

Putting a lid on dangerous blasts with Blastfoam

It looks like shaving cream, but this Canadian foam is helping explosive experts around the world get out of some close scrapes alive.

Blastfoam is the result of a decade of researching methods to contain a bomb blast. In the 1990s, Canada's Department of National Defence, working closely with RCMP bomb experts and the Canadian Police Research Centre (CPRC) partnered with a Canadian firm, now called, Vanguard Response Systems to develop, manufacture and promote the Blastfoam technology.

Vanguard Response Systems produces the foam and the special tent-like enclosures made from a proprietary polyamide felt. When the enclosure is placed over a bomb and filled with foam, the combination turns what might have been a destructive explosion into a highly contained blast. The foam does more than just muffle the explosion; the formula includes chemical penetrants and decontaminants to neutralize and contain the harmful agents.

Vanguard of Stoney Creek, Ontario, is setting new standards in this demanding field. The firm's products have seen service at suspected chemical and biological warfare facilities in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as becoming part of contingency planning for events such as the Olympics, international summits, and political conventions.

The CPRC played a crucial role in the development of this technology, bringing together the right blend of resources in order to ensure continued development of the foam and its associated systems. As DND refined the foam, the CPRC brought in a renowned RCMP bomb technician and a retired Ottawa firefighter to design a nozzle to safely deliver the foam. Vanguard continued to enhance the overall package, which fits on a dolly and can be wheeled into almost any setting where a bomb might be found.

"The CPRC not only facilitated getting the players together, but offered support at critical points," says CPRC project manager Glenn Carroll.

Vanguard today finds itself on the leading edge of an area that is increasingly prominent; the relationships fostered by the CPRC remain invaluable.

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able. "We found them to be just excellent partners to discuss different ideas," says Chris Corbin, Vanguard's Chief Technical Officer. "They provided facilities and expertise for all the test work that would have been difficult to get any other way."

Above all, Corbin adds, "They vaulted Vanguard and this Canadian technology into an unrivalled position on the world stage. We are unaware of any product that even comes close to it in performance."

THE CANADIAN POLICE RESEARCH CENTRE (CPRC) IS A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE (RCMP), THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF CHIEFS OF POLICE (CACP) AND THE NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL OF CANADA (NRC) – www.cprc.org 