

U.S. Military Relies on American Textiles

The United States Armed Services, comprised of the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines, rely heavily on the procurement of clothing and textiles (C&T) and individual equipment items by the Defense Logistics Agency – Troop Support in Philadelphia, PA (DLA – TS). This Department of Defense (DoD) purchasing activity estimates that over 8,000 different textile items are purchased annually for use by the U.S. military and other allied organizations, and this figure actually rises to over 31,000 line items when individual sizes are factored into the item mix.

The volume of items provided by the U.S. textile industry varies according to the needs of our military, ranging from an annual level of \$1.5 billion in FY 14 (most recent data) to over \$2.2 billion during years when our military was more actively engaged in Iraq and Afghanistan. As domestic suppliers, U.S. textile mills provide products with cutting edge technology made to very high-quality standards on a timetable that our military services demand.

U.S. textile companies supply the components with superior performance that give U.S. Warfighters many advantages on the battlefield. Ballistic fabrics provide body armor for protection from shrapnel and other high-velocity projectiles; innovative engineered fabrics provide flame-resistant clothing for protection from Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and other sources of heat and high energy, likewise, engineered fabrics provide protection for our Warfighters in the event of chemical or biological attacks; multilayered fabric ensembles allow our Warfighters to conduct critical missions in extreme cold weather; and moisture wicking fabrics allow our Warfighters to perform strenuous tasks for extended periods and with more precision. The list of battlefield advantages based on textile technology improvements for our military forces is almost endless.

The textile industry supplies defense contractors with industrial textiles that are vital to the operation of essential military equipment and other components. High-tech textile components are key to making lightweight but extremely strong composites for aircraft, and ground vehicles that are essential for maximum impact on the battlefield. Unique applications include fabrics that form the foundation and provide added strength in blades for aircraft. Textile fabrics are the foundation of inflatable boats used by units such as Special Forces in tactical operations. Every branch of the military – Army, Navy Air Force and Marines – and other organizational units such as Special Operations rely heavily on high-tech textile items supplied by the domestic industry to successfully

complete their missions. The U.S. textile industry is, in the words of one former Secretary of Defense, "Second only to steel in importance to the Armed Forces of the United States."

Military purchases of textiles and related items are covered by the Berry Amendment, which requires 100 percent U.S. fibers, yarns, fabrics, apparel and other goods made from textiles. The Berry Amendment was passed by Congress in 1941 to promote the purchase of U.S. military goods. It was critical during World War II for U.S. forces to obtain uniforms and other covered products when needed. The U.S. textile industry has maintained its strong commitment to providing our Warfighters with quality textiles in the volumes needed for more than half a century. Not only does the Berry Amendment spur substantial innovation in the area of military textiles, it ensures that U.S. military needs are not dependent on goods provided by foreign countries – thus mitigating potentially serious national security issues.

NCTO is a charter member of the Berry Amendment Textile Coalition, a consortium of textile-based trade associations that follow issues related to the Berry Amendment, and work to improve compliance with the law. The Coalition monitors Congressional activities, including House and Senate authorization and appropriation legislation and is committed to maintaining a strong and transparent procurement process at DoD to ensure compliance with the Berry Amendment.

For more information about the Berry Amendment and the procurement process, please visit the Office of Textiles and Apparel (OTEXA) Berry Amendment page (<http://web.ita.doc.gov/tacgi/eamain.nsf/BerryAmendment/Berry%20Amendment?Opendocument>). The OTEXA page includes information about exceptions to the Berry Amendment and a list of waivers granted for certain products.

For information on contract solicitations from the Department of Defense and other government agencies, visit the Federal Business Opportunities page (<https://www.fbo.gov/>).

Under certain conditions, U.S. companies are allowed to sell military textiles and finished products to certain allied countries, such as the NATO countries and Australia. The Department of Defense and the Business and Industry Security office at the Department of Commerce provide extensive information about requirements and solicitations.