



E74 Bulletproof: Two Incidents of Non-Penetrative Bullet Strikes Inflicted on Soldiers Without Armor During Operation Iraqi Freedom

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After attending this presentation, attendees will have a greater understanding of the effects of unintentional intermediate substrates on would-be victims of gunfire. The substrates were circumstantial to each incident and were not intended or designed for protective purposes or to defend against firearm projectiles. The intermediate substrates likely saved the lives of both victims in the two case studies presented.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by providing two case studies of rare, anomalous gunshot incidents by the United States Army special agents who investigated them. The case studies presented are in a category of unique and compelling incidents that often become anecdotal “legends” within law enforcement circles. This presentation will formally establish them within the academic community as a resource for future research and possible practical application.

While serving as two forward deployed special agents in the United States Army Criminal Investigation Command during Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) in 2005-2006, the two agents each worked a separate, unusual firearm incident involving soldiers being struck by firearm projectiles, but with little to no injury. Both incidents occurred on United States Army bases in Iraq. United States soldiers supporting OIF were issued Individual Body Armor (IBA) at this time in the conflict; however, neither of the victims in the incidents were wearing their IBA as they were located in office or residential settings with presumably little to no enemy threat. The bullet projectiles struck both victims, but failed to penetrate or otherwise break their skin due to the intervention of substrates circumstantial to each incident. As a result, both victims suffered minimal to no injury from the gunshots.

Case 1: In April 2006, a United States Army soldier committed suicide with his rifle in his quarters. The rifle’s projectile passed through the soldier, the wall of his quarters, and the wall of an adjacent quarters, striking a second soldier in the back with almost no injury.

Case 2: In December 2005, an Iraqi national interpreter attacked a United States Army intelligence soldier with a pistol. The pistol’s projectile struck the soldier in his uniform’s chest pocket over his left chest, where he kept his unit standard operating procedure booklet and his official badge and credentials. The bullet penetrated the booklet and lodged in his badge. The soldier was able to overcome his attacker and survived the incident. The soldier received minor bruising below the impact site, but was otherwise uninjured.

Firearm Incidents, Unique, No/Minimal Injury