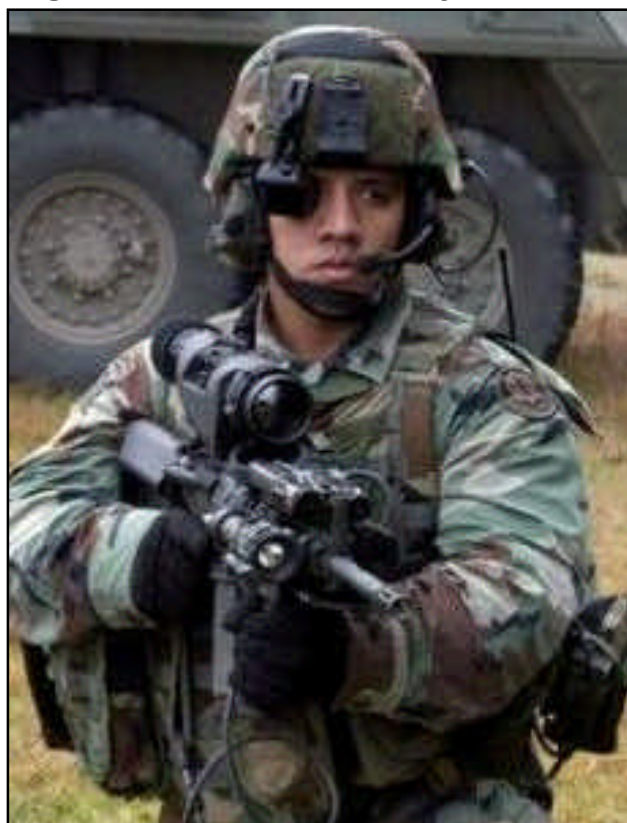




High-Tech Uniforms Finally Go To War



By Noah Shachtman

A high-tech collection of soldier gear, 15 years and half a billion dollars in the making, will finally make it into battle. The 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry has adopted the Land Warrior suite of wearable electronics, and will take it with them to Iraq when they deploy next year. It's the first time a large group of infantrymen will be tied to the combat network that's connecting so much of the military.

These days, the vast majority of dismounted soldiers don't even have radios -- let alone the electronic mapping and messaging tools that have become commonplace in most Humvees. That'll change, once the "Manchus" of the 4/9 Infantry don the Land Warrior ensemble.

Radios and GPS locators come standard. A helmet-mounted monocular lets the soldier know he and his buddies are on a satellite-powered map. That same monocular is connected to the weapon sight, so the infantryman can, in effect, shoot around corners. The sight also serves as a long-range zoom, with twelve times amplification. "It makes every rifleman a marksman," Night vision, and laser targeting -- which once required clunky binoculars, or attachments to the gun -- are now built in, too.

Getting this kind of gear out to troops has taken just about forever. First proposed in 1991, Land Warrior went through one clunky, next-to-useless iteration after the next. One cost \$85,000, and weighed over 40 pounds. Another was way too fragile for combat. Even this version 3.0 (now down to 12 pounds and \$30,000 each) has had a bunch of weight, security, and usability issues.

The concerns were so great that the original vision giving every soldier a full set of high-tech gear has been scrapped. For now, only Manchu team leaders will get the entire Land Warrior ensemble, Col. Hansen tells Defense Tech. Regular riflemen will be equipped with GPS beacons, to let their sergeants and lieutenants know where they are.

It's a small step, but a significant one.

VA Underestimates Care Costs

The government used prewar data to estimate the cost of caring for Veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan, contributing to a \$3 billion budget shortfall at the Veterans Affairs Department since 2005, congressional investigators say.

The department used "unrealistic assumptions, errors in estimation and insufficient data" to project its budget, the Government Accountability Office said in a report.

Investigators also said VA failed to estimate correctly the costs for these war Veterans partly because the agency could not get accurate information from the Defense Department.

In addition, the VA agency failed to tell Congress in a timely way that it was struggling to meet its expenses. The problems led officials to make requests for an extra \$3 billion last year, according to the GAO.

Department officials said they agreed with the findings and were working to improve. Secretary Jim Nicholson said in a statement that VA uses "highly reliable actuarial projections of health care demand" but that the agency continues to "refine" its modeling.

Clerk's Note: All of you buying into this "Spin" please write us a letter. If you don't buy it, send congress a letter!

America Grows Up!

Quietly, without a bell or even a whisper, in mid-October 2006, the United States of America reached a milestone... Three Hundred Million people now live here. Of that just over 5% are illegals.

So when you hear that the unemployment rate is 5% of the American population workforce, you will know who got your job.

And if you want to know how important 5% of something is... The United States of America is just under 5% of the World's Total Population.

It would seem that 5% of something is a very important number... At least to us as Americans.

American Legion Addresses Findings

"Recent media reports that Gulf War Syndrome doesn't exist are misleading and masks the fact that even though ongoing maladies being experienced by Gulf War Veterans may not have a scientific name they certainly do exist," said Paul A. Morin, National Commander of the American Legion. "The Institute of Medicine's (IOM) recent report on the health of Gulf War Veterans is basically a summary of existing peer-reviewed research and the committee's findings. The most contentious, which some media are just now reporting on, is the conclusion that there is no Gulf War Syndrome," Morin said. "This is not breaking news within the Veterans community, but it does warrant more explanation because of the misleading headlines."

Depleted Uranium, How Is It Helping You?

The United States and other nations are using Depleted Uranium (DU) within our weapons and as a weapon itself. It is made into munitions used in the very weapons that our troops carry into combat.

And while being around it one day every three months or so has no major effect, daily doses of breathing in its particles are deadly.

DU is used in shells that are fired from tanks, planes, rifles and helicopters. It not only has an immediate effect on its target, it has a lasting effect on the environment for about a thousand years. After all, it is uranium.

Dust particles linger for generations, getting into our lungs and into the ground where our water and food comes from or our livestock feeds from.

Thousands of our Veterans have died, are dying or are ill from this so called "Small Problem." Will you speak up? Even if you do not care about yourself, what about your grandchildren?

For more information on the web, go to: <http://www.apfn.org/apfn/DU.htm>

New Command for Unique Missions

By Patti Bielling, Army News Service

Ft. Sam Houston, TX. - The Army's newest service component command has a dedicated mission unlike any other -- defending the homeland and supporting civil authorities during times of crisis.

The U.S. Army North achieved full operational capability Oct. 16 following a year of intense planning, manning, equipping and training.

"We have come a long way," said Lt. Gen. Robert T. Clark, US Army North commander. "We conducted a robust training and exercise program and have worked to establish critical relationships with federal, state and local partners in disaster response."

The command is based at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, and is the Army service component of U.S. Northern Command. Its mission includes homeland defense, defense support of civil authorities, and theater security cooperation activities with Canada and Mexico.

To conduct day-to-day disaster response planning, the command has aligned a defense coordinating officer and a 5-person defense coordinating element with each of the ten Federal Emergency Management Agency regions.

The command is also able to task-organize up to two task forces that, with augmentation, can become joint task forces and deploy within an operational area to command and control Defense Department forces responding to homeland defense or civil support operations.

In addition, the command oversees the training and readiness of Civil Support Response Teams, National Guard units dedicated to weapons-of-mass destruction and other disaster response missions.

During the last year of building toward full operating capability, U.S. Army North performed various civil support missions, to include providing support during the 2006 wildfire season and the 2005 hurricane season.

Upcoming events for the command include Golden Guardian, a California emergency response exercise in November, and Vigilant Shield '07, a U.S. Northern Command exercise in December.

The U.S. Army North was conceived in 2004 and traces its lineage to the Fifth U.S. Army. Its creation as the Army service component command was directed as part of Army transformation, a Dept of the Army effort to adapt the Army headquarters command structure to execute Military Department Title 10 functions more effectively and efficiently.

Subcommittee Seeks Timely, Accurate Claims

Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs Chairman Jeff Miller (R-Fla.) held an oversight hearing recently to assess the training and claims procedures of VA's claims adjudicators. Testimony was received on the types of training provided to claims adjudicators, the standards used to measure proficiency and performance, and what the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) is doing to enhance the performance of claims examiners. "The ability to provide timely and accurate benefits is dependent not solely on increasing staffing levels, but on providing proper and thorough training. Congress, and certainly VA, must ensure that current and new employees have the skills and knowledge necessary to render accurate and fair decisions the first time," said Chairman Miller.

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