



# Department of Justice

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## **ATTORNEY GENERAL ASHCROFT ANNOUNCES BULLETPROOF VEST SAFETY INITIATIVE**

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Attorney General Ashcroft today announced a Department of Justice initiative to address the reliability of body armor used by law enforcement personnel and to examine the future of bullet-resistant technology and testing. The men and women of law enforcement must be able to place their confidence in the equipment their agencies purchase and use.

“The safety of our nation’s law enforcement officers is of the utmost importance,” said Attorney General John Ashcroft. “Criminals with weapons pose a constant threat to our law enforcement officers. We have seen routine traffic stops result in unexpected armed confrontations and armed robberies resulting in shootouts. As all law enforcement organizations know, bulletproof vests exist to save the lives of law enforcement officers. Since their introduction over 30 years ago, the vests have saved more than 2,700 lives. As the International Association of Chiefs of Police and the Fraternal Order of Police have shared with me, law enforcement officers who do not wear body armor increase the risk of being killed or injured in the line of duty. I encourage all law enforcement officers to wear bullet-resistant body armor for their own protection. The Department of Justice will do everything within its power to inform and assist law enforcement to ensure the reliability of bullet-resistant vests worn by officers as they patrol our streets and keep our communities safe.”

The Attorney General has directed the Department of Justice to take the following actions:

- **Examination and Report.** The National Institute of Justice (“NIJ”) will immediately initiate examination of Zylon-based bullet-resistant vests (both new and used). Upgrade kits provided by manufacturers to retrofit Zylon-based bullet-resistant vests will be included in the study. NIJ also will review the existing process by which bullet-resistant vests are certified to determine if the process needs modifications. NIJ will report to the Attorney General within 90 days on status and activities.
- **Information.** The Office of Justice Programs (“OJP”) will make available to the law enforcement community up-to-date information about bullet-resistant vests, including information from NIJ’s examination, research and testing, manufacturers’ statements, and other relevant information. This information will be provided on the website of the Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Program administered by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (“BJA”). In addition, state and local law enforcement agency grantees and law enforcement associations will be contacted as new information becomes available.
- **Summit.** OJP will convene a summit within 120 days with representatives of federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement; law enforcement associations; manufacturers of

bullet-resistant fabric and equipment; and standards and testing organizations. Summit participants will review the information available from NIJ's examination, including the suitability of Zylon-based bullet-resistant vests for law enforcement use and the effectiveness of NIJ's certification process. Summit participants also will consider the future of bullet-resistant technology and testing technology.

- Replacement. OJP will work with state and local law enforcement agencies that have purchased Zylon-based bullet-resistant vests to ensure they are fully aware of all information available about the product and, if necessary, will assist them in their efforts to replace any defective equipment.

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