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WSU Scientist Developing Detectors for National Security Applications

SPOKANE, Wash. – A Washington State University researcher has received federal funding to develop a way to detect Improvised Explosive Devices, the largest killer of U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Hergen Eilers of the Applied Sciences Laboratory will use the \$903,500 Office of Naval Research grant to develop a remote, laser-based method of detecting minute amounts of explosive near the devices, or IEDs. Iraq and Afghanistan insurgents have planted thousands of the devices, killing and maiming hundreds of U.S. soldiers and forcing troops to go to great lengths to avoid injury.

“Such a system could help the U.S. military avoid deadly incidents, and could also be used in civilian locations such as airports,” said Eilers.

The IED grant is one of two totaling \$1.3 million and aimed at countering weapons technology. The second grant of \$483,000 from the Defense Threat Reduction Agency focuses on developing small heat sensors to ensure that the biological agent of a weapon of mass destruction is destroyed.

The Spokane-based Applied Sciences Laboratory is the applied research component of WSU’s Institute for Shock Physics. The lab integrates multidisciplinary activities in the physical sciences and engineering to undertake a broad range of applied research projects for government agencies and companies, including technology transfer for commercial applications. The scientific underpinnings for these projects are in materials science, chemistry, optical physics, and computational modeling and simulations. Further information about ASL may be found at www.asl.wsu.edu. Further information about ISP is available at www.shock.wsu.edu.

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