

**INTEGRATED SYSTEM FOR COMBATING IMPROVISED EXPLOSIVE
DEVICES**

5 The present invention relates to an integrated system for combating improvised explosive devices.

More particularly, the present invention relates to a system for equipping a vehicle so as to give said vehicle a capacity for combating Improvised Explosive Devices
10 (IEDs), particularly IEDs laid by terrorists in zones of armed forces interventions in overseas theatres of operations.

An improvised explosive device is a device that is positioned or manufactured in an improvised manner and that comprises explosive, incendiary or toxic chemical
15 components. It is designed to destroy, handicap, slow down and/or distract. It can incorporate elements originating from military arsenals (for example, a grenade), but in most cases it is composed of an assembly of non-military parts. An improvised explosive device often comprises an explosive charge, a priming charge, a detonator and a firing system that is either mechanical or electronic.
20 Numerous types of improvised explosive device exist, often assembled from miscellaneous elements.

The improvised explosive devices that are intended to reduce the mobility of troops are most often laid at the sides of a road, within a strip of less than ten metres, or
25 are even laid or buried at a shallow depth on a road or a track used by military vehicles.

These devices are triggered by a remote radio command, but they can also comprise sensors capable of automatically activating the charge upon the passage of the
30 target, often after a Hertzian arming command.

An integrated system for combating IEDs must have the following features in particular:

- a range of several tens of metres in order to ensure the safety of the carrier
- 5 in relation to the effective radius of the charges, which is increasingly high;
- detection reliability; and
- high destruction reliability with an effect that can be observed remotely.

US 2009/0182525 discloses a system for detecting, locating and destroying
 10 improvised explosive devices. This system, the external elements of which can be mounted on a platform, is arranged underneath a helicopter in order to survey a ground zone located in front of the helicopter. The detection system comprises means for illuminating the surveyed zone by microwaves and for analysing the returned signals. In the event of the detection of returned signals, the spectrum of
 15 these returned signals needs to be analysed in order to verify the presence of improvised explosive devices. In the event of the proven presence of such a device, the orientation of the antennas used to transmit and receive the signal needs to be precisely determined in order to locate the device.

20 These operations for detecting, verifying and locating improvised explosive devices are relatively complicated and calculations need to be implemented in order to confirm a detection.

In addition, the following is known:

- 25 - US 4 053 891 discloses a system for detecting and locating an object using a detector of non-linearities that are characteristic of specific objects;
- US 2010/0289686 discloses a method for disrupting or destroying a transmitter or a receiver of an improvised explosive device; and
- US 7 864 107 discloses a system for detecting and locating an improvised
 30 explosive device.

The object of the present invention is to overcome the aforementioned disadvantages. It relates to an integrated system for combating improvised explosive devices provided with electronic components, said system comprising means for remotely detecting electronic components, provided with at least a transmission antenna and a reception antenna, as well as means for neutralising improvised explosive devices.

To this end, according to the invention, said system further comprises:

- an orientable block in which at least the following are mounted:
 - the transmission and reception antennas of said detection means, which are directed so as to illuminate a same zone of space, principally of the ground; and
 - a detection confirmation camera that is directed toward the zone illuminated by said transmission and reception antennas so as to be able to form at least one image of said zone; and
- means for controlling the orientation of said orientable block, which cause a displacement of said orientable block so as to generate a scan of part of space by said detection means.

In this way, by virtue of the invention, the confirmation of a detection can be implemented easily and simply using a confirmation camera, as specified hereinafter.

Furthermore, as the confirmation camera is directed toward the zone illuminated by said transmission and reception antennas and forms an image of this zone, it is not necessary to carry out orientation calculations and adjust the aiming of the camera in order to carry out the confirmation, which therefore can be implemented quickly. In order to increase the speed and the precision of the detection, the confirmation camera is preferably directed toward the centre of the zone illuminated by said transmission and reception antennas.

In a preferred embodiment, said system further comprises means for displaying, on a display screen, the images generated by said detection confirmation camera, and means for manually adjusting the scale of the display shown on said display screen
5 (allowing the zoom of the displayed images to be modified). Said display screen and said adjustment means are remote from said orientable block, preferably installed inside a vehicle equipped with said system.

Advantageously, said means for controlling the orientation of said orientable block
10 cause a displacement of said orientable block so as to obtain a scan at a constant scanning speed.

Furthermore, said detection means are advantageously formed so as to detect non-linear junctions of electronic components. In a preferred embodiment, said
15 detection means comprise:

- a signal transmitter capable of transmitting at least a pulsed signal;
- said transmission antenna, which is connected to said signal transmitter;
- a signal receiver capable of receiving at least pulsed signals returned by improvised explosive devices provided with electronic components;
- 20 - said reception antenna, which is connected to said signal receiver; and
- a signal control and processing unit, which is connected to said signal transmitter and to said signal receiver.

In addition, said transmission antenna and said reception antenna can be mounted
25 on said orientable block:

- either side by side;
- or in tandem, which reduces the spurious noise caused by the carrier vehicle in the reception antenna, as specified hereinafter.

Furthermore, at least means for directing the firing (gun, antenna) of said neutralisation means are advantageously arranged on said orientable block and are directed (at least in a rest position) toward the zone illuminated by said transmission and reception antennas, thus simplifying the system, which comprises
5 a single orientable block and single means for controlling the orientation of said block.

Moreover, said neutralisation means advantageously comprise:

- a disruptor gun; or
- 10 - a microwave generator coupled to an orientable antenna.

In addition, said detection means advantageously further comprise means for adjusting the fundamental frequency of the signal in order to select a fundamental frequency, the exact harmonic of which is not present in the operating environment.
15

The present invention further relates to a movable device comprising means for combating improvised explosive devices.

According to the invention, said movable device is noteworthy in that said
20 combating means comprise the integrated system for combating improvised explosive devices specified above.

In a first (preferred) embodiment, said movable device is a land vehicle (that is to say moving on the ground). In this case, said block of the integrated system is
25 preferably mounted on the roof of said land vehicle and is arranged and controlled so as to carry out a scan of the ground in front of said land vehicle.

Furthermore, said movable device advantageously comprises means for transmitting a warning signal when the current speed of said land vehicle exceeds a
30 reference speed that depends on the scanning speed of said detection means. This

allows efficient detection to be provided by providing a reference speed that prevents the presence of non-scanned zones in front of the land vehicle. It is also possible to provide an alarm warning an operator in the event that the speed is exceeded.

5

In a second embodiment, said movable device is a helicopter and the block of said integrated system is mounted underneath said helicopter and is arranged and controlled so as to carry out a scan of the ground when the helicopter is flying (at low altitude).

10

The figures in the appended drawings will aid understanding of how the invention can be carried out. In these figures, identical references designate similar elements.

Figure 1 is the block diagram of a system according to the invention.

15

Figure 2 schematically shows an orientable block of a system according to the invention.

Figure 3 schematically shows a vehicle carrying a system according to the invention.

20

The system 1 according to the invention, which is schematically shown in figure 1, is an integrated system for combating improvised explosive devices (IEDs) provided with electronic components.

25

Said system 1 is more particularly, but not exclusively, intended to combat IEDs laid by terrorists in zones of armed forces interventions in overseas theatres of operations and particularly IEDs laid at the sides of a road or IEDs laid or buried at a low depth on a road or a track used by military vehicles.

30

For this purpose, said system 1 comprises means 2 for remotely detecting electronic components, provided with a transmission antenna 3 and a reception antenna 4, as well as means 5 for neutralising improvised explosive devices.

5 According to the invention, said system 1 further comprises, as shown in figure 2:

- a block 6 that can be oriented in elevation and in bearing and in which at least the following are mounted:
 - the transmission and reception antennas 3 and 4 of said detection means 2, which are directed so as to illuminate a same zone Z1, Z2 of the ground (figure 3); and
 - a detection confirmation video camera 7 that is directed toward the zone Z1, Z2 illuminated by said transmission and reception antennas 3 and 4 so as to be able to form an image of this zone Z1, Z2; and
- means 8 for controlling the orientation of said orientable block 6, which cause a displacement of said orientable block 6 so as to generate a scan of part of the ground by said detection means 2. This scan, which is implemented between two extreme positions shown by the zones Z1 and Z2, is indicated by a double arrow B in figure 3.

20 In this way, by virtue of the invention, a detection can be confirmed easily and simply using the confirmation camera 7, as specified hereinafter.

Furthermore, as this detection confirmation camera 7 is directed toward the zone Z1, Z2 illuminated by said transmission and reception antennas 3 and 4 and forms an image of this zone Z1, Z2, it is not necessary for orientation calculations and significant adjustments to the aiming of the camera 7 to be carried out in order to carry out the confirmation, which thus can be implemented quickly. In addition, the image formed by the camera 7 allows a detected IED to be precisely located.

In order to increase speed and precision, said detection confirmation camera 7 is preferably directed toward the centre of the zone Z1, Z2 illuminated by said transmission and reception antennas 3 and 4.

5 Said transmission and reception antennas 3 and 4 and said detection confirmation camera 7 are preferably fixed (in the same orientation) in the block 6. Means for individually adjusting their respective aiming directions can also be provided.

10 In a preferred embodiment, said system 1 further comprises a man-machine interface 9 that comprises in particular a display screen 10 and adjustment means 11.

15 This man-machine interface 9 can in particular display, on the display screen 10, the images generated by said detection confirmation camera 7, and it comprises means (for example belonging to the means 11) allowing an operator to manually adjust the scale of the display shown on said display screen 10 (so as to modify the zoom of the displayed images).

20 Said man-machine interface 9 of the system 1 is remote from said orientable block 6, preferably being installed inside a vehicle 12 provided with said system 1.

25 Furthermore, said detection means 2 are formed so as to detect non-linear junctions of electronic components, which significantly reduces the probability of false alarms. In effect, an analysis of threats has revealed that a vast majority of IEDs that are laid on roads 13 or on roadsides 14 integrate large or small electronic circuits, either for arming them or for triggering them remotely (or via a sensor integrated in the IED). In the zones of engagement envisaged for
30 the system 1, electronic components are rarely present on roads 13 and

roadsides 14, and therefore, in the event of the detection of an electronic component, the likelihood that it belongs to an IED is high.

5 Said detection means 2 represent an active pulsed system of the NLJD (Non-Linear Junction Detector) type and are intended to detect non-linear junctions, whilst allowing the detection of the harmonics returned by non-linear junctions present in any semi-conductor, such as diodes or transistors.

In a preferred embodiment, said detection means 2 comprise:

- 10
- a signal transmitter 16 capable of transmitting at least a pulsed signal with a given fundamental frequency;
 - said transmission antenna 3, which is connected to said signal transmitter 16;
 - a signal receiver 17 capable of receiving at least pulsed signals returned by
- 15
- electronic components, in particular improvised explosive devices;
 - said reception antenna 4, which is connected to said signal receiver 17; and
 - a signal control and processing unit 18, which is connected to said signal transmitter 16 and to said signal receiver 17.

20 In addition to a reduced rate of false alarms, this detection of electronic components has the further advantage of allowing a detection distance of several tens of metres, which can be expected from an active pulsed system for detecting the signal reflected by the PN junction of certain components present on electronic boards. In effect, the response of the junction is perfectly predictable:

- 25
- a PN junction between two semi-conductors reflects the incident signal exactly at the frequency of the second harmonic of the signal initially transmitted by the transmission antenna 3; and
 - a junction between two conducting metals reflects the incident signal on the third harmonic of the initially transmitted signal.

The detection of an electronic component comprising a semi-conductor junction is effective as soon as the receiver 17 transmits a signal to the signal processing unit 18 with a signal-to-background noise ratio that is higher than a predetermined threshold, typically 20db.

5

The fundamental frequency transmitted by pulses by the transmission antenna 3 is selected so that its exact harmonic is not present in the operating environment. In order to fulfil this operational requirement, the detection means 2 further comprise means for adjusting the fundamental frequency of the signal, which form, for example, part of the means 11.

10

In particular, in order for said detection means 2 to detect components at a distance that ensures the safety of the carrier, said means have the following features:

- high transmission power, in the order of 1kW;
- 15 - transmission and reception electronics designed with a very low noise level; and
- an ultra-sensitive and highly directive pair of transmission and reception antennas 3 and 4.

- 20 The transmission and reception antennas 3 and 4 are designed to be as directive as possible and not to be the source of the generation of harmonics that can disrupt the operation of the detector.

25 In addition, said transmission antenna 3 and said reception antenna 4 are mounted on said orientable block 6:

- either side by side, as shown in figure 2;
- or in tandem, that is to say one behind the other (at a sufficient distance from each other).

In a tandem assembly (not shown), the reception antenna mounted at the front cannot carry out scanning but can have a wider lobe. In this case, only the transmission antenna carries out a scan, which reduces the spurious noise caused by the carrier vehicle in the reception antenna.

5

As shown above, said system 1 further comprises means 5 intended to neutralise (that is to say to destroy or put out of operation) any previously detected and located IED. At least means for directing the firing (gun, antenna) of said neutralisation means 5 are also arranged on the orientable block 6. These means are preferably directed toward the zone illuminated by said transmission and reception
10 antennas 3 and 4, which facilitates the neutralisation. Alternatively or additionally, it is possible to provide specific means for carrying out very precise aiming of the neutralisation means 5.

15 In a particular embodiment, said neutralisation means 5 comprise disruptor guns 20.

Preferably, such a gun is of the type used with manual aiming by parcel bomb task forces. It has, for example, a 40 mm calibre and it fires projectiles made from soft material, which are crushed upon impact with the structure of the IED and transfer
20 all of the kinetic energy thereto. The level of the impact is such that it dismantles the components of the IED (electronic boards, batteries, wires and fuses), and the IED is then neutralised without having operated. Nevertheless, even if the IED is activated by the impact, the explosion occurs a significant distance from the vehicle 12 carrying the system 1, which is not damaged.

25

In a further embodiment (not shown), said neutralisation means 5 comprise a high-power microwave generator, coupled to a (phase scanning) antenna which can be mechanically aimed or controlled. This high-power microwave generator allows the electronics of the detected IED to be destroyed remotely.

30

The operation of the system 1 according to the invention, which is shown schematically in figure 1, is as follows:

- during the displacement of the vehicle 12 carrying the system 1, the means 2 for remotely detecting electronic components scan the ground in front of said vehicle 12, illuminating a zone of space (between Z1 and Z2) in order to remotely detect electronic components that can be part of IEDs;
- in the event of a detection (preferably indicated by a visual and/or audible alarm) the image of the zone illuminated at the time of the detection is displayed on the display screen 10 in the cabin of the vehicle 12 by means of the video camera 7 which is linked to the movement of the two transmission and reception antennas 3 and 4;
- the vehicle 12 then stops and once the vehicle has stopped the operator zooms the camera 7 to the relevant zone and directly controls it in order to visually examine the source of the alarm, before deciding whether or not to deal with the object that is the source of this alarm;
- if the presence of an IED is proven or suspected it is neutralised by an operator using the neutralisation means 5.

The technologies used to implement the aforementioned functions preferably have homogenous performance levels in terms of range.

A system 1 according to the invention has the following features in particular:

- a range of several tens of metres, ensuring the safety of the carrier in relation to the effective radius of the charges, which is increasingly high;
- detection reliability with a low false alarm probability; and
- high destruction reliability with an effect that can be observed remotely.

As indicated above, the system 1 according to the invention for combating improvised explosive devices is mounted on a movable device.

In a first preferred embodiment, shown schematically in figure 3, said movable device is a land vehicle 12 (that is to say moving on the ground). In this case, the block 6 of said system 1, which can be oriented in elevation and in bearing, is preferably mounted on the roof of said land vehicle 12.

5

Furthermore, the two antennas 3 and 4 are oriented in a negative elevation and said block 6 is arranged and controlled so as to bring about a scan of the ground several tens of metres in front of said land vehicle 12.

10 In order to provide efficient detection, the scanning speed of the detection means 2 and the speed of the vehicle 12 need to be selected so that the scan of the sector scanned in front of the vehicle 12 prevents the occurrence of non-scanned zones between two successive scans.

15 Preferably, the system 1 scans the zone in front of the vehicle 12 at a constant angular speed, with which the maximum speed of advance of said vehicle 12 is servo-controlled. It is also possible to provide an alarm to warn an operator when this maximum speed is exceeded.

20 Furthermore, in a second embodiment (not shown), the block 6 of said system 1 is mounted under the belly of a helicopter and is arranged and controlled so as to carry out a ground scan, underneath and in front of the helicopter, when said helicopter is flying at low altitude, particularly during a route surveillance mission.

25

CLAIMS

1. Integrated system for combating improvised explosive devices provided with electronic components, said system (1) comprising:
 - 5 - means (2) for remotely detecting electronic components, said means being provided with at least a transmission antenna (3) and a reception antenna (4) and being formed so as to detect non-linear junctions of electronic components;
 - an orientable block (6) in which at least the transmission and reception antennas (3, 4) of said detection means (2) are mounted, which are directed so as to
 - 10 illuminate at least a same zone (Z1, Z2) of space;
 - means (8) for controlling the orientation of said orientable block (6), which cause a displacement of said orientable block (6) so as to generate a scan of part of space by said detection means (2); and
 - means (5) for neutralising improvised explosive devices,
 - 15 characterised in that it further comprises a detection confirmation camera (7) which is mounted in said orientable block (6) and is directed toward the zone (Z1, Z2) illuminated by said transmission and reception antennas (3, 4) so as to be able to form an image of this zone (Z1, Z2).
- 20 2. System according to claim 1, characterised in that it further comprises means (9) for displaying, on a display screen (10), the images generated by said detection confirmation camera (7), and means (11) for manually adjusting the scale of the display shown on said display screen (10), said display screen (10) and said adjustment means (11) being remote from said orientable block (6).
- 25 3. System according to either claim 1 or claim 2, characterised in that said detection confirmation camera (7) is directed toward the centre of the zone (Z1, Z2) illuminated by said transmission and reception antennas (3, 4).

4. System according to any one of claims 1 to 3, characterised in that said means (8) for controlling the orientation of said orientable block (6) cause a displacement of said orientable block (6) so as to obtain a scan at a constant scanning speed.

5

5. System according to any one of claims 1 to 3, characterised in that said transmission antenna (3) and said reception antenna (4) are mounted side by side on said orientable block (6).

10 6. System according to any one of claims 1 to 3, characterised in that said transmission antenna (3) and said reception antenna (4) are mounted in tandem on said orientable block (6).

15 7. System according to any one of the preceding claims, characterised in that said transmission and reception antennas (3, 4) and said detection confirmation camera (7) are fixed in said orientable block (6).

8. System according to any one of the preceding claims, characterised in that said detection means (2) comprise:

- 20 - a signal transmitter (16) capable of transmitting at least a pulsed signal;
- said transmission antenna (3), which is connected to said signal transmitter (16);
- a signal receiver (17) capable of receiving at least pulsed signals returned by improvised explosive devices provided with electronic components;
25 - said reception antenna (4), which is connected to said signal receiver (17);
and
- a signal control and processing unit (18), which is connected to said signal transmitter (16) and to said signal receiver (17).

9. System according to any one of the preceding claims, characterised in that said detection means (2) further comprise means (11) for adjusting the frequency of the signal.
- 5 10. System according to any one of the preceding claims, characterised in that at least means (20) for directing the firing of said neutralisation means (5) are arranged on said orientable block (6) and are directed toward the zone illuminated by said transmission and reception antennas (3, 4).
- 10 11. System according to any one of claims 1 to 10, characterised in that said neutralisation means (5) comprise a disruptor gun (20).
12. System according to any one of claims 1 to 10, characterised in that said neutralisation means (5) comprise a microwave generator coupled to an orientable
15 antenna.
13. Movable device comprising means for combating improvised explosive devices, characterised in that said combating means comprise the integrated system (1) for combating improvised explosive devices, specified in any one of claims 1 to
20 12.
14. Movable device according to claim 13, characterised in that said movable device is a land vehicle (12), and in that said block (6) of said integrated system (1) is mounted on the roof of said land vehicle (12) and is arranged and controlled so as
25 to carry out a scan of the ground in front of said land vehicle (12).
15. Movable device according to any one of claims 13 to 14, characterised in that it comprises means for transmitting a warning signal when the current speed of the land vehicle (12) exceeds a reference speed that depends on the scanning speed
30 of said detection means (2).

16. Movable device according to claim 13, characterised in that said movable device is a helicopter, and in that said block of said integrated system is mounted underneath said helicopter and is arranged and controlled so as to carry out a scan
5 of the ground when the helicopter is flying.