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MSA (Mine Safety Appliances Company)

STATEMENT REGARDING THE WALL STREET JOURNAL REPORT ON THE ADVANCED COMBAT HELMET FOR THE U.S. ARMY

MSA is one of three manufacturers that produce the Advanced Combat Helmet (ACH) for the U.S. Army. Jointly designed by MSA, the Special Operations Command and the U.S. Army, the ACH represents the most advanced ballistic head protection ever used in military applications. In short, it is an exceptional helmet that incorporates the very latest in advanced material and manufacturing process technologies.

The recent *Wall Street Journal* article that discusses the effectiveness of the ACH could be interpreted as classifying the ACH as ineffective for all military applications. To clarify, the article focuses on the ACH and its use in situations where soldiers may be exposed to shrapnel from explosive blasts occurring at ground level and traveling upward. Clearly, the smaller profile of the ACH does result in less coverage of the ears and neck than earlier combat helmets. However, the ACH provides higher ballistic protection and comfort which is critical in traditional military applications. The bottom line is that the ACH has and will continue to save lives in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The ACH differs from earlier generation helmets in that it sets new standards for ballistic protection, comfort, stability and situational awareness. Combined, these features have enabled the Army to address and overcome important shortcomings with previous generation helmets.

Among these shortcomings is that the previous generation helmet had the propensity to interfere with a soldier's ability to sight his or her weapon. For example, if a soldier moved into a prone position during a firefight, when he or she hit the ground, body armor would hit the back of the helmet and cause it to "ride up" the head and down over the soldier's eyes, thereby impeding a soldier's ability to return fire.

As with any design innovation, there are trade offs. In the case of the ACH, the trade off is slightly less coverage area in exchange for more stability, better integration with other body armor, and greater situational awareness because it doesn't completely cover the ears. With these benefits, it is much more likely a soldier will wear the helmet because it doesn't interfere with the ability to defend ones self.

MSA has received many reports of cases where the helmet has directly prevented serious injury from gunfire or shrapnel. In fact, one sergeant from the 82nd Airborne Division, who was struck in the head by a sniper round while on patrol in Afghanistan, was so grateful to have the helmet that he felt compelled to visit MSA's Newport Vermont factory just to say 'thank you' to the people who made it.

Another important fact to note is that the ACH has achieved one of the highest acceptance rates ever recorded among U.S. Army soldiers. Upon returning to the States from Iraq and Afghanistan, soldiers are frequently surveyed to gather opinions about the effectiveness of all kinds of equipment being deployed. In the case of the ACH, the helmet had an acceptability rate of more than 90 percent. For this reason, the ACH was named by the U.S. Army Material Command as one of the top 10 inventions in 2002.

Regarding any changes in the design, MSA does not anticipate nor has it been notified by the Army of any planned changes. However, should the Army determine that a design change is warranted, MSA has the expertise and capabilities to provide a wide range of coverage options that incorporate the same high level of ballistic protection and design features that have made the ACH such an important part of our soldier's protective equipment arsenal. Our materials and manufacturing expertise will help ensure any such change is a smooth and seamless process.

Whatever the resolution is, MSA will be there to assist in this effort.

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