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Analysis of the Thermal Shielding Properties of Camouflage Materials

February 2007

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ABSTRACT

In a previous paper, we discussed our techniques for measuring the thermal shielding of materials. Two heated panels served as surrogates for heated vehicle components, such as armor heated by the engine. The outer surface of each panel was thermostatically controlled to the same temperature. The camouflage material covered one of the panels, while the other, uncovered, panel acted as the baseline. Periodically, we collected calibrated infrared images of the two panels at 3 to 5 and 8 to 12 microns. In this paper, we present techniques to analyze further data from these measurements. The goal of the analysis is to quantify the relative capability of materials to shield from view warm vehicle components. We also present results of a simple experiment to measure the effect of air movement on the shielding properties of the materials.

Report Documentation Page				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.					
1. REPORT DATE 18 JAN 2007		2. REPORT TYPE N/A		3. DATES COVERED -	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Analysis of the Thermal Shielding Properties of Camouflage Materials				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Bennett, John G.; Polsen, Erik, S.				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) USA ARMY TACOM 6501 E 11 Mile Road Warren, MI 48397-5000				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER 16963	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S) TACOM TARDEC	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S) 16963	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release, distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The original document contains color images.					
14. ABSTRACT					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT SAR	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 8	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

Introduction

The function of an infrared camouflage material is to blend the signature of ground vehicle with the signature of the surrounding area. For unheated areas of the vehicle, the material should track the signature of the background area as conditions change with weather and solar load. For heated area, however, the material must shield from view hot areas on the vehicle.

Consider, for example, the M113 armored personnel carrier in Figure 1. The engine heats the area at the front of the right side of the vehicle. To be effective, a camouflage material should shield this hot signature from the view of enemy

Measurement Techniques

To evaluate how well camouflage materials perform this shielding function, we designed the indoor test set up in Figure 2. Infrared cameras record images in the 3 to 5 (medium wave) and 8 to 12 (long wave) micron bands.

Figure 3 illustrates the construction of these heated panels. The outer surface is 0.25 in. aluminum painted with green CARC paint. Behind the aluminum, a 500 watt element supplies heat to raise the temperature of the outer surface. A thermocouple on the outer surface and a control system maintains the temperature at the desired level, Figures 7 and 8. The system controls the spatial variation of the temperature to about + or – 3 deg C and the temporal variation to about + or – 0.25 deg C. Figures 4, 5 and 6 show how the test materials are arranged to cover heated and unheated panels. We leave portions of the heated and unheated panels uncovered for comparison.

Using this measurement set up, we begin by allowing the panels to stabilize to 46 deg C with the fan off. We then hang the test materials on the fixture, and take thermal images each minute for 20 minutes. Finally, we repeat the procedure with the fan on for convection cooling. infrared viewers.

Analysis Techniques

Figure 7 illustrates typical results from these measurements. To analyze this data, we estimate parameters to characterize the experimental curves. Using Solver in Microsoft Excel, we perform a least squares to

$$T(t) = T_{final} - (T_{final} - T_{initial})e^{-\frac{t}{\tau}}$$

where $T_{initial}$ is the beginning temperature, T_{final} is the ultimate temperature and τ is the time constant.

As a measure of the effectiveness of thermal shielding, we plot

$$\Delta T = T_{final} - T_{unheated\ panel}$$

where $T_{unheated\ panel}$ is the apparent temperature of the corresponding unheated panel.

Results and Discussion

The results of fitting this curve for the apparent temperature for long wave (LW) infrared is plotted in Figure 8. Note that all of the materials shielded the hot panel to some extent. The best materials are an artificial grass and the two TBE materials. Figure 9 adds the medium wave (MW) apparent temperature results to this plot. The materials all behave similarly for LW and MW.

The addition of forced convection from a fan does change the apparent temperatures, as would be expected, Figure 10. The bare panel is somewhat cooler, but almost all the materials are more effective at thermal shielding.

Conclusions

The techniques shown are suitable for evaluating the thermal shielding performance of camouflage materials. Because air flow has a strong influence on thermal shielding performance of camouflage materials, future measurements should include precise control of air flow.

The Problem: Hot Areas Need Thermal Shielding

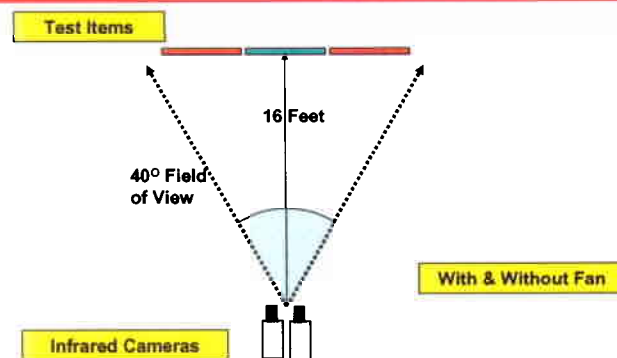


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Figure 1. The problem requiring thermal shielding.

Measurement Techniques: Test Setup

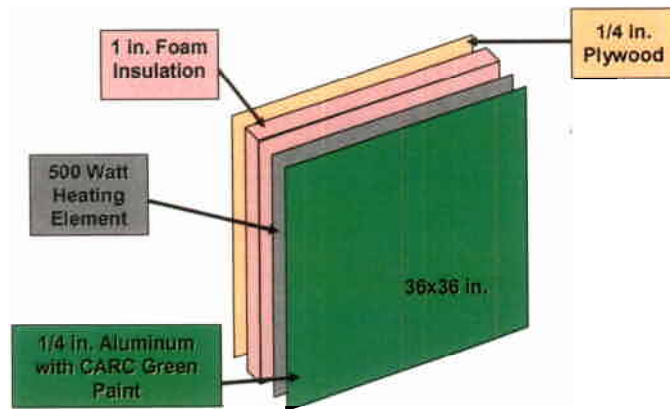


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Figure 2. The measurement setup.

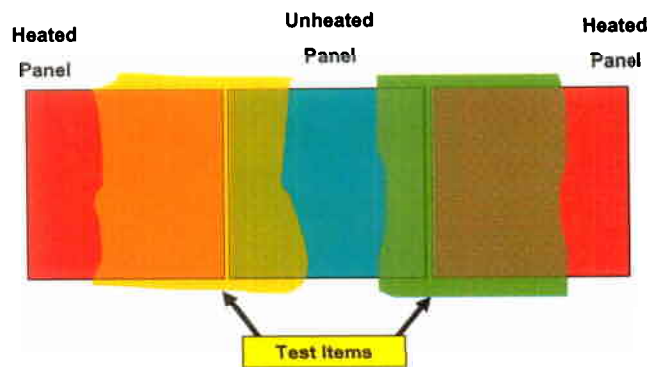
Measurement Techniques: Construction of Heated Panels



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Figure 3. Construction of heated panels.

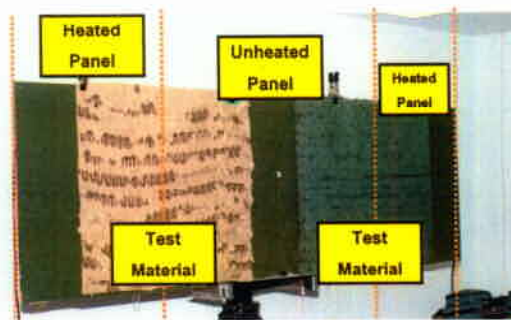
Measurement Techniques: Test Setup



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Figure 4. Position of test items.

Measurement Techniques: Arrangement of Test Items

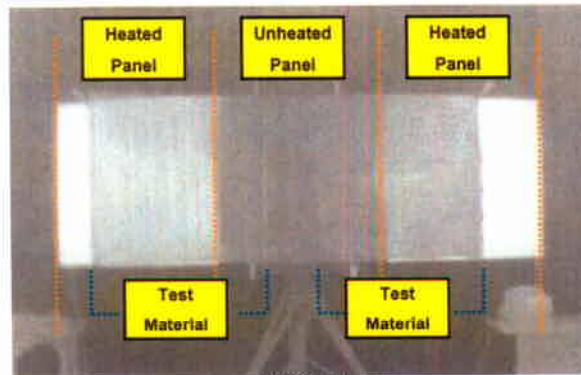


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Figure 5. Position of test items.

Measurement Techniques: Arrangement of Test Items



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Figure 6. Position of test items.

Measurement Techniques: Typical Results

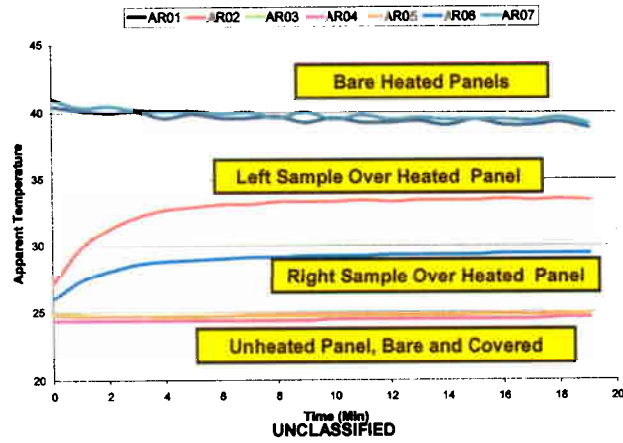


Figure 7. Typical results.

Temperature Difference, Long Wave IR

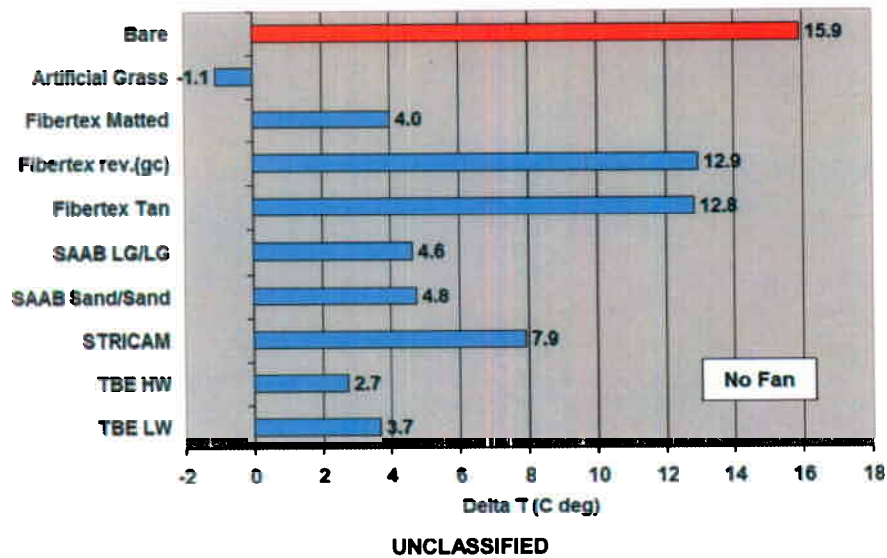
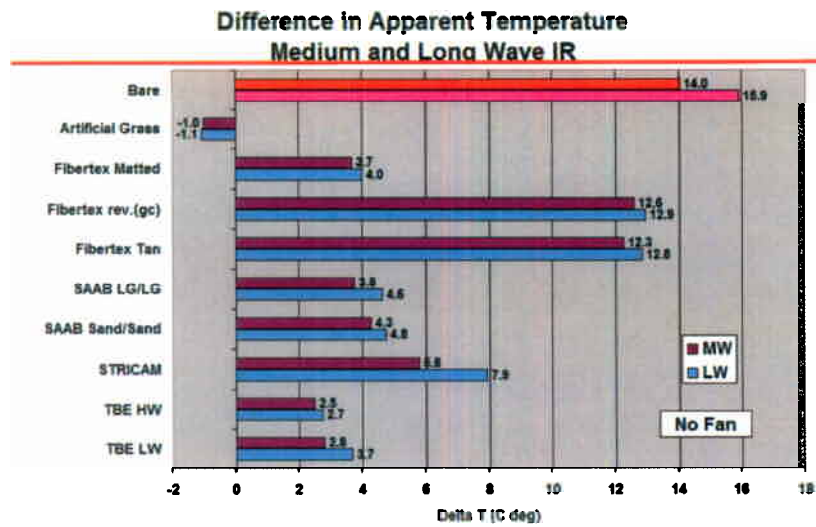


Figure 8. Long wave performance with no fan.



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Figure 9. Long and medium wave performance with no fan.

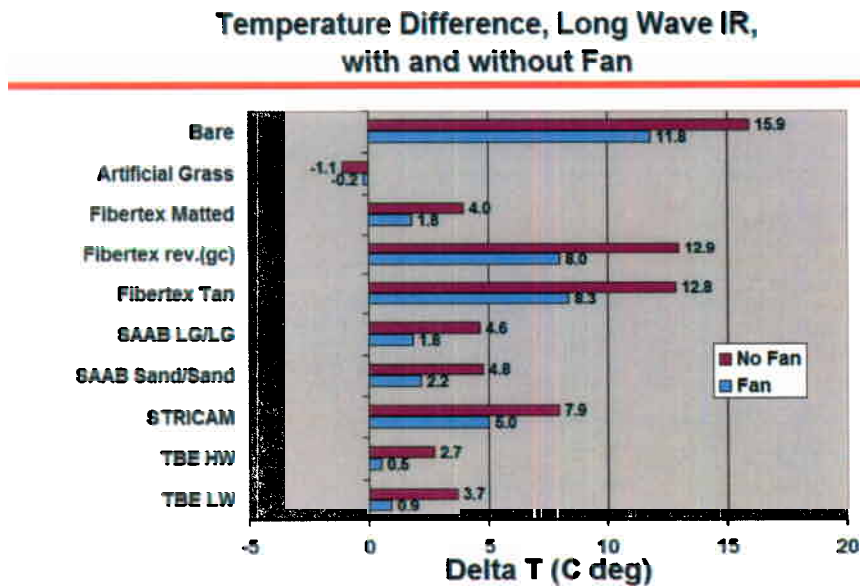


Figure 10. Long wave performance with and without a fan.