

[<<Back](#)

Part 6: Lifesaving armor

By [Vanessa Van Hyfte](#)

SAN ANTONIO, Texas -- Poorly-armored vehicles has been one of the most controversial issues of the Iraq war. It's been a sore spot for soldiers, and their families. For Dusty Hill's unit, it was no different.

When Foxtrot Battery left its post in Galva, it became the first Illinois National guard unit activated to combat since Korea. Patrolling Baghdad's deadly Airport Road, they were a prime target of the insurgents' attacks.

Six months into their tour of duty, a suicide bomber loaded with a trunk full of explosives detonated in front of Hill's humvee. Dusty was in the army's best, a fully up-armored M1114 humvee.

"If my humvee was not up-armored there would be a good chance I would not have legs. There's no doubt in my mind I would have been dead and my driver would have been dead," said Hill.

While Dusty was blown from the humvee, Specialist Lucas Siemers of Galva walked away virtually without a scratch. His armored door was the only thing protecting him from the bomb.

"I'm thanking my guardian angel . My window was the only one still intact," said Siemers.

"He got up by the grace of God, if it hadn't been for that armored 1114--who knows!" said Sgt. Aaron Jones.

F Company had to fight to get its life saving armor. When it first arrived in Iraq, most of it's vehicles had little or no protection. It's what the troops call "hillbilly armor."

"Originally we had tarp for roofs and no doors," said Sgt. Jones.

"They had plywood and sandbags when they first went over there, it was just scary," said Mike Bowman. Bowman's son, Tim, is a gunner in the unit. "As a parent, that made me mad as hell. Why do we have to sit here and watch our soldiers get blown up with cheap equipment?" said Bowman.

He didn't waste time confronting the brass.

"We've got e-mails from the President on down," said Bowman. The explanation all came back the same, the Army's working on it.

"We didn't get anywhere until a soldier starting questioning it on live TV," said Bowman.

Last December during a Q & A while the Defense Secretary ws stopping off in Kuwait, a soldier asked Rumsfeld:

"Why do we soldiers have to dig through local landfills for pieces of scrap metal and compromised ballistic glass to up-armor our vehicles?"

"After that press conference, we hear we can step up production. We were asking the same questions, it just wasn't on live television," said Bowman.

Soon after, the Rock Island Arsenal was ordered to work around the clock to make armored door kits. The Arsenal makes about a third of the armored doors in Iraq. The M1114 humvees are the best protection for a soldier. The second best come from the add-on kits.

"There's no reason anyone should go into combat without them," said Hill.

A soldier's story



[Part 5: BAMC -- The Army's best](#)

At a time of so many casualties, sometimes we forget those who survived the battle but are still fighting their own personal war.

 [Video](#)

Armor eventually started trickling in. Humvees, like Dusty's, are now outfitted with more armor on the turret. Although extra armor probably would not have made a difference in Dusty's case.

Join us for "Dusty's Miracle: A Soldier's Story," Sunday May 15th at 10:00 p.m. We will bring you the final part of our week long series. We will explore Hill's future outside the walls of the Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas.

Email

Emails for Dusty Hill can be sent to his [mom](#).

Cards and letters

Attn: Sgt. Dustin Hill
3851 Roger Brooke Dr.
Dept. 1000, Ward 4 South
Ft. Sam Houston, TX 78234-6200

Packages and Gifts

18005 1150 E
Wyanet, IL 61379

Dusty Hill Trust Fund

(815) 673-3333
1839 N. Main or 601 S. Main
Princeton, IL
(or donate at any Union Bank)

"Dusty's Miracle: A Soldier's Story"

Wednesday, June 1 at 7:00 p.m. **

Replay: Sunday, June 5 at 4:00 p.m.

** ABC scheduled program, "Supernanny," will air Sunday, June 5 at 3:00 p.m.



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