

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

PRESENTATION TO THE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SUBJECT: INDIVIDUAL BODY ARMOR

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6 JUNE 2007

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BY THE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

## **Introduction**

Distinguished members of the committee, I want to thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to present information on the current Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI) Individual Body Armor (IBA), its capabilities, how we chose this particular IBA and the chain of events which lead to AFOSI's selection of another IBA after briefly fielding Pinnacle Dragon Skin Armor. On behalf of our commander, Brigadier General Dana A. Simmons and the men and women of the AFOSI, thank you for your continued, strong support.

First, let me begin by stating AFOSI provides significant support to the ongoing conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan. We currently have 181 special agents deployed in support of Operations IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF) and ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF). Since just the beginning of this fiscal year, the 91 special agents deployed in direct support of Air Force operations have conducted 832 combat sorties, identified 2737 threats, prepared 28 Target Packages and have been responsible for 341 terrorists neutralized. The remaining special agents supporting joint operations or performing "in-lieu of" taskings have made a similar impact.

Because of our extensive "outside the wire" mission, AFOSI continues to field the most advanced protective gear and equipment for our special agents, specifically in the areas of combat helmets, light armored vehicles, and individual body armor.

## **Type of IBA Currently Used**

Since October, 2006, AFOSI agents are issued the Paraclete Rapid Release Vest (RAV). This IBA is provided to all our special agents deploying in support of OEF or OIF prior to attending our six week Advance Deployment Operations Course that prepares them for the turbulence and violence they may experience while deployed. Prior to the Paraclete RAV IBA selection, AFOSI reviewed 16 different IBA models for level of threat protection, mobility, and comfort before choosing this model for further consideration. At the time of selection, a SOCOM Tier 1 team was using this model, as were AFSOC Special Tactics Squadrons (STS). AFOSI's forward deployed staff members also requested HQ AFOSI review this IBA after gathering data within the OIF/OEF AOR. A three day examination period, sponsored by HQ AFOSI for recently redeployed AFOSI personnel and Antiterrorism Specialty Team and Contingency Response Group special agents, provided universal positive feedback on the Paraclete RAVs comfort, mobility, and protection as compared to the standard Interceptor IBA used by the bulk of deployed US forces.

### **Effectiveness**

Fortunately, no agents have received direct or indirect fire to the torso area since Paraclete RAV IBA has become standard issue. Additionally, all redeploying agents asked have provided positive feedback on the Paraclete RAV IBA. The Paraclete RAV IBA utilizes front and rear Enhanced Small Arm Protective Inserts (ESAPI) as well as side torso side strike plates. These side plates protect against a single round of 5.56 (M-4) or 7.62 x 39 (AK-47) assault rifle threat. It also allows the wearer to mount a soft ballistic collar, yoke, shoulder, and groin

protection. A final benefit is an emergency rip-away release feature, which provides the wearer the ability to quickly remove the vest in case of vehicle immersion into water, escaping a damaged vehicle, or to quickly remove to treat combat wounds.

### **Pinnacle Dragon Skin Body Armor**

AFOSI's first interaction with Pinnacle Dragon Skin Body Armor occurred while researching flexible armor to hardened indigenous vehicles. This led to AFOSI reviewing Pinnacle Dragon Skin Body Armor to meet the needs of our deployed special agents. Initial information obtained from Mr. Nevin Rupert, US Army Research Laboratory, was positive and AFOSI pressed ahead with urgency to acquire this promising IBA. However, On 26 Jan 06, AFOSI was notified by USAF Battle Lab personnel of test failures of Pinnacle Dragon Skin Body Armor at the Air Force Research Lab (AFRL). Because of this notification, and to confirm Pinnacle verbal claims of their SOV 2000 Level III "Plus" Dragon Skin Armor meeting key Level IV threats, AFOSI requested the Aberdeen Test Center fire the following Level IV rounds into the vests on 16 Feb 06.

1.) 7.62 x 54mm 147 GR, (LPS – light-ball ammo w/mild steel core) -

PENETRATION despite Pinnacle Armor verbal assurance it would stop this threat.

2.) 7.62 x 39mm 120 GR, (BZ – armor piercing incendiary (API)) -

PENETRATION despite Pinnacle Armor verbal assurance it would stop this threat.

3.) 7.62 x 39 mm 122 GR, (PS - steel case mild steel core) – PASSED as advertised on Pinnacle Armor website

According to the contract specifications, the Pinnacle Armor SOV 2000 Level III “Plus” Dragon Skin vests did not fail testing on written capabilities and was certified per contract specifications. However, it did fail the verbally stated capabilities discussed between Pinnacle Armor and HQ AFOSI personnel and on 17 Feb 06. AFOSI immediately issued a “Stop-Use” order on Pinnacle Dragon Skin Armor and directed all vests currently in use be sent back to HQ AFOSI. AFOSI personnel were directed to use an alternate IBA until a suitable substitute could be fielded.

On 11 May 06, AFOSI received verification from the Nation Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center that Pinnacle Armor had no body armor tested/certified to NIJ Level III or Level IV standards. Of note, is all Pinnacle Dragon Skin SOV 2000 armor received by AFOSI were clearly and falsely marked NIJ Level III. On 13 Jun 06, AFOSI directed HP White Labs to perform NIJ Level III ballistic testing on AFOSI procured Pinnacle Dragon Skin SOV 2000 Armor. This testing was performed under supervision of a HQ AFOSI special agent and resulted in the Dragon Skin Armor failing. The tested vest experienced one penetration to the front panel after six shots and two penetrations to the rear panel after six shots. Additionally, the vest failed to stop Level III threats to the side panels, disproving the “full torso wrap protection” claim made by Pinnacle Armor.

During the month of July 06, the AF initiated action to stop further contractual payments to Pinnacle Armor because of these documented failures. In April 07, AFMCLO/JAF began preparation of proposed debarment package on Pinnacle Armor. That package is in final review and is expected to be filed with SAF/GCR by the week ending 8 Jun 07. The AUSA and AFOSI had no objections to the package. In addition, Pinnacle Armor formally appealed the Air Force Legal Operations Agency (AFLOA/JACQ) Termination for Cause determination to the Armed Services Board of Contract Appeals (ASBCA).

Also ongoing is a Joint DCIS/AFOSI criminal investigation of Pinnacle Armor for wrongly indicating via labels affixed to the AFOSI purchased Pinnacle Dragon Skin Body Armor the vests were NIJ Level III compliant when in fact they had not been certified to that standard

### **Summary**

Brigadier General Simmons is committed to providing the men and women of AFOSI with the most advanced protective gear and equipment available. We want to especially thank you for your continued support that allows us to obtain this leading edge equipment so we can more safely perform our mission which is to "Identify, exploit and neutralize criminal, terrorist and intelligence threats to the U.S. Air Force, Department of Defense and U.S. Government." Members of the committee, thank you from the men and women of AFOSI for your interest in our safety.