finally consummated a contract that had been funded by the Congress the prior December. In fairness to the Army, the very same day somebody got back to us after sending that e-mail, saying, well, upon further investigation there may be some distribution problems.

Since we began this inquiry, the Army has in fact been responsive to us, and I appreciate that. We've been in contact with the Army on a daily basis. And we have been told by you today and by others in the Army that 117,000 units have been purchased and have been shipped to the theater, that the Army is doubling procurement of coagulant bandages from 10,000 a month to 20,000 a month starting this month and that every service member will have at least one.

My national question, General, is, despite the fact that you have recognized that this is a problem, what are we going to do to make sure that the problem does not occur again? We're ramping up production. We're ramping up distribution. But what's to stop another distribution problem in theater? What are we doing in terms of the roots of this problem? If you would answer that, and if I have time I will have another question for you.

SPEAKES: Sir, absolutely.

You addressed I think very accurately the chronology of our internal investigation to see what was happening with this very important issue. I think procedurally we learned some important lessons.

First of all, we had an early determination that we'd make this what we call SBE or stay behind equipment, so that what happens when soldiers exchange roles, the stuff that is critical, that is going to remain in the theater and is of limited supply, stays in theater. This wasn't on the order

that we had put out at the department directing that it be stay behind equipment.

This week we've made the correction. It's a part of a review that we're undertaking right now at the department level to make sure we have a current list of the material we are mandating stay in the combat zone because it is in short supply. So that's step one, official recognition at the department level that this is critical property that must remain in the combat zone.

The next issue, sir, that I think your constituents very accurately identified was where we had it, we were not sure that it was actually in the hands of soldiers. In other words, it was out, distributed in mass sets, but it was not out where soldiers actually need it. We're pretty confident that we have very good distribution in the medical command. In other words, the combat medic had it, but not all the combat lifesavers who, as you know, are basic soldiers who just get additional training, or that the individual soldiers had it.

This is now a chain of command focus. The chain of command is specifically focused on distribution and ensuring it is an element of pre-combat checks, just as you would check for the presence of a weapon or ammunition. So, I think it is a part of our culture.

This, as you know, is new technology. It's a new capability. For years, I wore a first aid pack around me that meant nothing. Now we've got a critical lifesaving capability that we in the chain of command have got to be much more sensitive to. You have our attention, sir. We understand how important it is to soldiers and we'll get it fixed.

ISRAEL: Sir, I appreciate that. My time has elapsed. I'm just going to put on the record two questions and then I will follow up with you.

One is, there was a report that as many as 30,000 packets essentially were stuck in a pile and may have even been thrown out because they exceeded the six-month expiration date. And one of the things that I'm very careful about at home in my medicine chest is opening it up to make sure the Tylenol hasn't exceeded the expiration date. How is it possible that 30,000 of these packages were just thrown out because somebody didn't figure out that we've got to use these within six months?

I'm going to ask you to look into that. We don't have time to get a full answer, but I will contact you tomorrow to follow up.

And secondly, General, if the chair will permit, you had said that you will be reporting to this

committee on the progress that you are making in achieving the 531 goals. Can we expect you to report to the committee on a monthly basis, General?

SPEAKES: Sir, we'd be glad to report on a monthly basis.

ISRAEL: Thank you. I appreciate and will follow up.

I thank the chair.

WELDON: I thank the distinguished gentleman for his excellent questions and will continue to pursue this.

I now recognize the gentleman from Texas for five minutes.

CONAWAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Catto, I appreciate your passion for fact-based decision making. The study that is being done in Virginia, will it include the things that Chairman Buyer talked about in terms of his concern from the veterans' perspective?

CATTO: We're looking primarily at the first increment of this for ballistic protection, because we already know what happens based on the anecdotal data that we have with the ACH in terms of it being slightly better in terms of the crash protection.

So, I think you ask a very important issue, though. We're going to need funding to get to this correctly, and we're going to want whatever kind of help we can get from Mr. Buyer and this committee to make sure that we have the right information so that we make the right choice.

CONAWAY: The padded system -- I played football, I wore both kinds of helmets. Will the study show if, in the ballistic hits, the padded system transfer shocks through the neck and into the spine that might not otherwise be there?

CATTO: That is one of its functions of this study. We're looking to find out what are the results of that kind of trauma and how is it transferred.

CONAWAY: So, if it shows that the pad systems do not degrade the ballistic protection, you would be willing to switch?

CATTO: Yes, absolutely.

CONAWAY: But based on facts and a study from scientists. CATTO: As we've said, we don't have a preconceived position here. I just want to be sure before I make that decision or recommend that decision be made that we have had right data to support it.

CONAWAY: OK. General Speakes, does the Army have any kind of data like that, of the ballistics characteristics of the pad system versus a sling system on ballistic hits?

SPEAKES: Sir, let me take that for the record.

CONAWAY: OK.

SPEAKES: We have studied material, but I don't know for sure if it addresses that specific issue.

CONAWAY: Okay.

WELDON: Well the gentleman yield?

CONAWAY: Yes.

WELDON: And I'll give the gentleman extra time.

CONAWAY: Actually, I'll just -- let me yield back. That was my last question.

WELDON: General, the point I have to ask you, then, is why would you then issue this helmet to your recon folks who are in a more hostile environment? Why would you do that, if you're not satisfied that perhaps enough testing has been done?

CATTO: Well, remember, now, I said we issue our recon guys both helmets. They have the ACH for certain direct action missions or missions where they're doing parachute ops, where we're more concerned about the crash issues. And in those kinds of missions, they're not intending to be involved in firefights. They're intending to do the reconnaissance piece, collect intelligence, and then get out of the area. And those missions where we think that they may be involved in a firefight or a high probability, they're going to wear the lightweight helmet, which by design is significantly bigger and we think slightly better in terms of the ballistic protection.

So, it's really mission specific.

WELDON: You're not saying they carry two helmets around.

CATTO: We said they're issued two. We didn't say they carried two.

WELDON: The gentleman is finished?

The gentleman is recognized for -- am I right? I'm sorry. The chairman is recognized, Chairman Buyer.

BUYER: What was your motivation to do this study in March?

CATTO: Mr. Buyer, the issue for us...

BUYER: It's pronounced Boo-yer.

CATTO: I apologize.

Because we've had persistent questions about this and our own guys asking for the helmet, we've gone out and said, OK, we need to have the specific data, because we have the same kind of questions you do...

BUYER: OK, stop.

Was there any motivation that you would then do a study on blast? Did you ever have a motivation to study blast?

CATTO: We will look at blast in the next increment.

BUYER: All right. Let me rephrase the question. When you made a decision, you were motivated to do a study on ballistics. At that time, did you have an equal motivation to study blast?

CATTO: We did not.

BUYER: All right.

CATTO: Now, can I go back and say, remember, we don't have the trauma information to tell us where our injuries are coming from.

BUYER: (OFF-MIKE).

WELDON: I thank the gentleman for his outstanding presentation.

The gentleman is recognized, Mr. Wu.

WU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to follow up on your pointing out that the Army and the Marine Corps had similar decisions to make, and it is my understanding that the Army and Marine Corps had the same data about helmet safety, or very, very similar data, and one service went one way and, thus far, the other service has not chosen to go to what marines in the field seem to be choosing for themselves.

We have two major generals before us. Didn't you all have the same data in front of you to make your decision?

SPEAKES: Sir, I don't know that the specific data that we had, in terms of how it was shared or what the common situational awareness of it was when we made the decision back in 2002. I'll take that for the record.

CATTO: Mr. Wu, when we looked at this helmet in 2002, we didn't have a respondent from industry come in with a padded solution.

WU: But that was '02. This is '06.

CATTO: Yes, sir, and that's why we're looking at an upgrade.

WU: And you have 6,000 or 7,000 marines that have selected a different helmet. And it's my understanding, or at least people have given me information to the effect that people have tried to supply the Marine Corps with information and the Marine Corps has been resistant to that. And I would like to follow up with you off-line about that.

CATTO: Mr. Wu, I welcome that discussion. If that information has been provided to us, I'm not

aware of it, because if it is, I would act on it.

As I said, I have asked for these studies from Oregon Aero and I have never received them. When Dr. Meaders said he had studies, I have never had the benefit of those studies.

WU: Major General, we have a dispute of fact here and we will try to resolve that and we will work with you to do that.

My understanding is that both Dr. Meaders and others have tried to supply you and the university with information and that there has been resistance to that.

I want to focus on a different aspect of this issue, which is that this Congress appropriated \$2.2 million specifically for helmet padding in fiscal year '05. And I just called the Oregon Guard today and they used \$200,000 of that money. Now, I really respect the job that Dr. Meaders and others have done in raising private money, but we should not be outfitting our soldiers through charitable foundations.

We appropriated \$2.2 million. \$200,000 of that money has been spent by the Oregon Guard, and I want to know where the other \$2 million are.

Now, the problem is, I mean, it's not just a matter of potential wastage of taxpayer money in that there is \$2 million that I don't know where that's gone, but it is also the case that we've asked for \$5 million this year to improve helmet liners, and I want to make sure that that money that we approve here is actually saving lives in the field.

Back in fiscal '05, there was \$2.2 million appropriated. There was \$2.5 million in the House appropriations report. In conference it was cut to \$2.2 million. Ask I don't know how to account for that \$2 million, and that's why I have stayed here this long, even though I am not on that committee, because there is by my count a couple of million dollars missing. And, for some, that may be just a rounding error, but it is a significant amount of money and it makes a real difference to troops in the field.

CATTO: When you say Guard, I assume you're addressing this to General Speakes?

WU: Well, it was appropriated to the Army Guard, but my understanding is that that money can be reprogrammed for any branch of the service. CATTO: I can't speak to that, because I'm not aware of it. If it was appropriated to the Army Guard, that was not a Marine Corps issue at the

time and we'll have to talk off-line.

WU: Well, what I need to point out to you is that that money was appropriated for fiscal '05, which ended September 30 of last year. The Oregon Guard told me that they were not offered the money from that appropriation until the last month or two. Now, somehow that money was held up into the wrong fiscal year. Now, that may seem like a small accounting issue to some, but that's 10 months or 12 months in the field with the wrong kind of helmet for others. And that's why I'm raising this money issue and this specific appropriation issue today.

SPEAKES: Sir, this is clearly an issue that the Army needs to take a look at. At this point, I don't know the specific status of the Oregon Guard and this money.

What I can assure you is that at this point we have bought 660,000 of the ACH, that we're continuing to buy 30,000 a month.

WU: Well, Major General, what I can tell you about the situation of the Oregon Guard is, when they needed the helmets -- when they needed the helmets, they had to borrow them from California and Florida and elsewhere, and then when they were asked how much money can you use, they used \$200,000 because they had borrowed a whole lot of helmets. And they said why don't you go to those other Guard units in California and Florida and elsewhere in the northwest and see if they can use some money now, because we had to borrow those helmets, but we don't need any more than \$200,000.

So, I'm wondering why there was a significant delay, much more than 12 months, and where the missing \$2 million is as we're looking at a \$5 million appropriation for FY '07. I want to make sure that that money goes to be used the way that it was intended, to save soldiers lives.

SPEAKES: Sir, I understand your concern. We'll work it. And we owe you an answer. And I understand your commitment.

WU: And let me know if you have any problems reprogramming that money from one service to another or between the Guard and the regular Army or the Marine Corps, and we will work on that with you.

SPEAKES: Sir, I appreciate it. We will do that.

WU: Thank you, General.

WELDON: I thank the gentleman for his questions.

General, I don't want to beat a horse to death, General Catto, but we have a copy up here of Oregon Aero's test results. Has the Marine Corps asked them for their test results?

CATTO: Sir, yes we have. I have not seen those results. We asked for them in September.

WELDON: Here they are. And they're comparative results. And what we're told here is these are basically the same evaluations with the Marine Corps lightweight helmet. And the results are pretty much what we've heard the Army state to be the case.

You know, it is hard for us to be here and to understand all the dynamics in question here. What we do know is very simple. We do know we want the best protection.

General, I have to ask you this question, General Speakes, are all of our Guard and Reserve being retrofitted with the inserts that we're talking about here?

SPEAKES: Sir, absolutely. Let me explain how we're doing it.

Because of the need for a form fit, what we're doing is we're using the rapid fielding initiative, which, as you know, is a program that we're using across the Army. And we've essentially started with Guard and Reserve deployers and worked our way across the deployment list, over 600,000 soldiers fielded to date.

And we're using the RFI team to go to units and do unit set fielding where we're getting a form fit for every soldier or unit, in most cases before they go to combat, and then we're extending that program so that we're going across the rest of the Army.

So, our commitment is to field all the way out the 900,000 until we get everybody taken care of at all com posts.

WELDON: So, that's underway right now?

SPEAKES: Yes, sir, it is.

WELDON: General, you can make my day by simply saying that while you're doing whatever studies you're doing, 6,000 of the marines in theater, which I think are 20,000-something, are

using these inserts. I'm not talking about the helmet test. I'm talking about the inserts that are certified for use, which your special ops recon people are using.

We will give you the money -- you already have the money. Let's put Dr. Meaders out of business. Let's buy these inserts and make them available for the troops today. We're with you. Democrats, Republicans, you've got the money. Buy them. Let the marines use them as they're doing. And then if there is a study that shows we should improve it another way, then fine.

To me, if it makes the soldiers who are using these inserts feel comfortable, then we ought to do that. You still do the study, but let's do that now. And we're not going to take this out of the Marine Corps budget. I'm going to the wall, as I have for the Marines, and I think my colleagues would join with me.

CATTO: Congressman, you've always been a great supporter and your heart is pure and I love that. I will not go ahead and authorize the use of those pads unilaterally until I have the data that says what the right decision is.

Now, having said that, I'm not going to tell them they cannot use it, but the issue we've talked about here has been primarily comfort or a better protection against crash. I've got to have the data to make sure that we make the right decision before we as a service move one way or the other. And I'm not trying to be a roadblock here.

WELDON: Well, respectfully, General, I would say the Army is looking at the same three areas that you're looking at. They're not just looking at ballistics, they're looking at crash, they're looking at everything. And they've made a decision. And I understand that recon has a different function and you've made that decision for them but not for the others.

But I can tell you, the decision in my opinion has already been made. It's been made by the marine on the ground. And this wasn't something forced on them. There was no marketing team over in the theater saying hey, buy this. This was a group of Americans who said we'll raise the money to give you, if you want it, and 6,000 marines now have that.

So, I'm going to tell you what I'm going to do. We're either going to raise the money privately and I'm going to get behind Dr. Meaders and do it, and if we do that, it's going to embarrass the service. We shouldn't have to do it. Or we're going to force it through an appropriations process that this Congress has the ability to do.

And I don't mean to be blunt, but that's how strongly I feel about this based on what we've heard and what we've seen today.

The gentleman, the chairman, is recognized.

BUYER: Thank you very much.

With regard to the study on the blast, is that something that you have available dollars that you could initiate or are you going to have to wait for something from us?

CATTO: We don't have the dollars available now, no.

BUYER: OK. Wow. All right.

Well, then, we are going to have to put something together. And we're also going to look to you for your expertise that when we do this study, that we have to have the right modeling. And it's not just the study of the helmet by itself. It is, as the soldier depicted, with everything we put on them.

And we have such great capacities in our country to do wonderful and marvelous things. And to think that we don't have the ability to create a helmet that is multifaceted sort of would be amazing to me. I just want you to know that that is how I feel. And I am not going to sit here and supplant my judgment for you, because you gentlemen have commanded troops in battle, and I'm not going to question your sincerity, because you know what it's like to lose a soldier or an airman, marine, so I'm not going to get into that with you. But, man, I feel for them.

I also was in the desert and I know what that was like in the first Gulf War, and that is a miserable helmet, Sergeant, you're absolutely right, to wear. Piercing headaches. I actually got a care package and in that care package were those air bubbles, you know, the plastic air bubbles? I cut it, cut out the air bubbles, and put it in my helmet to rest on my head, on air, and immediately it removed my headaches.

So, soldiers and your marines are going to do whatever they can out there. They want to operate, but they also want to be able to exist and live, and I think you guys know that.

All right, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

WELDON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And to our friends from the Air Force and Navy, we're not trying to slight you. And for the record we're going to provide a whole series of questions on these issues. And without objections I'm going to submit the documentation and data provided by the companies that staff has inquired of regarding these inserts. And that all will be a part of the record as well as additional questions that we would ask of each of our witnesses, to which we would ask you to respond.

We're going to have a classified brief following this which I want to get underway because of the debate on the floor, so I will not take the hearing any longer. But, again, I just want to say, and especially to my friends in the Marine Corps, General, this, to me, is so obvious that it is -- I won't say ridiculous. And I understand, you want the best protection. We want the best protection. But the fact is, the Army has made a choice. They're using this. It's a certifiable system. You're allowing the marines to put this system in place in their helmets in theater, 6,000 of them already have it. To me, it's a no-brainer. You buy these inserts from whoever. I don't care what contractors. I understand now there are three contractors that make this. I don't care who you buy it from. None of them are from my area of the country. None of them I even know who they are, I couldn't name them except Oregon, Oregon Aero something.

But it's a question of where this has been brought to our attention -- and if it was just somebody coming in saying this, but when we have 6,000 marines and 2,000 soldiers and all the other soldiers using this in theater, it just defies logic for us not to know why this is not being done. And to have to go out and continue to beg and borrow and raise money from the public is not the answer. It's not what the American people want to hear.

Again I want to thank all of you, and especially our civilians who have come in to testify who have reached out in a very positive way as citizens, for your effort, Dr. Meaders and family. Cher, thank you for being here.

And, Cher, you've impressed me today, not just because you impress me all of the time as a musician and as an artist, but you sat through a two-and-a-half hour Congressional hearing. And that in itself deserves a round of applause. So, thank you for being with us here today.

This hearing is adjourned.

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