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Tests verify safety of Lightweight Helmet pads

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QUANTICO, Va. — Contrary to Internet statements, Marine Corps Systems Command is standing by the safety of the Marine Corps Lightweight Helmet. Formal tests, with strict adherence to standard and accepted test protocols, prove helmet pads issued for the Marine Corps Lightweight Helmet do not burst into flames when exposed to an improvised explosive device (IED)-like event. The test results are based on the pads being properly installed and worn in the helmet.

Officials said the current issue helmet pads were chosen because they provide the best available protection, as demonstrated during formal, laboratory testing in 2006.

From December 2006 until March 2007, Marine Corps Systems Command conducted formal, laboratory burn tests on various flame-resistant clothing systems at North Carolina State University and the University of Alberta, Canada. The test scenarios comprised a system of components replicating combat-worn items such as Lightweight Helmet with pads inserted and flame-resistant clothing articles including gloves, tactical vests, etc.

Testing was conducted using the American Standard Test Methods (ASTM) International Standard F1930-00. Using this test protocol, the uniform ensemble, including issued helmet pads, was exposed to a four-second flame duration ranging between 1,472 to 2,552 degrees F.

The Department of Defense uses the ASTM F1930-00 to evaluate flame-resistant clothing for protection against flash fire simulations using an instrumented manikin. The ASTM F1930-00 test protocol is the best model available to simulate flash fire conditions in an IED incident. Tests revealed that the issued helmet pads within the Lightweight Helmet were not ignited when exposed to flame.

Marine Corps Systems Command Program Manager for Infantry Clothing and Equipment Lt. Col. A.J. Pasagian emphasized "we are doing everything we can to ensure the safety of our Marines and Sailors by providing them with the best and most effective force protection equipment. Their preservation through better and more capable equipment has been, and will always be, the highest priority of the Marine Corps Systems Command."

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