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Attachments:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

American Legion to DoD: Fix the Combat Gear

WASHINGTON (December 16, 2009) - The American Legion called reports that soldiers are being sent to combat with deficient gear and lack of training “completely unacceptable.”

“The American Legion supports our troops’ missions in Iraq and Afghanistan but they must have the best equipment and training that we can possibly give them,” National Commander Clarence E. Hill said. “Representatives Ike Skelton and Solomon Ortiz should be commended for bringing these serious concerns to the attention of the Pentagon leadership.”

The two House members wrote in a Dec. 10 letter that they are “greatly troubled” by what they have been told by soldiers.

For instance, a military historian found that the M4 carbine failed at critical moments during a July 2008 firefight in Afghanistan, in which nine U.S. soldiers were killed.

“Even though these weapons routinely rank lower than other military weapons in testing, they are still being issued as the Army’s weapon of choice,” the lawmakers wrote.

“I am also concerned that troops are reportedly being taken from bootcamp and being sent to combat, with little or no additional training. Soldiers are also saying that their rucksacks are poorly designed and make it difficult to fire their weapons,” Hill said. “My question to military leadership is ‘Who has the backs of our troops?’ The American Legion would like some answers. Training and equipment should be factored in as essential costs of war, just like VA health care. We will take this issue up with the Secretary of Defense and even the president of the United States if it is not addressed quickly.”

With a current membership of 2.5-million wartime veterans, The American Legion was founded in 1919 on the four pillars of a strong national security, veterans affairs, Americanism, and youth programs. Legionnaires work for the betterment of their communities through more than 14,000 posts across the nation.

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