

New Tech will Prevent Friendly Fire Incidents

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A new infrared detection sensor will better scrutinize friendly forces on the ground. The sensor will be incorporated into various ground, sea and air platforms.

UTC Aerospace System is testing its next-generation short-wave infrared (SWIR) camera sensor, which it says is capable of seeing laser strobes in real time. The system — already deployed with U.S. military testing units — is a multi-mode tracking SWIR sensor.

Tara Martin, director of business development for UTC told military.com: "We're amongst the first companies offering that, and that will be reaching the field in the next two to three years".

The sensor was developed in order "to prevent fratricide," Martin said. Secondary goals are "reducing talk on target" and promoting covert communication. "When people are just talking onto target, there have been instances where, because of their different perspectives, they're not actually talking about the same target," she said. That could lead to confusion, or an incorrect target description. JTACS, who call in airstrikes, often have to talk with the aircraft overhead, and double- or triple-check a target with the aircraft before it strikes. "That talking back and forth could take 20 minutes or so to verify ... they're looking at the same target," Martin said. "That talk can very well be [condensed] under a minute when the person on the ground can see" with the sensor, or vice versa.

The more platforms equipped with the sensor — from tanks, to fixed-wing and helicopter aircraft, and even ships — the more streamlined target identification becomes, she said.

"One thing that's unique about our sensor is how fast it can operate. The faster the sensor can operate, the more different codes you can differentiate between," she said.

An additional benefit: Adversaries can't pick up the laser on standard night-vision goggles.

"Being able to move to a more covert wavelength to do that has a lot of benefits," Martin said.

According to Sensors Unlimited, the SWIR capability can be deployed on targeting pods and satellites and used for laser spotting, weapons guiding, and maritime and submarine surveillance, among other missions.