

OIP
MISSION
CRITICAL
EXPERTISE



RECENT GEOPOLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS ARE OPENING UP NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR BELGIUM-BASED OIP, A LEADER IN THE FIELD OF ELECTRO-OPTICAL SYSTEMS DESIGNED FOR INTERNATIONAL DEFENCE AND SPACE PROGRAMMES.

MISSION CRITICAL EXPERTISE

PROJECT MANAGED BY: TYLER WARNER

OIP, a member of the Elbit Systems Group, has carved out a distinguished presence in optics, electro-optics, defence, and space technology. Founded in 1919 in Ghent, Belgium and later relocated to Oudenaarde, the company has over a century of expertise in high-precision optics and engineering. Today, it stands as a leader in its field, offering cutting-edge solutions across three primary divisions: OIP Sensor Systems – the original core business, OIP Space Instruments launched in 2021, and OIP Land Systems, acquired in 2010.

Throughout its history, OIP has developed and manufactured some world premières such as the first “Optical Sight” or Head-Up Display for fighter aircraft (NATO F-104 Starfighter) and the first Fire Control Systems for Main Battle Tanks (LEOPARD 1) in Belgium, Canada and Australia in collaboration with SABCA.

“All three divisions have enjoyed successful development and have great prospects,” says Freddy Versluys, the company CEO, adding that the original core business, OIP Sensor Systems, continues to account for about 80% of OIP’s turnover.

“While OIP Sensor Systems and OIP Space Instruments have

a similar focus and boast state-of-the-art laboratories including clean rooms, OIP Land Systems is different. Established in 1967 as a military surplus trading company, formerly known as Sabiex International, the business is a specialist in the upgrade of a wide range of military vehicle platforms.”

When asked what enables OIP to compete successfully with much large players like Safran, Thales and BAE, he says: “We are small and flexible. We have a multi-functional workforce and a strong team of engineers who embrace challenges and as a result, can always adapt our products to the very specific needs of the customer. We don’t engage in mass production; we are a project-based business.” >>



Precision and robustness beyond limits: sensor integration in harsh environments

Photo by OIP Sensor Systems

sentech.nl/en



SENTECH

Finding ways to optimise operational efficiency is a complex challenge for companies across the world. This is especially true for OEMs operating in harsh or difficult environments, like those in the defence industry, where there is a demand for robust high-spec solutions adhering to MIL-SPECs and trade compliency requirements. Naturally, these leading-edge solutions do not come straight off the shelf – they require a more bespoke approach. This is where Sentech comes in.

SMART SENSOR SOLUTIONS

A key partner to OIP, Sentech is a provider of custom sensor solutions to businesses across a wide range of industries, including the semiconductor, heavy-vehicle, high-tech robotics, medical instrument, and defence sectors. Since 2000, Sentech's mission has been to supply these clients with reliable, integrated sensor solutions that improve and enhance the performance of their machines and applications.

Sentech allows clients to focus on their core activities, while taking responsibility for everything from design through to product delivery, relieving customers of these concerns. Sentech offers:

- **Technological Independence:** Unbiased selection ensures the best technologies for specific applications
- **Optimal Designs:** In-depth customer insights and deep market knowledge ensure solutions perfectly fit client needs
- **Reliable, Futureproof Solutions:** Proactive life-cycle management keeps sensor solutions current and dependable
- **Strategic Partnerships:** Beyond products, Sentech provides advice, engineering, and supply chain support, making the company a strategic partner for life

POWER OF PARTNERSHIP

At Sentech, every project begins with a single, powerful question: What are you trying to achieve? From there, the company can apply its highly specialised and technology-independent approach towards developing sensor integrations renowned for their compatibility and long life.

Sentech's success is characterised by long-term partnerships. The company values open, transparent relationships, exemplified by its recent work with OIP. OIP set Sentech the challenge of inventing a custom MIL-SPEC module that, among other functions, could register movement in a more accurate way. Working closely with its client, Sentech took full responsibility for the design and development of a sub-assembly in the application, evaluating the best fit for the specification, before exploring the particulars of its practical integration. The custom solution was delivered under a challenging timeframe and was a plug-and-play answer to OIP's unique demands.

A PROVEN RECORD OF SUCCESS

Over the course of 25 years in business, Sentech has amassed an in-depth market knowledge that allows the company to create sensor solutions based on a technology-independent approach. In a world where technology is advancing at a rapid pace, these intelligent integrations are solving problems, decreasing costs, reducing waste, and advancing the capabilities of organisations across the globe. In partnership with its clients, the company does not just deliver products but provides the specialist expertise, engineering nous, and dedication to collaboration that drives long-term customer success.

No matter how big the problem or how intricate the issue, Sentech always has the same response for OEMs that require its help – challenge accepted.

www.sentech.nl



The trusted partner for innovative electronics development and manufacturing in the Netherlands.

machtechnology.nl





GROUND-BREAKING INNOVATIONS

The company has an impressive track record. OIP Sensor Systems is a technology leader in the field of design, development, production and sales of high-end electro-optical systems and components for defence and aerospace applications, and offers a comprehensive range of products, including night vision devices (portable and platform mounted), pilots' night vision goggles, weapon sights, thermal imagers, IR laser pointers, eye-safe laser rangefinders, day/night periscope sights, fire control systems.

Outstanding products from OIP Sensor Systems include Eoptris, an electro optical sight, equipped with a wide range of advanced sensors that provides 24-hour observation and surveillance capabilities; and Sentinel, a 360-degree day-and-night military vehicle thermal situational awareness system with motion detection and treat detection. "These innovations have gained traction internationally, with deployments across Europe, Chile, and other regions," says Freddy Versluys.



The newest division, OIP Space Instruments, designs and delivers electro-optical high-end customised spaceborne solutions for international development projects. Versluys points out that today, there is no planet in our solar system which doesn't have a peninsula of OIP around it or even on it.

"Within the Space Instruments division, two major projects stand out. The first one is ALTUS, a ground-breaking three-layer hyperspectral camera developed to study ozone in the Earth's atmosphere. With over 250,000 engineering hours invested, it is considered the most complex instrument

ever built in Belgium. We have also designed CLIM, a cloud imaging system developed for the European Space Agency's Sentinel program."

While the first two divisions are R&D based, OIP Land Systems division, with its focus on surplus military vehicles refurbishment, has a more physical aspect. Its latest achievements include the delivery of 266 military vehicles to the Ukraine through different European governments. "At the beginning of the war, we had 430 military heavy vehicles and were one of the only companies able to deliver military vehicles right from stock and at very short notice," says Versluys.

GLOBAL REACH AND MAJOR CONTRACTS

He affirms that OIP operates predominantly in international markets, with only 5% of its business coming from Belgian contracts. Over recent years, the company has participated in a number of prestigious projects.

For example, OIP was the prime contractor for the €65 million contract with the French Direction Générale de l'Armement for weapon sights, sniper rifles, and ammunition; and enjoys exclusive supplier status for all sensors on India's Arjun main battle tank. OIP Land Systems is also participating in a major military vehicle upgrade project in Chile.

"Partnerships are vital for our success. As we do not engage in large-scale production but focus on engineering, development, final assembly, and integration, relationships with our suppliers and subcontractors are key."

"We collaborate with our subcontractors from the very early stages of a project as 80% of the cost of a product is already defined in the engineering. As a project-based business, we outsource around 55-60% of our manufacturing," says Versluys, noting that while the company tries to source as much as possible locally, some specialised components and technologies, such as optics, are no longer available in Europe and are shipped from India and the Far East.

GOOD TIMES AHEAD

Recruiting skilled engineers is one of OIP's biggest challenges, he admits. With an existing engineering team of 75 people from 15 different nationalities,



OIP struggles to find further top-tier technical talent. The lack of interest in defence-related fields in Belgian universities has exacerbated the issue, though changing geopolitical circumstances are slowly altering perceptions. "We do look well after our employees, and sustaining know-how within the company is an important task. Our company's workforce is loyal, with several employees celebrating over 35 years of service," says Versluys, who himself has been in the company for over 35 years.

Although he will soon pass the leadership baton to the younger generation and move to more of a support and advisory role in the Board of Directors, he will continue to be excited to be part of the company's development in the coming years. "OIP is poised for significant growth due to increasing global defence expenditures. European nations, influenced by geopolitical tensions, are boosting their defence budgets, creating new opportunities for our products. Investment in space technologies is also increasing. Given developments on the global scale, there are exciting and challenging times ahead." ☺





OIP

WWW.OIP.BE



PRODUCED BY:

CEO
MEDIA GROUP
WHERE INSIGHT MATTERS