



## MEMORANDUM

**TO: All interested readers of FactCheck.org**

**FR: Jon Soltz, Co-Founder, VoteVets.org**

**DA: September 23, 2006**

**RE: FactCheck.org analysis of “Body Armor” advertisement**

On September 20, 2006, FactCheck.org, which bills itself as a non-partisan watchdog, posted an article on its website which claimed Iraq veterans were making false claims about body armor, and Congressional failure to properly fund the need, especially to the Guard and Reserve.

I would first invite all readers to view a debunking of FactCheck’s claims done by Media Matters for America, which has long proven itself as a reliable source when it concerns distortions by outside groups, such as FactCheck. You can view Media Matters’ piece here, <http://mediamatters.org/items/200609220002>

Two claims were made by FactCheck made in support of its assertion that Iraq veterans are lying. First, that Senator Mary Landrieu never said the words “body armor” on the floor of the Senate when introducing her amendment to provide \$1 billion for the acquisition of materials for the National Guard and Reserve and, second, that money was never an issue regarding the shortage of proper body armor that I and other Iraq veterans faced in the war.

To the first point, I would refer to the Media Matters analysis above, which points out multiple times Senator Landrieu referred to the type of equipment that her amendment would purchase, and her press release at the time, which made it abundantly clear where the funds would go. Indeed, as explained in that press release issued by Senator Landrieu’s office at the time, the purpose of the amendment targeted shortfalls identified by the National Guard and Reserve, including “bullet-proof inserts and tactical vests”—the technical term for body armor. Every Senator knew what they were voting for and voting against.

The FactCheck.org piece doesn’t meet the laugh test when it takes a literal reading of Senator Landrieu’s amendment. The No Child Left Behind Act, which you can view here, <http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/index.html>, never mentions the words “High School.” FactCheck would have to argue, based on their logic, that the No Child Left Behind Act never intended to appropriate money that would go towards High Schools. It is, frankly, a silly and cheap line of thinking.

To the second point, that funding was never an issue in the procurement of enough body armor, I only need to point out that in a FactCheck.org piece from March 16, 2004, on an ad President Bush ran against Senator John Kerry, claiming the Senator voted against body armor. FactCheck specifically cited funding shortages in defending the ad’s claim.

You can view that post here: <http://www.factcheck.org/article155.html>

The group quotes testimony on Sept 24, 2003 from General Abizaid in favor of an additional \$300 million for body armor, to back up the claim that Senator Kerry did, indeed, vote against funding for body armor. FactCheck made no counter-argument that funding was not an issue, as the group has with the ad from Iraq veterans. FactCheck is trying to have it both ways. Either funding was an issue or it was not, in 2003. The record makes it very clear that shortage of funds were an issue. Multiple Pentagon officials testified to that fact to Congress, and many Members decried the lack of funding.

To that point, I would also cite testimony from General George Casey, after the \$300 million was passed, in front of the Senate Armed Services Committee's Subcommittee on Readiness and Management Support. In response to a question from Senator John Cornyn inquiring whether the \$300 million was essential towards getting body armor to troops in the field, General Casey says, "It has enabled us to significantly increase the protection for our soldiers throughout the theatre -- Afghanistan and Iraq." Asked whether it would have meant more troops dying from a lack of body armor had the \$300 million not passed, he replies. "Either that, Senator, or we would have to gut the Army budget to find the money to do this. We're committed to making sure our soldiers have the right equipment, one way or the other."

Yet, in the end, it is abundantly clear that in April of 2003, many Senators opposed giving additional funding for the National Guard and Reserve so they could purchase the body armor which was in such short supply. Eventually, Congress did appropriate funds in October of 2003, and shortly thereafter, body armor started to make its way to the troops in Iraq. However, during the six-month period after the Landrieu Amendment was killed and when Congress finally did appropriate the funds for body armor, many troops were sent to war with obsolete protection, and many died because of it. The fault lies squarely with those in the Senate who voted to kill Senator Landrieu's amendment.

The sacrifice the fallen made during that time calls for much more respect from groups such as FactCheck.org, which only serves to muddy the waters of what should be, and is, a very clear vote in Congress.