

INTEGRATED PROTECTION AND LOAD CARRYING SYSTEM FOR THE DEFENCE FORCES

In 2004 the Defence Forces decided to procure a new Integrated Protection and Load Carrying System (IPLCS) to consist of new helmet, body armour, goggles, elbow/knee protectors and a new load carrying system. Furthermore, it was stipulated that all this equipment had to be fully interoperable and compatible with existing night vision equipment (NVE), individual protective equipment (IPE) and CBRN equipment (chemical, biological, radiological & nuclear) as well as with an array of communications and ancillary equipment that are currently in service. But most important was the requirement for the IPLCS to meet the current and future needs of DF personnel in its peace support operations abroad.

To date a new helmet and body armour has been procured which is lighter, offers higher ballistic and fragmentation protection than current helmets and incorporates a new padded head harness. The helmet delivery was completed in May of this year.

The body armour is made by LBA International Ltd of the UK and offers a higher degree of protection to the current vest and larger but lighter ballistic plates successfully tested to meet specific dangers most likely to be encountered by DF personnel at home and abroad.

The new load carrying equipment will consist of a three-part system designed to replace the existing personal load carrying equipment. It includes an adjustable long framed main pack designed to permit safer carriage of increasing load weights, a patrol pack and a battle vest. The main and patrol pack evaluation is complete and a decision is expected soon. The battle vest is currently subject of a Request for Proposals and it is anticipated that an order will be placed in the next 4 – 6 months.

Evaluation trials of a Military Eye Protection System have taken place and a decision is expected shortly while the tendering process for the final components of the protective system, the knee and elbow pads, has commenced.

The new protection and load bearing equipment for the Defence Forces will replace the current helmet, body armour and webbing as depicted in the photograph.

