

# 'Industrial Cooperation DNA Ensured Our Success'

**THEON SENSORS' CEO Christian Hadjiminias insists future of military products lies in interoperability**

By: Sakha Pramod



THEON SENSORS is a market leader in night vision and thermal imaging systems. The company is an Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM), which owns every aspect of its product technology, including optics, mechanical and electronic assemblies. In an exclusive interview with *Nation Shield*, Christian Hadjiminias, CEO of THEON SENSORS and President of EFA Group, explains how promotion of industrial cooperation, which is part of the DNA of the company, has helped its business model success globally.

**THEON SENSORS, based in Athens, is known as one of the market leaders in Night Vision and Thermal Imaging Systems for military and security applications. Do you have a presence in other countries?**

We are headquartered in Greece and today our group is the largest Greek defence group of companies. We have offices and industrial investments in the U.S. We have been selected by the U.S. Marines, with a partner of ours in the U.S., to provide night vision equipment. We have also opened an office in Germany, where we are major suppliers of night vision equipment, and in German-speaking countries like Austria and Switzerland. We have an office in Abu Dhabi, and I am very pleased to say that we have been here for more than eight years. Besides, we have offices in Singapore, and co-production facilities in Indonesia and India.

**To how many countries do you export your sensors?**

We export to as many as 55 countries. We are considered mar-



Christian Hadjiminias

ket leaders in night vision. In thermal, we have recently started having major successes, especially in North America, Far East and Europe. We do not just seek to export, but we promote local industrial cooperation. We are not at all shy about transferring technology. We believe in true partnerships.

We have supplied a considerable amount of night vision systems to the UAE and today we are launching a facility for man portable night vision and thermal products with local partners in Abu Dhabi. This facility will also support the existing fleet and provide new and upgraded systems to the esteemed UAE Armed Forces.

We not only offer our products and knowhow, but also like to

## EFA GROUP

share our ideas and business. That creates long-term benefits and not just one-off sales.

**What is special about your products?**

We have relooked at all our products improving their quality and cost-wise for the benefit of all our military and law enforcement customers. We have major contracts in the U.S. night vision market. We are also successful in Europe having won most of the night vision programmes. While we match other brands in quality, we are some 20 per cent cheaper and thus more competitive.

As a policy, we do not overcharge as we aim at long-term relationships. When we started from Greece, the brand name of Greece in the defence industry was not high. So, we had to be reasonable in prices and top in quality. The combination has worked wonders.

**Night operations must focus on safety. How do you address that aspect?**

We are following a holistic approach on military operations' safety. We are developing as a Group a completely integrated Situational Awareness suite for dismounted soldiers, that enables interoperability and real-time exchange of information. For example, our solution MIMS Ranger shares the view from the soldiers' thermal imaging equipment amongst squad members. The future of military products lies in interoperability.

**What the key features of your thermal sensors?**

One factor that helped us is that we own our own thermal engine. This helps in a combination of quality and competitive prices. While being competitors, some German and French companies are interested in using our new product range of thermal sensors using bolometers of 12 µm. Similar products from other companies are quite expensive. Bolometer im-



NYX Night Vision Binocular

**We have relooked at all our products improving their quality and cost-wise for the benefit of all our military and law enforcement customers**

provements and software allow for products to be better, lighter and smaller.

**THEON SENSORS took part at IDEX 2021 in Abu Dhabi. How would you describe the response from visitors?**

Globally, not many defence exhibitions are being held. We took a chance. Abu Dhabi is like our second home. The response was much more than we expected. It seems the UAE has been rightly applying a rigorous industrial cooperation plan. There was much interest in the exhibition for the local industry and this made a large difference.

**Could you tell us about your various industrial cooperation projects or offsets units?**

Our group started by having an advisory company on industrial cooperation. Today, we consider ourselves a global leader in providing industry cooperation advice/fulfilment. We are advising prime contractors and countries as well, some in the Middle East and Far East. We have also advised major local companies on industrial cooperation.

With this background, we are considered leaders on advising and delivering turnkey solutions on industrial cooperation in areas of aerospace and defence. We have started doing projects with U.S. companies in Abu Dhabi. We are very optimistic in this field.



Headquarters in Athens

**How was business last year?**

Interestingly, the last two years, our group saw 40 per cent growth. This year, we are expecting another 40 per cent growth. Europe has been a dominant force in the increase in our turnover. Budgets have loosened up in Europe.

The significant increase in sales shows that more and more spare parts are being ordered for the service of systems delivered by THEON SENSORS in the last 10 years mainly because of the quality of our products. The long-term investment in building up industrial cooperation partnerships around the world has started paying off. We are working in Europe with two of the largest aerospace and defence companies. With one of them, we recently won the largest EU night vision tender.

**How big is the Middle East market for you?**

Middle East accounted for 20 to 30 per cent of our exports, but now it is only 10 to 15 per cent because of a surge in demand in Europe. Yet, we have set up industrial facilities also in the Mideast. We started with the UAE because we have been working with our partners for a long time. We want to grow as local industrial partners.

Let me state here, that I believe the industrial policy of the UAE, after having been successful in creating a local defense industry, should now help connect advanced, small to medium companies in the country with clusters in Europe. Once

you invest in Europe, you have the benefit of being partners and having NATO, EU certification. One interesting aspect is that it creates more employment in the home base too. Europe and U.S. have to be the target of the UAE defence industry. Actually, I would say that, if supported also by the right offset policies, that is, investing into EU defence businesses and connecting them to the local UAE companies, would be another positive game changer by UAE.

**You have an office in Abu Dhabi. Which markets do you focus on from there?**

Our second office after Greece is Abu Dhabi. We focus on Middle East, Africa and out of Singapore for the Far East region. Some of our Far East operations are also monitored out of Abu Dhabi.

**EFA Group member, SCYTALYS, recently won a contract with the Indonesian Ministry of Defence. Your comments?**

This is another niche business. In defence, if you have deployed fighter aircraft, radars, submarines etc. you can multiply your effectiveness by connecting them. By creating links and having unified command and control, by connecting their assets, we benefit much. In Indonesia, we won against larger foreign companies. We give total integrated solutions and see a big future in links. We now seek industrial partners in the region for these businesses.

THERMIS Thermal Sight

