

## **Military turns to Vancouver firm**

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**By JONATHAN NELSON, Columbian staff writer**

A Vancouver company trying to convince the U.S. military to use its unique armor system will get a chance to prove itself with a slightly different product.

Armor Systems International has received \$11 million as part of a contract to apply a spray-on material that protects the large tanks on Army fuel trucks and exterior gas tanks on large vehicles operating in Kuwait and Iraq.

The material, called TankSkin, is different from Armor's initial product, a peel-and-stick armor system designed for troop-carrying vehicles like Humvees.

Ed Menteer, Armor spokesman, said the contract is the most significant for the fledgling company and gives it a chance to prove to the Army that its technologies work.

"It gives our company credibility with the Army and hopefully will help them get away from their steel mind set," Menteer said. "It's been difficult for us to help the Army understand."

Armor markets the composite material used for the peel-and-stick system as a cheaper and lighter alternative to steel plates that the military traditionally uses to protect vehicles.

The Army has tested Armor's system at East Coast facilities as well as in the field in Afghanistan.

The level of protection on military vehicles, particularly Humvees, drew intense attention at the outset of the Iraq war.

Story after story from the front lines told of soldiers being killed or severely injured after lightly armored vehicles were hit with improvised exploding devices.

A Newsweek magazine story said at one point the military was 1,800 armored Humvees short of its stated requirement for the war.

In Iraq, insurgents frequently target fuel trucks in their attacks. Menteer said TankSkin, which is being used on an undisclosed number of vehicles, stops leaks from punctures and cracks in fuel tanks.

Armor's \$11 million payment is part of a larger \$34 million contract the Army awarded to VSE Corp. of Alexandria, Va., a partner with Armor.

Menteer said Armor is providing the material and expertise to VSE, which in turn is applying the protection to the vehicles.

Menteer said a strong performance by TankSkin could result in a much larger second order.

Armor, a privately held company, was formed in 2003 by several people with military backgrounds.

Mentee said one of its employees is in Iraq serving with the Idaho National Guard.

While Armor waits to generate a bigger presence in military circles, the company continues to sell its peel-and-stick armor in civilian markets.

Mentee said companies operating in Iraq, Kuwait and Afghanistan are customers. The TankSkin could also be sold domestically once Armor gets the Army's permission.

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#### Update

Previously: Armor Systems International of Vancouver tested its unique peel-and-stick armor on military vehicles stationed in Afghanistan.

What's new: The company has received \$11 million to protect the tanks of military fuel trucks with a spray-on material that prevents leaks from punctures and cracks.

What's next: Armor continues to work toward a military contract for its peel-and-stick armor.