Block MEMS Wins $9.8M Government Contract for Standoff Detection of Chemical Threats

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MARLBOROUGH, Mass., July 6, 2016 /PRNewswire/ -- Block MEMS, a leading developer of Quantum Cascade Laser (QCL) based infrared detection systems, has been awarded a $9.8M contract from the Intelligence Advanced Research Projects Activity (IARPA) to develop a system that can detect trace quantities of chemicals at standoff distances of at least 100 ft. The award is part of IARPA's Standoff Illuminator for Measuring Absorbance and Reflectance Infrared Light Signatures (SILMARILS) program and is managed by the U.S. Air Force Research Laboratory at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio.

Dr. Anish Goyal, Block's VP of Technology and Principal Investigator of the contract, commented, "Standoff detection of trace chemicals, such as explosive residues, chemical warfare agents and toxic industrial materials, is a critical unmet need within the Intelligence Community, Department of Defense, and Department of Homeland Security. There are also many commercial applications for sensitive, standoff chemical detection. Block's QCL technology combined with advanced data analytics makes it possible to meet the challenging performance goals of the SILMARILS Program."

Under this contract, Block will develop a new class of widely tunable, high-pulse energy Quantum Cascade Lasers and also next-generation detection algorithms to detect and identify hundreds of chemicals on a wide range of surfaces. Block has previously been successful in demonstrating standoff chemical detection capability under several prior government programs and this award will significantly advance the technology for use in real-world situations.

Dr. Petros Kotidis, CEO of Block, added, "Block is very pleased to receive this award and grateful to IARPA for their confidence in our technologies and products. Block has strong capabilities in developing sophisticated standoff chemical detectors and deep, decades-long understanding of infrared spectroscopy. We really look forward to expanding the operating envelope of our chemical detection systems through this award and providing more tools to the intelligence community and to the warfighter."

About Block MEMS LLC

Block MEMS, LLC is an engineering and development company focusing on the R&D of high performance Quantum Cascade Lasers (QCLs) and FTIR spectrometers. Block MEMS has been awarded numerous government contracts over the past decade for the application of its technologies toward the detection of explosives, buried IEDs, chemical warfare agents, toxic industrial materials and chemical clouds. Both standoff and sampling systems have been developed and delivered to the government for additional testing and evaluation. For example, Block's PORTHOS (TM) is a man-portable, passive FTIR spectrometer system that remotely detects chemical threats as far as three miles away and protects against chemical warfare agents and weapons of mass destruction. LaserWarn (TM) is a QCL-based system that is used to protect critical facilities against chemical attacks by establishing a "chemical trip-wire" using eye-safe laser beams.

About Block Engineering, LLC

Founded in 1956, Block Engineering, LLC is a leading manufacturer and marketer of high performance Quantum Cascade Laser and Fourier Transform Infrared analyzers and spectrometers for commercial, industrial, military and government customers. Block's unique QCL-based analyzers

include the LaserSense (TM) Gas Analyzer for the detection and quantification of a wide variety of gases for process control and field applications in the oil, gas and chemical industries. In addition, the LaserWarn (TM) Gas Analyzer is used for safety, environmental, and fence-line monitoring of toxic and fugitive gases over a large area. The LaserTune (TM) product line of QCL-based Infrared Sources is used for corporate research and academic markets.

Block MEMS and Block Engineering are affiliated through common ownership and share headquarters in Marlborough, Massachusetts, USA. For more information, visit http://www.blockeng.com.

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