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Kerry, Kennedy, Tsongas Announce Lawrence Company to Receive \$8.6 million for Production of Protective Military Clothing

Funding part of FY 08 Department of Defense Appropriations Bill

aWashington, DC – Senators John Kerry and Edward Kennedy today, along with Congresswoman Niki Tsongas, announced that the FY 2008 Department of Defense Appropriations Conference Report includes \$8.6 million for the purchase of protective military clothing which is made at Polartec in Lawrence, Massachusetts.

“This investment helps a great company and its workers who have made huge sacrifices to keep good jobs right here in Massachusetts while strengthening our military and securing our homeland,” said Senator Kerry. “Polartec has long been a leader and I’m happy that it will continue to design better, safer protective clothing for our troops.

“Since the days of the Minutemen, Massachusetts has been at the forefront of the defense of our nation, and today Polartec is an important part of that effort, protecting our nation’s finest in dangerous parts of the world,” said Senator Kennedy. “I’m delighted that Polartec is receiving this vital federal funding to continue the innovative work they do so well for our troops.”

“Senators Kennedy and Kerry, as well as former Congressman Meehan, have been critical supporters of Polartec and of our men and women in uniform,” said Rep. Tsongas. “I look forward to joining their efforts to support Polartec in its continued mission to provide our troops with world-class equipment and to stimulate the local economy through keeping good jobs in the Fifth District. Polartec is a model for what a partnership between the federal government and local business can look like.”

“Senator Kennedy, Senator Kerry and Congresswoman Tsongas’ commitment to ensuring that our men and women in uniform receive this vital gear remains unwavering,” said Polartec President Andy Vecchione. “It is an honor to work with them to facilitate getting top-notch products made by our workers into the hands of those who need them most – our soldiers. Their combined efforts continue to directly impact our 1000 employees here in Massachusetts and we are extremely grateful for their hard work.”

The Polartec projects receiving funding are the following:

\$3.2 million for the Fleece Insulating Liners for Extended Cold Weather Clothing System

Generation III (ECWCS-GEN III)

Currently soldiers and units of the Army use obsolete cold-weather clothing. The ECWCS GEN III was developed in direct response to soldiers' complaints of bulkiness and lack of breathability as an existing issue. Soldiers stationed in Iraq and Afghanistan often suffer from overheating when active and cold when standing still. This radical redesign of ECWCS requires 33% less space and weighs 25% less than previous generations, allowing soldiers to move with greater ease.

\$2 million for the Multi Climate Protection System (MCPS)

The Multi Climate Protection System is a modular ensemble that provides total performance by layering thermal protection shell garments. Polartec Thermal-Flame Resistant (FR) with NOMEX fleece knit structures provide aircrew with enhanced thermal protection, flame protection and reduced thermal burden via dimensional moisture management. Wind and water resistance capabilities are obtained using Polartec WindPro with NOMEX in the outer layer wear.

\$1 million for Responsive Textiles

The US Army Natick Soldier Center has recognized a need for reducing the weight and bulk of the war fighter while maintaining breathability and as-needed insulation. A single responsive garment would replace a multitude of layers, allowing for maximum mobility in varying environments. This funding will research the feasibility of a Responsive Textile concept, estimate costs, manufacture a prototype concept, and conduct fabric testing, bulk testing, and thermal analysis of the prototype concept under varying temperatures.

\$2.4 million for the Cold Weather Layering System (CWLS)

The requested funds will be used to provide war Fighters with a "capability set" of clothing to facilitate expeditionary operations in mountainous and cold weather environments. It will reduce the weight and volume that a Marine operating as dismounted infantry must carry to accomplish combat missions in those conditions. Malden Mills is currently developing Polartec Powder Dry Silkweight, and Polartec Dry Grid with flame resistant properties for use in the CWLS, in direct response to the U.S. Marine Corps' unique combat needs. Roadside bombs kill or wound more troops than any other weapon in Iraq. The heat and flame produced by roadside bombs presents a significant burn threat, and the USMC has called for the use of flame resistant textiles to maintain safety in harsh combat conditions.