

# Clarifying Threat Levels, Refining Ammunition Types, ADDING FEMALE ARMOR TESTING:

## NIJ REVISING BALLISTIC-RESISTANT BODY ARMOR STANDARD

**W**ith the release of *Ballistic Resistance of Body Armor* NIJ Standard-0101.06 in 2008, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and its Compliance Testing Program (CTP) launched a new era in body armor testing, one that for the first time included testing armor that had been subjected to a rigorous conditioning protocol and greatly expanded the number of armor panels put through the testing process. With the introduction of the Follow-up Inspection and Testing (FIT) program in 2011, the CTP began providing oversight of the first-ever testing of production samples of ballistic-resistant models listed on the program's Compliant Products List (CPL).

Yet not long after the FIT program got underway, in June 2012, NIJ began making plans to develop the next iteration of the standard. A Special Technical Committee (STC) composed of practitioners, test laboratory staff and subject-matter experts from NIJ, the CTP and other agencies began meeting in February 2013 to discuss revisions needed for NIJ Standard-0101.07. Plans call for a draft of that standard to be released via JUSTNET for public comment later in 2017.

Unlike the major changes of NIJ Standard-0101.06, the latest revisions will consist mainly of refinements and

clarifications, many of which will impact only test labs and the CTP. Changes impacting law enforcement agencies and officers in the field fall mainly in the areas of protection levels, types of ammunition used in testing, vocabulary refinements and testing of female armor.

### Details on those changes include:

- Development of a test protocol specific to female armors, developed over the past several years by convening several focus groups of female officers to provide input to help CTP staff engineers devise new and appropriate test methods.



- Introducing the use of 7.62 x 39 mild steel core (MSC) and high performance 5.56mm ammunition, or equivalent threat rounds, into hard armor plate testing. The ammunition specified in NIJ Standard-0101.06 represents a large gap between the two existing levels of hard armor protection, and bringing these two types of ammunition into the test matrix will help close that gap and provide a better base level of protection for officers. (The standard specifies not only the caliber of ammunition, but also the specific manufacturer and model for quality control purposes.)
- Revisiting protection level names of both hard armor plates and soft armor vests, with a goal of ensuring clarity through nomenclature that instantly identifies the type of protection offered. Also, changing names would provide demarcation between the new standard and previous iterations. The STC has agreed that the publication of NIJ 0101.07 is an appropriate time to retire Level IIA, the lowest level of soft armor protection.
- Reducing confusion caused by manufacturers, labs, practitioners and government agencies all using the same term to mean different things, or using different terms to describe the same thing, by including only a truncated section of definitions and additionally referencing the newly released *ASTM E3005-15 Standard Terminology for Body Armor*. (As a service to the criminal justice community, NIJ provides free access to this and other ASTM standards through a portal on JUSTNET, the website of the National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center (NLECTC) System. For more details and to apply to obtain access, visit [https://justnet.org/NIJ\\_ASTM\\_Standards\\_Portal.html](https://justnet.org/NIJ_ASTM_Standards_Portal.html)).



JTIC, which is part of NLECTC System, supports NIJ's standards development and implementation and administers its Compliance Testing Program, under which equipment is evaluated and subjected to a series of tests described in NIJ standards to determine if it meets minimum performance requirements. Body armor models that comply with the standard are added to the Compliant Product List posted on JUSTNET, the website of the NLECTC System ([www.justnet.org](http://www.justnet.org).)

*For more information on the draft standard, contact JTIC Materials Engineer Dan Longhurst at [dlonghurst@justnet.org](mailto:dlonghurst@justnet.org). And sign up to receive JUSTNETNews, the weekly email newsletter of the NLECTC System, or follow NLECTC on Facebook or Twitter, to find out as soon as the standard is released for public comment. To find out more information and to sign up, visit JUSTNET.*