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<http://latest.blackhawk-mines.com/2012/07/17/military-gear-gets-female-version/>

Army engineers of the US military has announced its plans to make a new gear for female soldiers that will provide them with more protection and make them more alert in combat.

In a study made by the US Army it was discovered that the ill-fitting military gear actually interferes with the women's combat performance, citing examples like difficulty in boarding the vehicles and taking proper aim with their weapons.

This initiative to redesign body armor started in 2009 when women from the 101st Airborne division felt uncomfortable wearing the gear during the war.

“It rubbed on the hips, and the vests were too long in the front, so that when you had female soldiers climbing stairs or climbing up a hill or a tree, or sitting for a long time in a vehicle, that would create pressure points that in some instances could impact blood flow and cause some discomfort,” said Lt. Col. Frank Lozan, who is helping design the body armor.

However, engineers are faced with challenges because making new female body armor will present potential weaknesses on the material. This is because the material of the armor they use will get heavier as you add more curves.

“There are some complex curvatures that come into play with female hard-armor plates. I could make female hard-armor, but it would be twice as heavy,” Lozano said.

They are now exploring “unique chemical designs” to make lighter but effective plates.

“It became clear to us that there was a difference in torso length. The other point that we realized is that there is a significant difference in shoulder width. I read this data, and it seems so obvious,” says the product manager for the Army's soldier protective-equipment program.

Black Hawk Adventures reports that they are planning to design body armor specifically for women with adjustments like narrower shoulders, shorter torso and curves in the hips and chest so they can fit more naturally.

Eight female sizes gears are now being tested by 100 female soldiers of the 101st Airborne Division. In the meantime, female soldiers still have to choose from 11 different sizes of Army-standard body armor.

US military officials recognize that this feat will be an engineering challenge so such armor may take years to make.

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