



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
3000 MARINE CORPS PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20350-3000

IN REPLY REFER TO:
JUN 27 2006

The Honorable Curt Weldon
Chairman
Subcommittee on Tactical Air and Land Forces
Committee on Armed Services
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for the opportunity to talk with you yesterday regarding the Marine Corps' Lightweight Helmet (LWH) and its sling suspension system. I share your strong commitment that our Marines and soldiers be equipped with the best force protection equipment available.

As a follow-up to our conversation, I would like to provide you with additional information. As you know, no single helmet can provide complete protection against all major sources of head injury. Head injury on the battlefield can be divided into three main groupings: ballistic, blunt force impact and blast. The LWH with its sling suspension system has performed extremely well in ballistic testing. However, the areas of blunt force and blast effects are of growing concern.

I believe that the Advanced Combat Helmet with its padded suspension system and the Lightweight Helmet with its sling suspension system both provide excellent protection. However, in order to better determine the efficacy of both suspension systems, in March 2006 we commissioned a study by the University of Virginia through the Natick Soldier Center to address performance of both sling and pad suspension systems. I have directed that this study be expedited and that follow-on studies immediately be initiated to address blast and blunt force performance.

In the meantime, I have directed that O&M funding be made available to commanders who want to purchase the padded suspension system. Both suspension systems are available and can be used in the LWH.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for your unwavering support for the men and women in the uniformed services.

Semper Fidelis,


M. W. Hagee

General, U.S. Marine Corps
Commandant of the Marine Corps