

Protection in peace

NBC-Sys supplies protection of first responders, including emergency doctors.

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CBNW Deputy Editor David Oliver talks to Bruno David, Commercial Director of NBC-Sys

CBRN protection systems are being supplied by NBC-Sys for French Army vehicles, including the NEXTER VBCI as part of the SCORPION programme.

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& war

NBC-Sys was founded in Saint-Chamond in France in 1991 to cover the continuous need for CBRN solutions. It went on to become an autonomous subsidiary of Nexter Group in 2006

CBNW: Could you provide a short history of how the company became involved in the CBRN detection, identification, protection and decontamination markets?

BD: NBC-Sys has a very long history in the CBRN field: 70 years working with the French Armed Forces. Our range of products and services covers the treatment of threats from detection to decontamination through collective and individual protection. This very broad spectrum of skills, almost unique at the level of a single manufacturer in Europe, allows us to offer our customers global solutions in a systems approach.

NBC-Sys is a subsidiary of Nexter Group which has a guarantee of sustainability. This is reassuring for our customers in this sector where products have a very long life. Our subsidiary structure allows ▶

Production of the current version of the NBC-Sys NRBC protection mask will exceed a million in 2020.

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us to market our products independently of our shareholder. In particular, we benefit from privileged access to Nexter Group vehicle platforms to advance our skills and collective protection systems.

Our resources and skills allow us to deal with the complete life cycle of products – studies, tests, production, in-service support, withdrawal of service, and recycling – and uniquely in Europe, live-agent testing of our CBRN protection and filtration products.

Production is carried out at our Saint-Chamond site near Lyon. We favour a supply chain from the industrial and technological base of French defence to guarantee quality and security of supply.

CBNW: Can you outline the different products you offer to government agencies and the military?

BD: Our extensive range serves a very wide spectrum of customers for our systems and the integration of vehicles, shelters and boats for collective protection. It includes end-users and government agencies for detection, personal protection and decontamination. For example, the current version of our CBRN protection mask will exceed a million produced in our factory in 2020. All versions combined, NBC-Sys has sold several millions of masks and filter cartridges.

CBNW: What percentage of your business is in the safety and security sector, and who are your main customers in the civil sector?

BD: Twenty per cent of our revenues is dedicated to internal security. Our experience in respiratory protection can guarantee high performance for the protection of first responders – firefighters, doctors, etc – and civil protection. For the civilian market we also offer a range of filtration systems from our military range, specially adapted for commercial vehicles working in hazardous conditions.

CBNW: Can you give details about your company's R&D?

BD: Our R&D is driven by the forward-looking needs of our armed forces with which we have ongoing exchanges. With a research department of 20-plus, including three specialists in chemistry, textile and materials, we invest 5% of our R&D to

Below: More than 20 specialist technicians work in the NBC-Sys R&D department.



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develop state-of-the-art products and to offer new technologies. We also cooperate with research centres, universities and other higher education establishments. We have participated in several European projects in military research and security including the European Defence Agency (EDA).

This innovation capacity allowed us to win the French market for the renewal of individual protection equipment for armed forces in the Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) with three other French companies, Paul Boyé Technologies, Ouvry and SP Defense.

NBC-Sys has been the supplier of CBRN protection masks for the French armed forces since 1951. In addition, the Scorpion programme is a significant example of innovative concepts in collective protection.

CBNW: What percentage of your business is aimed at the military sector?

BD: We achieve 80% of our revenues in the military field distributed equally between collective protection, personal protection and decontamination; 20% is realised through exports. Our products are distributed in more than 50 countries

under the NBC-Sys brand. Our order backlog totals nearly three years of revenues, excluding conditional tranches in certain contracts. We expect a 25% growth in sales over the next three years.

CBNW: Are you involved in NBC protection systems for military vehicles?

BD: We are very active in this sector and work in partnership with many system suppliers. In our domestic market, we are the exclusive supplier of air conditioning and NBC protection systems for the French Army's Scorpion programme, which includes Leclerc main battle tank (MBT), and VBCI, Griffon, Jaguar and Serval armoured vehicles. This is a global programme of unparalleled scale in terms



The NBC-Sys MEERKAT multi-purpose decontamination equipment is used by the armed forces and first responders.



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of number of vehicles, involving some 5,000 vehicles.

This production volume will guarantee an optimised performance/cost ratio at the highest standards. The qualification will be undertaken by the technical services of the French Army.

We have developed a plug-and-play system consisting of two separate kits: peacetime and wartime. The cost of owning the peacetime kit is optimised because it is standard on all vehicles with reduced filtration performance.

The wartime kit has a very high level of performance against the CBRN threat. Operational projection constraints mean it is not necessary for every vehicle to have a wartime kit. Our experience in the field has given us a global approach to filtration and air conditioning, to optimise performance of integration, use and maintenance.

For the life cycle of systems we can provide an environmental approach, a secured French supply chain, and an obsolescence monitoring structure ensures production continuity over the duration of the programme.

CBNW: Can you explain what training you offer to customers in the use of your products?

BD: We are involved in the entire life cycle of our products. Training is an

NBC-Sys produces the EPTBC set of biological/chemical sampling and transportation kit.

integral part of our field of expertise and services. We are able to provide different types of training that includes product use, their first- and second-level maintenance, training-the-trainer and specific training on request.

CBNW: What are the advantages of your products and services over your competitors in the market?

BD: In collective protection our presence in large-scale vehicle programmes guarantees us almost continuous production over the next ten years, including durability of our original equipment and spare parts, while also offering competitive quotes based on high production volumes.

Although the NBC-Sys brand has existed for only 20 years, we have more than 50 years' experience in the sector and our membership of the Nexter Group and involvement in major, long-term structuring programmes make us a solid and reassuring player for the customer. We are not a temporary player.

Finally, we are constantly looking for a high level of performance and quality. Our materials are qualified by the French Army according to the latest forces standard and are combat-proven in operational theatres. Our level of manufacturing quality is recognised and proven through 100% testing of our systems. Our expertise in the integration/vehicle qualification phases is recognised by our affiliation with the Nexter group. We support our customers in optimising the systems from the prototype phase.

CBNW: Where do you see the greatest potential growth sector for your products?

BD: With an innovative range of products qualified by the French Army for renewal over the next five years, we are more than ever ready to increase our export development by offering new and comprehensive solutions to our customers. ■