

DoD Orders \$250 Million of Gas Masks - What Do They Know?

By [Zero Hedge](#)

Global Research, March 31, 2019

[Zero Hedge](#) 29 March 2019

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Militarization and WMD](#)

The U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) has awarded Avon Protection Systems Inc., Cadillac, Michigan, a \$245,961,250 firm-fixed-price contract for production of M53A1 Chemical Biological Protective Mask systems, [according to the DoD contract website](#).

The Army estimates M53A1 gas masks will start delivery in the second half of this financial year ending September. U.S. Army Contracting Command, Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, will oversee the purchase order.

Avon Protection Systems is a world leader and major supplier to the military, law enforcement, first responders, and industrial sectors globally.

The M53A1 was developed to counter multiple threats encountered on the modern battlefield. "It provides excellent protection against traditional chemical and biological warfare agents, select Toxic Industrial Materials (TIMs) and particulate matter including radioactive dust," read the [M53 brochure](#).

M53

ONE MASK, ALL MISSIONS.



Based on the US Government M50/JSGPM (Joint Services General Purpose Mask) Program, the 53-Series Protective Mask was specifically developed to meet the unique requirements of Special Operations Units. The 53-Series Protective Mask was developed to counter the multiple threats encountered on the modern battlefield, war on terrorism and peace keeping operations around the world. It provides excellent protection against traditional chemical and biological warfare agents, select Toxic Industrial Materials (TIMs) and particulate matter including radioactive dust.

The M53 will function as a conventional negative pressure mask as well as with a range of SCBA (Self Contained Breathing Apparatus) and PAPR (Powered Air Purifying Respirator). This is achieved without the need to remove or change any components. CCBA (Closed Circuit Breathing Apparatus) capability is provided with an exhalation valve adapter.

Key Features

- The flexible, panoramic eyepiece minimizes visual stress and maximizes field of view; provides ballistic protection and scratch resistance
- Vision correction assembly for prescription lenses
- 6 point skull cap head harness with low profile pre-adjusted brow and temple straps
- Fail safe, high flow hydration system connects to hydration bladders and canteens



- The most operationally flexible mask
 - The Valve Cassette Assembly (VCA) provides the unique capability to use the 53-Series Protective Mask with a variety of PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) without the need to remove or change any components.
- The 53-Series mask is operational in the following modes:
- **APR** (Air Purify Respirator)- A negative pressure mask using NATO thread filters
 - **SCBA** (Self Contained Breathing Apparatus)
 - **PAPR** (Powered Air Purifying Respirator)
 - **CCBA** (Closed Circuit Breathing Apparatus)
 - Combination SCBA and PAPR Apparatus

Operational Flexibility

According to the company, the M53A1 protects soldiers from chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear attacks. Specifically, the mask protects against mustard, sarin, soman, and VX nerve agents.

M53 Mask Specifications		
CBRN Agent Resistance		
Mustard (H)		Greater than 24 Hours
Sarin (GB)		
Soman (GD)		
VX		
Laboratory Protection Factor performance (Sodium chloride)		Greater than 10,000
Breathing Performance (excluding filter)		
Re-breathing CO ₂		0.8%
Inhalation Resistance at:		
85 l/min		15 mm WG
160 l/min		32 mm WG
Exhalation resistance negative pressure mode:		
85 l/min		15 mm WG
160 l/min		30 mm WG
Exhalation resistance positive pressure mode:		40 mm WG
Weight		
M53 mask (excluding filter)		1.6 lbs.
Field of view		
Visual field Score - NIOSH CBRN standard		96
Materials used		
M53 Mask Visor		Flexible polyurethane
M53 Mask Facepiece		Chlorobutyl/Silicone Rubber
Hydration		
Drinking Flow Rate		>230 ml/min

The M53 respirator falls within the definition of Significant Military Equipment in the United States Munitions List, International Traffic in Arms Regulations and may only be supplied outside of the United States of America to customers who are licensed by the US Department of State, Directorate of Defense Trade Controls.

The order comes one month after the U.S. government introduced science-based guidelines for how first responders decontaminate large numbers of Americans after a chemical-weapons attack.

The guidelines, published last month, are the first in the U.S. to be based on extensive research and testing.

“Terrorist threats and the use of chemical weapons in Syria have heightened awareness of the need for improved preparedness against chemical attacks,” [said](#) Gary Disbrow, deputy director of the US Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority, which prepared the guidelines.

“First responders are supportive of the fact that it is evidence-based guidance, and not just, ‘We used this last time, and it seemed to work,’” he added.

With lightning speed, the Army and U.S. government have been actively preparing for a biological incident on the homeland. With threats harder to anticipate today, the act of preparation suggests some fears that an attack of some sort could be imminent.

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