

EQUIPPED TO WIN



SOLDIERS DEPLOYING TO AFGHANISTAN THIS OCTOBER WILL BE WEARING THE LATEST, BATTLE-TESTED SOLDIER SURVIVABILITY GEAR AND ITS RELATED EQUIPMENT.

The gear, including new body armour and combat helmets, is part of an ongoing five-year programme and delivery of equipment which is known as soldier survivability programme of equipment (SSPE). The Afghanistan rotation is the first operation being equipped and will be followed by other operations in order of threat level.

After operational needs are met, equipment will be delivered to wider units in the Army over following years out to 2013.

The new gear includes:

- Advanced combat helmet
- Improved body armour
- Ballistic goggles and glasses
- New individual torch
- Handheld GPS
- Enhanced patrol pack
- Combat gloves
- Enhanced modular (MOLLE) webbing and pouches

The improvements in the equipment will see soldiers significantly more comfortable, lighter, and notably with an enhanced level of protection from ballistic threats. A recognisable change is the colour which is now standardised as 'Coyote Brown'.

The improved body armour (IBA) provides enhanced ballistic and fragmentation protection and is now sized to the individual rather than the last one-size-fits-all model. The IBA is truly world-class and has been developed based on lessons learned in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is a Special Forces variant and is currently in use with US Navy SEALs and US Army Rangers.

This is the first part of wider range of equipment that will come on-line over the next five years as part of the Soldier Modernisation Programme including night vision equipment, In-Service Weapon Replacement and Upgrade Programme (ISWRUP), Urban Operations and Less Lethal Projects. On-going work for SSPE includes the replacement of the field pack, development of the next generation combat uniform and introduction of an active noise reduction commander's headset.

As the new equipment comes into service, current in-service equipment will be distributed throughout the wider Army for training purposes.



ADVANCED COMBAT HELMET:

The Rabintex ACH is a light-weight ballistic helmet that provides the same ballistic protection as the current in-service helmet but is 0.5kg lighter. Its internal mounting system is comfortable to wear and allows greater interoperability with ballistic glasses and TMCS. The design of the ACH helmet allows far greater freedom of movement than the existing design. The Rabintex ACH is in-service worldwide; notably with the ADF.

A helmet cover has also been designed for the ACH which comes in both desert and woodland DPM, is tight fitting on the helmet, has google retaining straps, and has several IR patches inserted for combat identification.

BALLISTIC GLASSES:

The ESS ICE ballistic glasses are already in-service with the NZDF on current operations. They provided the greatest overall comfort and interoperability with the ACH helmet and PRR. They come with three coloured lenses to allow use in low-light and sunny conditions. These will protect eyes against blast fragmentation and other non-ballistic threats.

BALLISTIC GOGGLES:

The Revision Desert Locust goggles were selected as they offered the greatest durability and functionality as a ballistic goggle. These will protect the wearer against blast fragmentation and other non-ballistic threats whilst also protecting the eyes from wind, sand, dirt and snow.

IMPROVED BODY ARMOUR:

The BAE RBAV (SF) provided the greatest overall benefit for capability, durability, comfort, functionality and design. It provides significantly enhanced ballistic and fragmentation protection for personnel over the in-service body armour. It contains two main (front / rear), five smaller side and groin plates and soft armour throughout providing ballistic protection. The IBA contains groin, throat, neck, upper arm and side protection and has a MOLLE exterior for attaching pouches.

The IBA is fully modular and also has a quick release system to enable the user or another person to discard the vest quickly if the user is injured or submerged in water.

COMBAT GLOVES:

The Camelbak Impact CT combat gloves are designed to protect the wearer against scratches and cuts when operating in an urban environment. They do not replace any in-service field or cold weather gloves. They provide enhanced protection around the fingers while still allowing users to operate small components like those on their individual weapon.

IMPROVED PATROL PACK:

The Camelbak Trizip provides a significant enhancement to the current in-service patrol pack with its ergonomic design and additional features. The Trizip contains a pouch for a Camelbak hydration system to be inserted into, has a removable back comforter, and is also adjustable for height. The outside of the patrol pack is MOLLE based which allows other pouches to be applied if required.

NEW INDIVIDUAL GENERAL PURPOSE TORCH:

The Sidewinder stood out as the individual torch choice as it is small, light-weight and has excellent functionality. It provides four types of light: red, blue, white and IR. It has four levels of brightness on each including a strobe function. The torch also comes with a helmet mount so that it allows a hands-free operation. With the IR function it significantly improves the local area illumination when used with an II NVG.

IMPROVED INDIVIDUAL GPS:

The Garmin 60cX GPS is a Commercial Off The Shelf (COTS) unit that provides a cheap but very functional GPS. The Garmin 60cX provides colour mapping and new maps can be downloaded via the internet as required. The users found it easy to operate and accurate as an individual navigation aid for tactical commanders.

