

Army Gets First Lot of 7,500 Hi-tech Helmets

Two-thirds of these to be given to soldiers engaging terrorists in J&K & those deployed on borders with China; many helmets are also equipped with communication device

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New Delhi: The Indian Army has received its first lot of 7,500 high-tech ballistic helmets that can withstand bullet fires and shrapnel hits. Many of them are also equipped with communication device.

It is part of an order of about ₹170 crore to procure 1.58 lakh ballistic helmets from Kanpur-based defence firm MKU, which supplies military equipment to the UN and NATO, defence ministry officials said.

They will replace the older helmets being used by the army, which offer little or no protection from bullets and shrapnel.

Two-thirds of the first tranche of helmets will shortly be given to soldiers engaging terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir and those deployed on borders with China, while 2,500 helmets have been already given to Indian Army soldiers deployed in UN peacekeeping missions.

In addition, 6,000 more helmets will undergo trials at DRDO's Terminal Ballistics Research Laboratory (TBRL) in Chandigarh, which assesses the terminal effects of military weapons, officials said.

The Centre has approved procurement of 3.28 lakh ballistic helmets, they said.

The 1.58 lakh new helmets will be given as part of "standard kit" to soldiers. "These helmets are for the battalions deployed in counter-terrorist (in J&K) and counter-insurgency (in the North-East) operations and along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China and Line of Control with Pakistan," said a senior defence ministry official, adding that about 13,981 helmets are for the Indian Navy.

TWO TYPES

The new helmets come in two kinds. The first is the "normal helmet", which merely offers protection to a soldier's head. Head is normally the first body part exposed in any combat situation. These helmets offer effective

Better Equipped

Indian defence firm MKU to provide helmets

Indian Navy will also be given new helmets	Helmets offer effective protection against 9mm bullets fired as close as 10 m away	Offer protection from shrapnel from explosions	Helmet also compatible with three types of radio sets
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Army also wants helmet with thermal sensors, night vision device, audio headset and display monitor



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NOT TOTALLY SAFE



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a soldier from splinters, rocks and a bullet that has ricocheted and grazed it

tive protection against 9mm bullets fired as close as 10 m away. But quite often it is not a bullet injury, which proves fatal. Shrapnel from nearby explosions or cranial impacts from shock waves prove fatal. MKU, in its website, explains that these issues warrant ballistic head protection as an essential gear. It adds that the MKU's ballistic helmets provide protection against bullets and fragments. Older helmets could only protect a soldier from splinters, rocks and a bullet that has ricocheted and grazed the helmet. But if a bullet directly hits

HOLISTIC APPROACH



Army aims at providing soldiers with

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one of these older helmets it would not protect the soldier.

As an alternative, the Army began using patkas, which is an improvisation to the older helmets. But a patka can only protect one's forehead, not the rest of the head.

The other type of ballistic helmet is called the "commander helmet". It has a communication device and has compatibility with three types of radio sets.

ARMY'S AIM

The army aims at providing soldiers with enhanced lethality, protection, situational aware-

ness, survivability and mobility. It is looking to make the soldier a "self-contained fighting machine". So besides protection, the Army also wants that as part of its future technologies, a soldier's helmet should have provision for mounted search light, thermal sensors, night vision device and an audio headset. The helmet should also provide protection against bio-chemical threats. The visor should have a heads-up display monitor.

The army in a recently released report titled "Future Core Technologies and Problem Statements" states that the existing helmet does not provide "real-time situational awareness". This means that it is difficult for a soldier to engage a target and he is not fully aware of the progress of the battle. In addition, the report explained that to enhance a soldier's situational awareness, the US land warrior programme developed an assembly to provide communications (speaker and microphone) and a hands-free display (helmet mounted display for viewing maps and messages) mounted onto a standard helmet.