

Army improves uniform, equipment sizing criteria

USASSCN

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NATICK, Mass. — Traditionally, a guessing game of small, medium, large or extra-large by a supply sergeant was the closest to correct fit a Soldier could hope to receive when being issued his or her initial clothing items, such as uniforms and body armor. Also, the number of various sizes available at central issue facilities usually was determined by predictions based on demand from previous years and previous Soldiers.

This has led to sizing shortfalls and

overages in combat clothing and equipment.

In 1988, a study titled “Anthropometric Survey of U.S. Army Personnel” was conducted to get accurate and timely measurement data of military personnel because the previous data was more than 10 years old for women and more than 20 years old for men. Also, previous survey data differed with regard as to how the men and women were measured.

The 1988 survey involved taking extensive measurements, using the same measurement methods, from both male

and female active-duty personnel in order to assist designers of military equipment and clothing in achieving a better fit.

“This survey currently serves as the best guess of Soldier size,” said Steven Paquette, anthropology coordinator. “We have used it extensively at the U.S. Army Natick Soldier Research, Development and Engineering Center to help with clothing and equipment design, and other military organizations and contractors have used it to assist with the design and layout of helicopters, tanks, kitchens and more.”

Now, the Uniform System for Improved Tariffs program is looking to improve on the 1988 data to provide better size predictions and turn the guessing game into a thing of the past by allowing CIFs to manage clothing inventory in real time.

“The average age of an OIF Reservist is approximately 33 years old, while the average age of an incoming active-duty Soldier is between 18 and 23 years old. Sizing for uniforms will vary greatly between the two,” said Joseph Cooper, Integrated Logistics Support Center and U.S. Army Tank-Automotive and Armaments Command project officer for the joint initiative.

The USFIT program is working to provide 3-D whole-body, anthropometric scanners at installations with large troop concentrations. The scanners are able to record the shape of a Soldier’s body and provide a better size prediction for the clothing the Soldier should be issued.

The Soldier’s clothing size information will be loaded into a USFIT database while the 3-D scan and associated anthropometric data will be archived in the NSRDEC Integrated Database for Engineering Anthropometry of Soldiers.

“This new IDEAS database will provide improved tools for working with traditional and 3-D anthropometric data and provide a better overall description of the user population,” Paquette said.

As Soldiers change duty stations, they will be scanned again to update the databases and keep both the Soldier’s files and the databases current. From the USFIT database, the Army will be able to order uniforms and equipment from requirements rather than past demand. One of the USFIT programs future goals is to put the information onto a Soldiers’ common access card, and then the Soldier or supply sergeant can simply scan the card; order uniforms and equipment from remote sites around the world.

The database information from IDEAS provides Soldier body size information to the materiel developers for current and next-generation clothing and equipment system requirements.

USFIT Phase I included the development of size prediction algorithms for selected uniforms and equipment at Fort Bliss, where more than 3,000 deploying Soldiers were scanned and fit-tested. These algorithms were validated at Fort McCoy, Wis., where more than 1,700 deploying Reserve-component Soldiers were scanned and fit-tested.

Phase II of the USFIT Program is currently unfunded, but the plan is to distribute scanners to 24 Army installations and mobilization centers.

USFIT Phase III will include deploying head and foot scanners for use in sizing protective masks and footwear.

Not only would Soldiers get better-fitting clothing and equipment through this program, but time and money would also be saved. Most significantly, a 50 percent reduction in the current overbuy of uniforms and equipment represents considerable savings.

The Army also spends more than \$2 million in returns of clothing and equipment each year. If the sizing information is correct when the items are issued, this number would be reduced significantly.

Finally, there would be a reduction in storage costs for inventory because there would not be a need to hold as much stock in reserve.

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