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Operational Safety

Ballistic Eye Protection Saves Sight – Lessons Learned

This is the text of a message from 1st Lt Anthony Aguilar, a US Army Infantry Platoon Leader. At the time, he was with B Company, Task Force 2-1 Infantry, 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team in Mosul, Iraq in Support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. CF personnel serving with NATO's Multinational Brigade in Afghanistan received the message shortly after the incident occurred. Sgt Dowling and Sgt Haskins, deployed with OP ARCHER Roto 1 in Kandahar, quickly sent the text and photos back to Canada to encourage CF personnel to wear PPE in operational theatres. The message read:



The ballistic eye protection worn by 1st Lt Anthony Aguilar stopped the shrapnel and saved his eyesight and perhaps prevented even more serious injuries.

"Our patrol was struck by a massive IED (Improvised Explosive Device) on 28 Feb 2006, launching shrapnel and debris at high velocities toward the vehicle. I was thrown into the hull of the Stryker and later discovered that my eye-pro (eye protection), the 'Sawfly' yellow-tinted lenses, prevented a shard of shrapnel from contacting my face, saving my eyesight and preventing serious injury. I have attached images of the eye protection I was wearing on site, and images of the eyewear with the shrapnel. The shrapnel punctured the lens, but did not penetrate. The shrapnel was large enough to dislodge the eyewear from my face and force me into the vehicle. I wore the glasses the rest of the patrol, confident they could still do the job."

The information was disseminated within the CTC Infantry School and throughout Gagetown by WO David Patterson and soon found its way to the Director, General Safety and to the Editor of the Safety Digest.

Maj Michael Patrick, Chief Instructor at the CTC Infantry School, emphasized that credit for the story belongs to 1st Lt Aguilar, the US Army Officer who wrote the note and provided the accompanying photos. Maj Patrick concluded by writing a succinct and incisive comment that captures the essence of two important lessons to be learned from this story.