

## Congressman Neil Abercrombie Opening Statement

Mr. Chairman this subcommittee has a long record of effective oversight when it comes to testing weapon systems. Our recent efforts regarding the new Presidential Helicopter program are a good example.

The subject of this hearing is critical: how does our military select and develop weapon systems that help protect the lives our troops in combat. Such a process should get the troops what they need, be open to new ideas, and be willing to try unorthodox approaches. However, the process through which we give our troops equipment also has to be thorough. It would be tragic if an effort to protect our troops ended up instead actually putting them at greater risk. What this Committee wants from the DOD and the military is a system that is both open to new ideas and timely, but also rigorous in vetting technologies before they go into battle. That is a difficult balance to strike, but finding that balance point is essential.

The issues in question at today's hearing are very complicated from both a technical and military operational standpoint. "Active Protection Systems" for vehicles are a daunting technical challenge. The systems have to be completely automated to react quickly enough to shoot down an incoming missile or rocket-propelled grenade. But they must also be safe enough to use in real combat environments, not just on a testing range. A protective system that protects the vehicle but kills the American troops standing beside it may not be the ideal choice for the future.

At a minimum, the complexity of the issues involved in today's hearing suggests that serious testing and military judgment must be applied to this problem before the military moves forward.

The NBC news story broadcast a few weeks ago that led to today's hearing raised many issues about how the Army decided to proceed with development of an Active Protection System and what kind of threats our troops face in Iraq or may face in the future elsewhere.

These allegations were serious and included the following: First, that the Army chose to pursue its own Active Protection System through Raytheon rather than buying an Israeli system called "Trophy." Second, that the Army overruled others in the Pentagon who wanted to test the Israeli system in Iraq on selected US vehicles. Third, that the Army rejected the Israeli system due to its ties to Raytheon, a US defense company, and finally that the Army rejected the Israeli system because it could threaten funding for the Future Combat System, which includes the Raytheon active protection system project.

The goal of today's hearing is to lay all the facts on the table so this committee can decide what further steps are needed. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on this issue.