

OCTOBER 8, 2003

**SCHAKOWSKY: BUSH ADMINISTRATION'S MISSTATEMENT OF THE DAY -
PROGRESS IN IRAQ**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) issued today's "Bush Administration's Misstatement of the Day" on claims made by the Bush Administration that progress is being made in Iraq, while at the same time, U.S. soldiers are going without body armor and other critical needs.

Reporting on the public relations offensive the Bush Administration is about to undertake to defend its Iraq policy, the *Washington Post* (10/8/03) today quoted a senior administration official as saying:

"This will be a sustained effort to talk to the nation about the progress we are making."

□ Another administration official said in the same story:

"We want to make sure the American people and the members of Congress know that their money is being well spent."

However, the Bush Administration is not making progress to ensure that U.S. soldiers receive the equipment they need even though the Administration is spending \$1 billion a week in Iraq.□

According to an op-ed in [The Alameda Times Star](#) (10/5/03) by Jonathan Turley, some soldiers were given *"Vietnam-era flak jacket that cannot stop the type of weapons used today. It appears that parents across the country are now purchasers of body armor because of the failure of the military to supply soldiers with modern vests."*

□ In another piece for *The Hill* Newspaper (10/7/03), Turley wrote about other *"shocking shortages,"* including:

- Boots - Widespread reports indicate that boots issued to soldiers in Iraq *"have*

cheap and soft soles that quickly wear out. Soldiers are sewing material to the bottom of their boots out of desperation."

- Camouflage - Some soldiers were told to wear jungle camouflage in the desert because *"there was not enough desert clothing to go around."*
- Unarmed Vehicles - The military was not issued enough armored Humvees.

Turley continued: *"Soldiers have also complained about inadequate or poor field radios, ammo carriers, weapon lubricant, socks and even rifle slings."*

Schakowsky said, "It is shameful that the White House is launching a public relations campaign to tout its progress in Iraq when some soldiers still don't have the body armor to keep them safe. Soldiers are going without basic needs in Iraq because the Bush Administration is more interested in politics than in ensuring the safety of our military personnel in Iraq."

The Hill

October 7, 2003 Tuesday

'The best possible equipment' should include Kevlar and boots

By Jonathan Turley

Gunnery Sgt. Mike Quinn was concerned as his unit took up its position at a dangerous roadblock in Fallouja, Iraq, in May. Quinn expected a fight and the unit was short of Interceptor vests, the Kevlar body armor capable of stopping a machine gun's bullet. According to his friends, Quinn gave his vest to a young soldier. When the attack came, the soldier would survive but Quinn died of his wounds.

What is striking about this story is not just Quinn's heroism but the shortage of such a basic item as state-of-the-art body armor in a front-line unit. However, it now appears that such shortages of basic equipment are common and U.S. soldiers may have died unnecessarily.

Since the beginning of the war, Americans have been assured that our forces were given the very best equipment before going into combat. Indeed, when criticized for his record deficit, President Bush insisted that it was caused in part by the need to supply "the best possible equipment" to our forces in Iraq. That will come as news to many in Iraq who have been dealing with some shocking shortages and substandard equipment.

A few examples:

- **Body armor:** At the beginning of the war, many soldiers were issued Vietnam-era flak jackets that cannot stop a standard military bullet rather than modern Kevlar vests. Even after ramping up production, the military still equipped many soldiers with outmoded vests. Others have modern vests without the necessary protective-plate inserts.
- **Boots:** Perhaps the most basic military item for any foot soldier, there are widespread reports that the boots issued in Iraq have cheap and soft soles that quickly wear out. Soldiers are reportedly sewing material to the bottom of their boots out of desperation.
- **Camouflage:** Many soldiers who shipped out to Iraq were told that they would have to wear jungle camouflage in the desert because there was not enough desert clothing to go around.
- **Sidearms:** Soldiers have complained that their standard-issue sidearm - the 9 mm Berretta - does not automatically reload after one shot, an alleged defect in the ammunition clip that leaves them without an automatic sidearm.
- **Unarmored vehicles:** The military issued many units vehicles with light or no armor. The unarmored Humvees issued to many units are vulnerable to small-arms fire.
- **Rucksacks:** Many soldiers are buying their own rucksacks because the standard-issue models are too small and not durable.

That is only a partial list. Soldiers have also complained about inadequate or poor field radios, ammo carriers, weapon lubricant, socks and even rifle slings. Reserve and National Guard units have been hit hardest by shortages, though full-time soldiers have also reported shortages and shoddy equipment.

In defense of the military, no army can go to war without some logistical and supply problems.

However, the complaints do not appear to be the common wartime gripes from grunts in the trenches but a disturbing pattern of neglect. Soldiers have been going to extreme lengths to acquire basic equipment - buying their own equipment to remain ready for combat.

Consider the shortage of modern body armor. Richard Murphy is a military policeman in an Army Reserve unit in Iraq and one of my students last year. His unit was issued the outmoded flak jackets. When some of the modern Interceptor vests arrived, they lacked

the ceramic-plate inserts needed to protect the soldier's vital organs. Murphy's mother, Suzanne Werfelman, had to spend more than a week's salary as an elementary school teacher in Scotia, Pa., to buy armor plates and send them to her son.

She is not alone. Many parents have been buying modern body armor to protect their sons and daughters in Iraq.

The military recently made replacement of the outmoded vests a priority. However, the modern vests have been around for years and were credited with saving 29 lives in Afghanistan. Members of Congress demanded years ago that the military issue such vests to every unit, yet money and a lack of priority left many units, particularly Army Reserve and National Guard units, with substandard equipment.

Sgt. Zachariah Byrd was given an outmoded flak jacket in Iraq before his unit was ambushed. Shortly before, a friend gave him his Interceptor vest while Byrd manned a .50-caliber machine gun on the top of their vehicle. Byrd was hit four times by fire from an AK-47 and only survived because of the last-minute switch. Other soldiers have gone into Iraq with empty vests due to the failure to supply the necessary plates. Gen. Richard Meyers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, has admitted that there is a shortage of plates that will continue until December.

The failure to supply all units with modern vests by the beginning of the war is a case of criminal negligence. It is equally baffling to learn that we do not have sufficient supplies of desert camouflage.

The Bush administration spent months threatening to invade Iraq and there has been a real possibility of an invasion since the end of the 1991 Gulf War, yet the military failed to order sufficient clothing to support such an effort despite the fact that there had been a similar shortage in the 1991 war.

One of the greatest concerns is that many troops are driving through hostile areas in unarmored Humvees that offer little protection.

In an area saturated with rocket-propelled grenades and automatic weapons, soldiers were appalled that they were not issued the standard armored Humvees.

One detachment, the Rhode Island National Guard, complained about the lack of armored Humvees and got no action. Earlier this month, however, two members of the unit were killed when their unarmored Humvee was destroyed by a land mine. In the wake of the attack, the Pentagon has now ordered the transfer of armored Humvees to the unit. Other units, however, are still without armored Humvees and have experienced shortages in basic parts such as treads for existing vehicles.

In the Civil War, complaints of war profiteers' sending shoddy military equipment, rotten meat and flimsy footwear were common. Those reports led to a scandal for the Army and Lincoln administration, followed by a congressional investigation. It is shocking to hear

such stories today and see no similar effort by Congress to investigate the shortages and inadequate equipment.

In the meantime, before President Bush again taunts Iraqi gunmen to "bring it on," he may want to give our troops prior warning. They may want some time to grab their empty Interceptor vests, run in their defective boots to their unarmored Humvees and get the hell out of town.

Jonathan Turley is a professor of law at George Washington University who has written extensively about the U.S. military.