



**HOUSE ARMED SERVICES SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS  
JOEL HEFLEY, COLORADO  
CHAIRMAN**

**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Opening Statement of Chairman Joel Hefley**  
*Hearing on Body and Vehicle Armor, Rotorcraft Safety*

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – This hearing is the most recent in a series of activities the House Armed Services Committee is taking to keep up-to-date on the services' force protection efforts.

My colleagues and I are committed to ensuring that our troops have the best possible protective gear and equipment to fight this war. We're here today to get an update on how the services are utilizing funding, and how they are responding to recent news items claiming that more needs to be done.

In Iraq and Afghanistan, our enemies continue to develop new and more sophisticated threats. Our response to these threats must be both swift and sensible. We hope to hear from the witnesses regarding:

- How we counter the threats to our warfighters.
- And, how these initiatives are influenced by common-sense approaches that take into account long-term needs.

For example, regarding body armor, I want to stress how important it is to continue developing better, easier-to-wear personal protection. Current body armor—with its front and back plates and numerous inserts—are hot, heavy, and particularly cumbersome. Iraq is a hot and dangerous place; we need to continue developing lightweight gear offering maximum protection and maximum mobility for our soldiers.

In the meantime, the services should strive to field all available body armor and its numerous enhancements. When soldiers and marines go out into the field, operational needs—not the availability of armor plates or inserts—should dictate what type of body armor they wear.

We also look forward to testimony from our witnesses about their strategy for vehicle armor. It has been necessary to armor our vehicles as quickly as possible to protect against the IED threat. However, when developing this indispensable force protection for our troops, are the services also considering what can be done to sustain these vehicle platforms? The weight of add-on armor, along with the current optempo and harsh conditions, places stress on these vehicles. I'd like to hear what fundamental changes the Army and Marine Corps are making to vehicle transmissions, chassis, and other components to prolong the life of each platform.

And finally, as the Chairman of the Readiness Subcommittee, I am particularly interested in gaining a better understanding of the quality and type of training helicopter crews are receiving before deploying. Based on information provided to the committee, it appears that specialized training is helping aircrews better respond to hostile actions and avoid accidents.

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