

STEWART
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Home-grown security solutions

THIS week's conviction of the men who planned to blow up a number of transatlantic flights has come as a sobering reminder of the terrorist threat we face in the UK. Although the plot was averted by the diligence and professionalism of the intelligence and security services, the thought of the havoc the bombs could have wreaked is truly terrifying.

The authorities are increasingly turning to innovations in science and technology to help them combat this threat, and companies at NETPark are among those leading the way.

Kromek, a company set up to commercialise cutting edge research developed in Durham University, produces advanced scanners capable of identifying the liquid in a bottle without the need to open and test it. Needless to say this technology would have proved invaluable in thwarting the plans of the liquid bombers and is already on trial in a number of airports.

Kromek is a great example of the role to be played by science and technology in providing greater levels of security. As a company that was originally a spin out of Durham University, Kromek is proof of the excellence and level of expertise we have in this region, and the need to retain, develop and commercialise it.

ROAR Particles is another company working at the frontline of the security battle. Also based at NETPark, ROAR is a market leader in the field of fingerprint forensic analysis. Working with nanotechnology derived particles, the technology can identify chemicals in the finger prints ranging from drugs such as cocaine and nicotine to explosives. This means that ROAR's technology has major implications for the sectors of crime, forensics, counter-terrorism, immigration screening and a range of other markets.

ANImano, another company based at NETPark, was originally set up to develop technology to protect against the leak of harmful biochemicals in manufacturing spaces.

However, use of this technology is far reaching and it is hoped that versions of ANImano's machines can be produced to detect traces of explosives, avian flu and MRSA.

There is considerable potential for all these new technologies to seriously impact on the security sector and the way security measures are implemented. News of the convictions of the liquid bombers comes at a time when our home-grown technology is moving forward in ways that will help deter future plots and transform the landscape of security in this country and around the world.

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