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MONDAY, MARCH 07, 2005

Protecting Our Troops: How The Military Screwed Up

by Michael in New York on [3/07/2005 12:08:00 PM](#)

I was grouching just yesterday over the lack of follow-up articles about body armor for our troops -- both personal vests and the armor needed for Humvees and other vehicles. Lo and behold, the New York Times has a [massive, front page feature on the many "missteps" of the Pentagon.](#)

One order for bulletproof vests -- after a general realized his hasty decision that they weren't needed was deadly wrong -- took 167 days to get moving and weeks and even months more to get to the troops.

"By contrast, when the United States' allies in Iraq also realized they needed more bulletproof vests, they bypassed the Pentagon and ordered directly from a manufacturer in Michigan. They began getting armor in just 12 days," according to the New York Times.

It's a pretty dispassionate article, frankly, a "how did it happen" look at the past -- despite the fact that it details career soldiers resigning in frustration, shows anti-IED electronic equipment has been stalled and claims that a soldier who complained about the lack of armor was harassed when returning to his unit.

The article also fails to answer the one questions I had: Rumsfeld was lambasted over the number of Humvees that were poorly armored or nor armored at all. They insisted the problem was being tackled immediately. So what's the status? How many vehicles got the plating they need that can save lives? How many Humvees with pathetic scrap metal plating have been replaced with ceramic plating? Are soldiers still paying for armor out of their own pockets?

Please thank the NYT via letters@nytimes.com and push them to do the obvious followup.

If you've seen the pretty good new documentary "Gunner Palace," (which gives a sympathetic look at what our soldiers are enduring in Iraq), you know it shows one soldier giving a mock sales pitch for their Humvee. He describes the scrap metal plating they've improvised as being good enough to slow down bullets and shrapnel just enough so that they lodge inside of you rather than going right through your entire body. His buddies literally roll on the ground laughing.



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