



OPERATION HELMET



Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is Operation Helmet and How Does It Work?

A: A nonpartisan, charitable grassroots effort that provides helmet upgrade kits [free of charge](#) to U.S. troops in Afghanistan and other dangerous areas. We depend on your tax-deductible donations. For \$34, you can provide added safety and comfort for a trooper. But donations of any amount are welcome. You can designate the money for a specific branch of the military, a particular unit or an individual trooper.

Q: What is a helmet upgrade kit?

A: A helmet upgrade kit now consists of shock-absorbing pads to replace the "GI" pads. Troops find the GI pads very hard and uncomfortable to wear for extended patrols and other duties. The pads cause headaches, necessitating removal of the helmet for comfort. That's a bad idea with the unpredictability of IED's, RPG's, etc. Older Kevlar PASGT helmets required the same pads plus a new strap system with a nape strap and an enhanced chinstrap.

Q: How can I contribute?

A: Go to www.operation-helmet.org to contribute or learn more.

Q: Why are helmet upgrades needed?

A: With the phase-out of the PASGT helmet, today's military head armor all include shock-absorbing pads. The first 500,000 such pad kits ordered by the Army were of Oregon Aero (OA) manufacture that were well accepted and generated few if any complaints. For reasons known only to them, the Army and Marines began purchasing pads manufactured by Team Wendy (TW), a skateboard helmet manufacturer, for use in their combat helmets. Troops actually wearing the GI pads from TW tell us the pads are so hard they call them 'bricks'. The GI pads cause headaches and high-riding helmets, both a source of distraction when looking out for snipers, IED's, ambushes, and vehicle-borne explosives.

Q: Why doesn't the U. S. military pay for the upgrade kits?

A: The military provides the government issued upgrade kits (bricks).

Q: How can you tell if a helmet has been upgraded?

A: If the pad set was made by Oregon Aero, their name is stamped on the 'Velcro' side of the pad or have tags sewn to pad edge. If "ZAP" or the stock number is stamped on that side, the pads are of Team Wendy manufacture. Other manufacturers include Mine



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Safety Appliance (MSA) and Skydex. One can also take the pads out and feel them. The OA pads are 'conforming', that is both sides will feel comfortable to pressure. The GI pads have one very hard side and a thin inner 'comfort' layer and the whole pad's interior is enclosed in a tough plastic 'baggie'. The color may be the same for all manufacturers.

Q: Does Operation Helmet receive funds from upgrade kit manufacturers?

A: Operation Helmet was founded in 2003 by Robert H. Meaders, MD, a Vietnam veteran and retired Navy captain, after his Marine Corp grandson requested upgrade kits to make his company's helmets safer in combat in Iraq. It is not affiliated with any manufacturer of upgrade kits. We don't care who makes the pads, we just want them to take into consideration the need for troops to concentrate on their dangerous missions rather than needless headaches and the danger of removing helmets for comfort.

Q: What is Operation Helmet's relationship with the suppliers?

A: There is no financial connection between Operation Helmet and its vendors. Operation Helmet management receives no financial gain. Oregon Aero is to date the only supplier of upgrade kits that have stood the test of time. We have tried pads from different manufacturers, but troops' response has always had us fall back on the top-of-the-line pads from that source.

Q: How much of my donation goes toward helmet kits?

A: Over 99% of donations go toward helmet kits. There are extremely limited administrative costs deducted, no payroll, and the Operation's books are available for inspection by anyone who wants to see them.

Q: How did Operation Helmet get started?

A: In 2003, Doc Bob's grandson, Justin, a Marine combat engineer, was in convoy-escort training in California. He learned from a Marine gunny just back from Iraq about the protective upgrade kit. Doc Bob researched with US Navy and French Explosive Research docs, and de-mining pros in the US and Europe. Originally we started only to outfit Justin's company of 100. Word spread through the grapevine from Marine to Marine, then to soldiers, sailors, and airmen.

Q: Has Operation Helmet been a success?

A: To date, Operation Helmet has sent upgrade kits to over 70,000 troopers. Doc Bob and LaVera Meaders continue to personally contribute to Operation Helmet, feeling that they can't ask others to give unless they do as well.