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Tempe firm to outfit Israeli army

Phoenix Business Journal - by [Patrick O'Grady](#)

Black Diamond Advanced Technology has rolled out its first wearable computer for military use, and it's going to Israel in a deal that could result in thousands of unit sales.

The Tempe company, which specializes in rugged computers that serve specific niches, announced this week it has struck a deal with Great Neck, N.Y.-based Computech International and the Israeli Defense Forces to supply that nation's military with wearable computers.

The IDF hired Computech to find a wearable computer, and Computech selected Black Diamond's Digital Army Computer System. The system is based on Black Diamond's SwitchBack technology — a rugged, handheld computer capable of withstanding the extreme environments soldiers routinely find themselves in, said Norman Lange, the company's director of product development and DACS program manager.

"This product is in many ways similar, and in many ways different than the SwitchBack," he said.

The IDF contract is a multiyear, open-ended deal. Lange said the company would not release the dollar amount of the contract, but that it could constitute thousands of units sold to the IDF, with the work done in Tempe.

He also would not disclose the unit value of the DACS, but SwitchBacks sell for about \$6,000 each, according to previous Phoenix Business Journal reports.

The system's goal is to provide an integrated communications network for soldiers in the field. It has undergone about six months of field testing and fine-tuning with the IDF to integrate it with the soldiers' equipment, Lange said.

While the SwitchBack is a handheld device, it features modular units that come with different functions, from checking identification and fingerprints to biometric scans. The same will be true for the wearable computer, Lange said.

IDF officials said the system meets their needs to provide mission information to troops in the field in a multitude of ways.

"DACS is a significant development for the IDF because it marks the first time that dismounted commanders are not tethered to their stationary or mobile command posts," Brig. Gen. Yehoo Even-Zahav, the retired head of the IDF's technical division, said in a prepared statement. "The dismounted commander can be anywhere in the field and still have and provide the reliable situational awareness needed to carry out their mission."

The platform comes in three parts: the computer based on the SwitchBack, encrypted with the IDF's radio and communications frequencies; a handheld display; and a docking system.

Lange said the docking system will allow the wearer to plug the machine into a vehicle to boost its communication range and access new information.

"They're using the system to get data from the commanders in the field as well as information from their commanders in order to increase their survivability," he said.

Black Diamond is one of three companies within Tempe-based Roper Mobile Technology Inc. that are developing rugged computers for military and police applications. Black Diamond is focused on military uses, and its computers are based on Windows software and **Intel Corp.** hardware. They are resistant to water and extreme temperatures, and models can be dropped repeatedly with no damage.

The system designed for IDF is not the first Black Diamond has developed. It also is a subcontractor on a **Raytheon Co.** project that is developing a similar system for the **U.S. Army**.

That \$11.8 million contract — the result of a competition to find the best wearable computer for the U.S. military — also drew an entry from **General Dynamics C4 Systems** in Scottsdale.



Norman Lange

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BLACK DIAMOND ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY

HQ: Tempe

Vice president and General manager: David Molesworth

Founded: 2005; acquired by Roper Mobile Technology Inc. in 2007

Products: Rugged computers for military and other applications

Employees: 66

Web: www.bdatech.com

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