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Frontlines

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EXTENDED PROTECTION

New helmet pads shield neck from fragments

Marine Corps Systems Command has received approval to purchase neck-protecting body armor upgrades, which the Army began fielding Feb. 28, according to a SysCom spokesman.

Capt. Jeff Landis said March 5 the Marine Corps will order 75,000 of the "nape pads," which attach to the back of a Marine's helmet and hang over the exposed part of the neck.

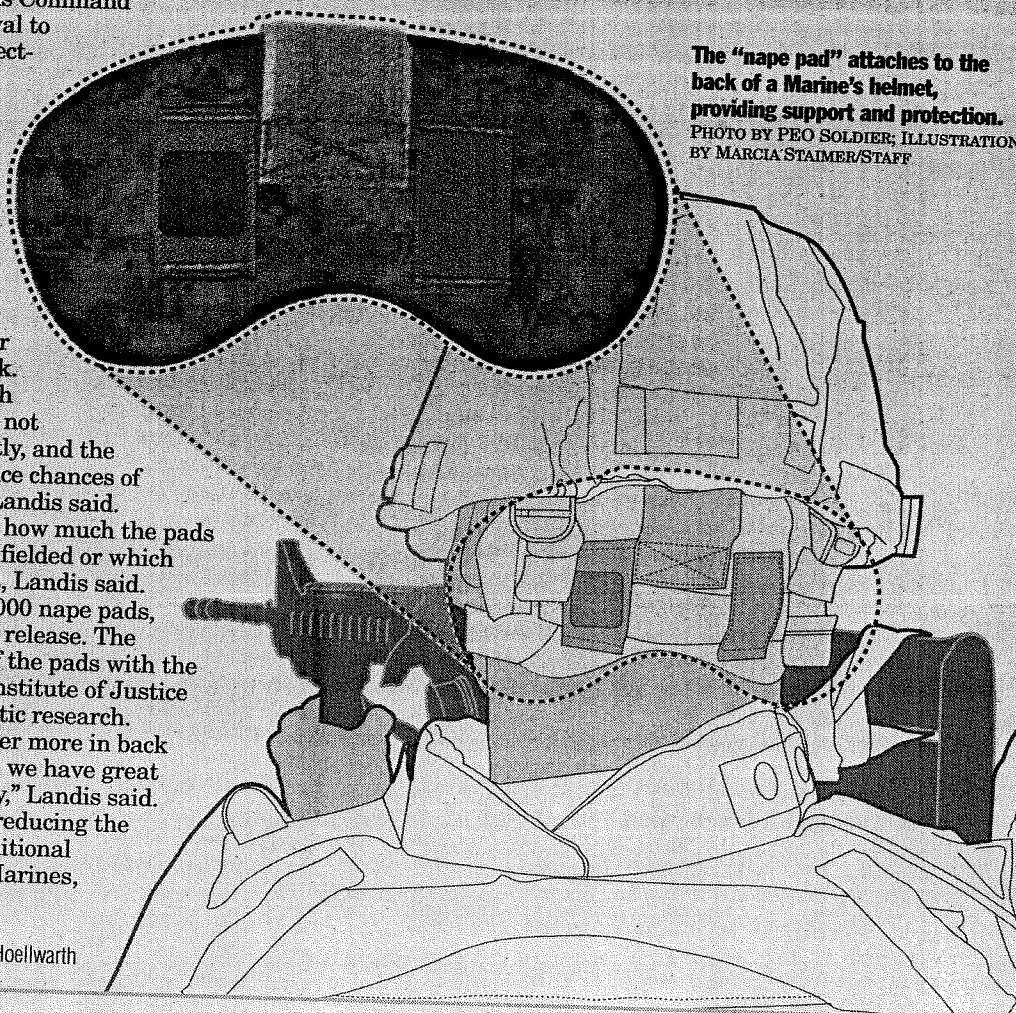
"We've recognized through time that head injuries are not something to be taken lightly, and the nape pads will greatly reduce chances of traumatic brain injuries," Landis said.

SysCom doesn't yet know how much the pads will cost, when they will be fielded or which units will receive them first, Landis said.

The Army is fielding 430,000 nape pads, according to a Feb. 28 news release. The Army coordinated testing of the pads with the Corps through a National Institute of Justice laboratory certified in ballistic research.

Marine Corps helmets cover more in back than Army helmets do, "and we have great coverage in the back anyway," Landis said. "What this does is assist in reducing the blunt-force trauma. Any additional protection we can give the Marines, we will."

— John Hoellwarth



The "nape pad" attaches to the back of a Marine's helmet, providing support and protection.

PHOTO BY PEO SOLDIER, ILLUSTRATION BY MARCIA STAIMER/STAFF

Pfc. Enrique C. Sanchez was posthumously awarded the Bronze Star Medal for combat distinguish-

POSTHUMOUS BRONZE STAR

Pfc. Enrique C. Sanchez would be proud to receive the Bronze Star with "V," but he would not be able to attend the ceremony that came with it. The ceremony at Camp Lejeune, N.C., his family will attend.

Lt. Col. Matthew Clair, Sanchez's commander, presented the medal March 5 to Sanchez's mother, Patricia Otten, and grandmother, Pat Ayscue.

Sanchez, 21, was killed when a roadside bomb exploded under his Humvee in Iraq in July.

A month earlier, on Aug. 8, 2006, Sanchez was killed in a roadside explosion of a four-wheel vehicle when a roadside bomb exploded under his Humvee, igniting tank.

As his vehicle burned, small-arms fire flames swelled around it. Sanchez returned to his turret-mounted machine gun.

"I remember the day the back of our squad said Cpl. Daniel V. [Sanchez] was a squad leader with a combined Anti-Armor

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