

MADE IN N.C.

STORY BY **JOHANNA ROYO**

Every month, American & Efird in Mount Holly supplies more than 19.2 million yards of thread that hold together the workaday ACU pants. It's just one in a long list of uniform components spun, sewn and shaped right here in North Carolina. Much of the work is done by federal prisoners and more is shifting to Puerto Rico.

Federal Prison Industries is a job-training and goods-producing arm of the prison system and won defense contracts worth more than \$100 million in 2013 to cut and sew uniforms. Here are the parts and pieces produced in North Carolina.



GLOVES

One North Carolina glove company, MITTS NITTS Inc, makes sweaters for the Marine Corps and Coast Guard, along with "hand sweaters" for the Army.

EMBLEMS/PATCHES

T-SHIRT

BODY ARMOR

SOCKS

Special T Hosiery Mills, Inc., is just one of several military sock makers in our state. It recently landed a \$1.8 million military contract. Now, that's a lot of socks!

BOOTS

McRae Industries, Inc., has been manufacturing combat boots for the military since 1967. The components come from across the U.S., but the boots are 100 percent put together in North Carolina. McRae currently provides 25 to 30 percent of all boots issued.

ZIPPERS

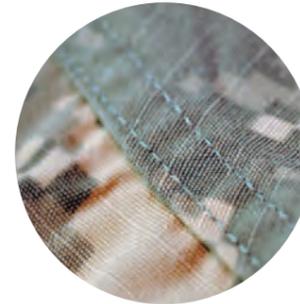


FABRIC AND ELASTIC



THREAD

The thread that holds it all together is spun by half a dozen companies across the state. But probably the most unusual supplier takes recycled water bottles and melts them into thread. UNIFI has branches all over the world, but the headquarters has been in Greensboro since the company started in 1971.



INSECT SHIELD

Starting in 2012, all Army combat uniforms are treated with bug repellent that bonds so tightly with the fibers it lasts through 25 washes.. Once the pants and jacket have been treated with Permethrin, it becomes an ACU-P. Insect Shield, LLC in Greensboro is one of only three companies in the country authorized by the Environmental Protection Agency to process Army uniforms and has treated millions of military garments. According to a company spokesman, its product actually lasts for 70 washes.



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