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# Emerging Imaging and Sensing Technologies

Keith L. Lewis Richard C. Hollins Editors

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## Introduction

Interest in emerging technologies has been of fundamental importance to the security and defence community for many years where it has informed the process of horizon scanning for both governments and industry. Indeed, in the United States, the Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) recognised its role at the outset as an enabler for the development of disruptive solutions for providing enhanced capability in military operations. Challenges posed when sensing under the difficult conditions encountered in military environments lie at the heart of many applications of photonics. Evolving threats have necessitated the need for innovation in the way that reliable solutions are brought to bear when armed forces are deployed. This conference brought together emerging activities in sensor and optical technologies and explored their application for those areas of application that are of current interest. The conference was organised around six topical areas:

- Infrared and optical devices
- Optical materials and devices
- Lasers and laser applications
- Computational imaging and image processing
- Quantum technologies
- Correlated imagery

At the device level, significant activity in optical integration was evident, with new solutions emerging for compact multispectral cameras capable of extracting more information from the scene. Such devices could potentially find application on autonomous platforms where there are requirements to address the size, weight, power and manufacturing cost of those components and devices. The understanding of plasmonics is advancing, as is the realization of metamaterials at optical wavelengths, supported by the evolution of effective techniques for the fabrication of nano-structured devices. There is always a need for improved active and passive components including laser sources, modulators and photo-detectors and that requirement was addressed by several authors. Advances in mid-infrared fibre-optics are enabling a number of applications especially for remote chemical sensing in the mid-infrared fingerprint region. Photon-counting sensing technologies can provide the basis for wide area terrain mapping and improved target identification as well as more exotic opportunities such as in quantum communications, quantum sensing and quantum ghost imaging. New approaches in the area of avalanche photodiode array technologies are particularly relevant here to allow operation across wide spectral ranges, especially in the SWIR band. But it is not only developments at the component level that are important. Techniques to understand and improve target discrimination, to enable more accurate target tracking and provide vision through turbulent atmospheres, can benefit from the application of both pre-detector and postdetector processing techniques. Improvements in computational imaging and compressive sensing help to reduce the overhead in managing large data sets, especially when communication bandwidths are limited.

Some of these topics were featured in SPIE's first European Symposium on Optics and Photonics for Defence and Security held in London in 2004, but the themes have evolved over successive years to support the basis of current requirements. An example addressed at the conference this year was the current Quantum Technology Initiative in the United Kingdom, with several papers offering highly disruptive capabilities that could be of great economic significance.

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