



**HOUSE ARMED SERVICES SUBCOMMITTEE ON TACTICAL AIR AND LAND FORCES
CURT WELDON, PENNSYLVANIA
CHAIRMAN**

PRESS RELEASE

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Opening Statement of Chairman Curt Weldon
*Protecting Our Troops - Combat Vehicle Active Protection
Systems*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, continuing our high priority placed on providing force protection for our men and women in combat, the subcommittee is holding its sixth hearing on force protection issues. We will receive testimony from Department of Defense witnesses on combat vehicle active protection systems -- systems designed to protect ground combat vehicles from threats like rocket propelled grenades and anti tank guided missiles. This capability has been described to me as a mini missile defense system. Only instead of a system with twenty to thirty minute timelines, a system with two second to thirty second time lines. And once armed, is without the man-in-the loop. Also, because of the proximity of engagements to the defending vehicle, there are associated potential collateral damage considerations. So achieving this capability is not without significant conceptual, technical, and tactical challenges.

In April 2005, Central Command validated a Joint Urgent Operational Needs Statement request from our forces in Iraq for a capability that included a requirement for a fully automated, active protection system against rocket propelled grenades and anti-tank missiles. Initially, the tasking for the Central Command request was assigned by the Joint Rapid Acquisition Cell in the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) to the Office of Force Transformation in the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

After conducting a market survey of active protective systems that offered the promise of providing near-term capability, the Office of Force Transformation and other agencies to include the Army, determined that a system called Trophy, developed by an Israeli company, offered the most promise of providing the required capability. After preliminary testing, the Office of Force Transformation estimated that the Trophy system could be fielded on one vehicle in the first half of 2007. However, the Army and OSD's Joint Rapid Acquisition Cell recommended against continued testing of Trophy because of technical and collateral damage issues, and that the Central Command urgent requirement could not be met until, at the earliest, the 2011 fielding of the active protection system being developed for the Army's Future Combat Systems Program.

So we have a situation where Central Command has validated an urgent requirement for an active protection system. The Office of Force Transformation indicates that a system could be fielded in the first half of 2007. Yet, the Office of the Secretary of Defense has decided to not field a capability until 2011, at the earliest.

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We would like to understand what factors went into this decision.

Further complicating a public understanding of the facts in the effort to develop and field a system that could protect our personnel is that the Army has not always been clear in responding to the public and Congress and has provided contradictory information on its active protection systems program. In an information paper dated June 13, responding to a query from our subcommittee, the Army stated in one place that the Trophy system could be deployed as early as the end of 2006 on Israeli vehicles, but further on in the response indicated it was on a similar developmental timeline as the only other U.S. active protection system in development, scheduled for fielding in 2011. Similarly, explanations regarding the selection of the contractor for the Future Combat Systems active protection system are unclear as to what that contractor was selected to do. This has led to media accusations that the Army cooked the books in the selection of the contractor. We intend to ask the Government Accountability Office to determine the facts in this source selection.

Contrary to information provided in witness statements, we are not aware of any funded program for an active protection system for current systems like M-1 tanks, Bradley Fighting Vehicles, or Stryker vehicles in the Army or Marine Corps budgets. We look forward to hearing the specifics of these purported programs.

Some of the major issues that we need to address are:

- ◆ Does the current threat to our combat vehicles require an active protection system for those vehicles?
- ◆ Does an effective, acceptable active protection exist to equip those vehicles and when can it be fielded?
- ◆ Is the investment required to equip those vehicles with an active protection system warranted relative to all of our other requirements?

Again, given the urgent action request from Central Command for our forces in Iraq, the Subcommittee hopes to understand why the Office of the Secretary of Defense has declined to pursue an interim active protection system capability, with the current earliest projected fielding of an active protection system in 2011.

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