

IT'S A LIFE AND DEATH ISSUE



Dear Editor,

There are enough unavoidable deaths in war that we don't need to lose Soldiers or civilians to avoidable ones. We lost a gunner in a vehicle rollover that would have been avoided if night vision goggle safety had been used.

In a nutshell, a patrol approached a convoy in blackout and the patrol leader made the decision to go to blackout and don NVGs. Although the patrol halted for a moment, at least one HMMWV driver did not have time to halt and properly don NVGs because they were still in their case. Instead, the assistant vehicle commander held their NVGs over the face of the driver while they attempted to retrieve the driver's NVG from the case. As a result, the driver was disoriented and rolled the vehicle over killing the gunner.

What was the tipping point that made this practice unsafe? Well, it could have been:

- the driver had to use goggles other than those assigned to him.
- the driver did not allow time for his eyes to adjust to the optics.
- the driver did not stop the vehicle to put the goggles on and the commander did not order a momentary halt.
- the patrol leader did not realize that every element in his convoy was not ready to change over to goggles.
- the driver was not prepared for night operations and should have had the NVG at the ready.

I'm very concerned about this death and don't want it to happen again. Help me spread the word.

K.W.
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Editor's note: Thanks, Sir, for this extremely important message. Commanders, ensure every Soldier under your command has been trained to use night vision goggles and that this training is documented on their driving record. Give refresher training often.