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**AQUATIC ARMOUR**

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*Fishy design could protect soldiers from bullets*

The skin of an ancient African fish is inspiring future body armour.

Engineers funded by the US military are testing synthetic materials based on the skin in the hope of using it for flak jackets, police vests and armoured vehicles.

For nearly 100 million years, the skin of *Polypterus senegalus* - commonly known as the 'dinosaur eel' - has effectively protected the species against tooth-and-claw attacks by predators. The skin has four distinct layers that are specially aligned to provide enormous strength.

Dissection of individual fish scales reveals that cracks spread out in a circle around a puncture wound, so any damage inflicted upon the armour is contained.

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