



## Enhancing the British infantry's combat effectiveness.

The British army is currently overseeing a project called Future Integrated Soldier Technology (**FIST**). Its aim is to enhance the infantry's combat effectiveness in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as part of the overall larger Future Soldier project. It is hoped that this goal will be achieved through the integration of a modular system of all equipment, weapons and their sighting systems, radios that the individual soldier carries or uses, in order to increase his overall effectiveness on the battlefield.

The five main areas of FIST capability are C4I, lethality, mobility, survivability and sustainability. The following list outlines in more detail which products, equipment and disciplines fall into each category:



- ◆ **C4I**  
Command, control, communications, computers and intelligence
- ◆ **Lethality**  
Weapons and sights
- ◆ **Mobility**  
Navigation, and small size and weight of equipment
- ◆ **Survivability**  
Clothing, stealth, body armour
- ◆ **Sustainability**  
Logistics

The Fine Group has worked directly for all branches of the Military – Army, Navy and Air Force – for over 20 years. It has also worked with many

companies operating in the defence sector who supply the Military with products that feature in all of the above categories. As such, we are well equipped to fulfill the requirements of those companies which have been awarded FIST contracts.

The military market is probably the most challenging sector of all those in which we operate. It requires an in-depth knowledge and comprehensive understanding of specialist textiles and their characteristics, to assess their suitability for dedicated military products

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### Introduction

The opening of our new production resource in China back in May 2009 certainly seems to be paying dividends. Since then we have been operating flat out on all fronts, from estimating to design and manufacturing at our UK factory as well as mainland China, despite all of the talk of doom and gloom in the newspapers on the world economy front. Of course, much of this may be attributable to our increasing presence at exhibitions and a greater commitment to promotion and the launch of our new website.

Either way, long may it continue!

As a further aid to our ambitious sales growth plans, we have introduced a Rapid Response Unit at Wembley. The aim of this unit is to meet the growing demand for low-volume products and has been set up to provide customers with a design and development service through to production and fulfillment.

### Product Portfolio

The Fine Group takes great pride in designing and manufacturing to the very highest operational standards. Our textile assembly solutions are engineered to meet the most stringent requirements of organisations such as BSI, the Military plus those to match European and American standards. Our comprehensive range includes:

- ◆ **Protective Covers**
- ◆ **Pouches**
- ◆ **Slings & Harnesses**
- ◆ **Seats**
- ◆ **Specialist Upholstery**
- ◆ **Bags & Rucksacks**
- ◆ **Instrument Cases**

**FAST TRACK INFORMATION:**  
**+44 (0)208 214 8635**

## Fines launch new website.

We are pleased to announce the launching of our brand new website. It has been designed to feature not only our growing range of manufactured products, but also to provide customers with a far more user-friendly site. Check out our site today: [www.finegroup.co.uk](http://www.finegroup.co.uk) or [www.finegroupplc.com](http://www.finegroupplc.com)



# The changing face of fabrics and textiles

At the Fine Group we pride ourselves on sourcing innovative new fabrics and working with suppliers that are technologically at the cutting edge to ensure that we are always 'one step ahead of the game'. In this respect, Intelligent Textiles is one such company with interesting ideas, with whom we are developing a potential partnership.

They are a company with bonded weaving mills both in the UK and North America and are revolutionising traditional fabrics as we know them, by weaving electrical circuits on a loom into woven fabric, using a patented combination of yarns and weave designs. A typical example is their fabric keyboard that is, quite literally, the size of a handkerchief which can be connected to a PDA, PC or cell phone.

Their heated glove fabric is another fine example of textile

innovation. It concentrates heating power at the fingertips, saving valuable battery weight and cost. While the fabric contains the complex wiring circuit there are no visible or bulky cables to hamper the wearer. The glove fabric employs 3 distinct conductive yarns in combination and can be laminated or coated for environmental protection.

Innovation like this is ideally suited to the FIST initiative currently being implemented by the Ministry of Defence (see front page article), particularly when those fabrics are employed by a leading provider of textile assembly solutions such as the Fine Group.

The current dismounted soldier, by necessity, carries a large number of electrical devices. These all require a power supply so that data communications can be transmitted efficiently and



effectively between individuals or units. Traditionally, this would have necessitated the carrying of bulky, heavy and unwieldy wires and cables (hardly ideal for the modern soldier who needs to move quickly or by stealth). A fabric woven by Intelligent Textiles can overcome this problem, as the conductors are integrated into the textile in a flexible, thin and lightweight manner. The garments made from these 'intelligent textiles' are also more robust and allow the wearer to adopt a valuable lower profile.

The configurations possible utilising these futuristic textiles is almost limitless but within today's theatre of war environment, it is perfectly feasible to design, develop and manufacture rucksacks, tactical vests, ballistic vests, combat trousers and vests. In other words, a complete uniform, all linked to a central processor, power or computer unit via these innovative and conductive fabrics.

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and their deployment in a wide range of operations. These characteristics might include some, or all of these properties: infrared reflectivity, water resistance, and disruptive pattern materials with specialised webbing.

Typically, we produce the following types of product for this specialist sector:

- ◆ Bags – military rucksacks and instrument carrying systems
- ◆ Fixed Wing Aircraft and Helicopter covers
- ◆ Tactical covers for tanks and other military vehicles
- ◆ Tactical Equipment – carrying systems and ammunition bandoliers
- ◆ PLCE and ALICE Webbing – load vests and harnesses

Wherever the theatre of war is being conducted, the Fine Group has the technical expertise, both in design and manufacturing capability to provide the right solution.

## Blue Sky Thinking



To assist our strategy for developing into new markets, the Fine Group has recently recruited Steve

Walker, a concept designer from outside of the textiles industry to provide a fresh perspective on our traditional products and services. With his experience of 3D CAD, prototype development, rapid prototyping, rigid component development and concept styling, Steve is well qualified to assist our growth through the development of innovative new products.

Steve trained as an industrial product designer and has a BA Hons degree and MSc in Product Design Strategies and Digital Prototyping and specialised in product concepts, CAD and visual design. These qualifications have served him

well in the development of products from the ground up to market placement as well as in the design of props and sets for BBC/ITV independent dramas. He currently has a number of consumer products stocked by major high street retailers.

As well as examining the potential for new products and markets, Steve will examine current market methodologies, materials science and leading edge manufacturing techniques. This will likely have an impact on the way we develop and manufacture new products.

The ultimate aim is that under Steve's guidance there will be a seamless transition from a tier supplier to a fully capable solutions provider and leading edge innovator; delivering design integrity and added value to both current and prospective clients.

Specifically, Steve has been tasked with research and analysis into the Police and Fire sector requirements, together with:

- ◆ 'Blue Sky' fabric and technology research including medical infection control, advanced communications and wearable electronic technologies, nano-fabric technologies, environmental control, prototyping techniques and manufacturing methodologies
- ◆ Ongoing process assessment to provide proactive solutions for evolving and emerging markets
- ◆ Support of design and prototype development and visual and technical solution design.

In every respect, Steve's role embraces 'blue sky' or 'out of the box' thinking to aid the Fine Group's ambitious five year growth plan.

## Mark Wilkes: Business Development Director of Fine Group PLC



On the crest of a wave would be a very apt description of Mark Wilkes private life and commercial value since he joined the company in July 2008.

Mark joined in the capacity of Business Development Director, having enjoyed previous spells in that role in the semi-conductor industry (Samsung) and other Venture Capital backed businesses. He has also been employed by various companies as a Sales Director – a highly useful role, as sales still forms a very important part of his BD duties at Fines.

Since joining Mark has been instrumental in devising a marketing strategy and implementing an ambitious development plan; designed to double the size of the company by 2014.



*With so much in-house knowhow and skill in textile engineering, the potential for growing this business is enormous.*

Despite a less than favourable economic backdrop, we're pleased to say that sales have remained on a par with last year, whereas many companies seem to be experiencing a 15-20% drop. The future orders book

is also looking very promising, so a return to increasing sales, year on year, is definitely looking achievable.

To help him, Mark has added to his sales team and also established a Customer Service department to provide clients with an immediate feedback on where their orders are in the system and resolve any queries or issues that they might have. At the same time, new markets have been developed – the Police, Fire

Service and Local Government – while the company is now far more pro-active approaching major blue chip organisations both in the UK and internationally.

Mark also takes a day-to-day interest with key accounts and is responsible for the company's design and development team.

His philosophy is, and always has been – 'work hard, play hard' – a school of thought that he puts in to good practice. Mark often cycles in to work from his home in Berkshire arriving before many who commute in by car. He is also an accomplished sailor and competed recently in the Laser 2000 National Championships at Hayling Island, with his son. His other interests, quite naturally, are his family and home.

Having a good navigator at the helm of business development can only be good news for the prosperity of the Fine Group.

## Ripsafe™ – the quick release solution.

In many walks of life, technicians and service and maintenance personnel need to carry the tools of their trade. Obviously our wide range of tool belts and carrying bags are ideally suited to the task, but certain roles require for the carrying of more substantial and bulky items.

In these situations, a rucksack is perfect for the job. It allows the wearer to carry relatively large and heavy equipment for extended periods in comfort and relative ease. But what happens in those situations and environments where personnel are working in extremely confined spaces? The rucksack could become a hazard and trap individuals.

With the Fine Group's Ripsafe™ quick release rucksack this potential problem is eliminated; allowing the wearer to remove the rucksack quickly and easily.



Standard harnesses require two hands, some effort and calmness to release. Not so with Ripsafe™. Ripsafe™ has a unique, one-handed quick release – keeping the user safe, without sacrificing any of the benefits offered by the rucksack.

There are also other scenarios where a Ripsafe™ rucksack can prevent a life-endangering situation. Personnel wearing

a standard rucksack can be snagged by a moving vehicle and dragged, out of control, into serious danger. Equally, working with machinery can pose a risk, potentially exposing the wearer to the danger of the straps or harnesses being caught up in the equipment.

In addition to the safety factor, Ripsafe™ from the Fine Group offers the following benefits:

- ◆ Instant removal by a work colleague
- ◆ Available in high visibility fabric
- ◆ Breathable materials ensure wearer comfort
- ◆ Water resistant
- ◆ Lightweight, yet extremely robust construction

Ripsafe™ is currently in use by many of the UK's leading companies in a variety of potentially hazardous

environments. The product's success is attributable to the Fine Group's ability to identify a problem, formulate a solution and then deliver an excellent result through innovation in design and manufacture. Typically, Ripsafe™ is used by the following industries and professional services

- ◆ Transport – especially Rail
- ◆ Oil, Offshore and Maritime
- ◆ Mining
- ◆ Search & Rescue
- ◆ Agriculture
- ◆ Heavy industry – plant and machinery
- ◆ Emergency Services
- ◆ Police & Fire

The Fine Group also manufactures a wide range of complementary technicians' specialist bags, pouches, wallets, straps and armbands to aid safety in the work place.

# China factory opening.



Front door with 2 inspection staff dressed in qipaos



Ground floor – bulk materials store looking towards goods in-out area and goods lift



Ian Gray (MD) employees ei



Ian Gray (MD) and Edward Ng (Everbest owner – welding subcontractor)



L-R: Mr Li (head of local trade and industry committee), Anthony Cheung, Mr Wong (factory manager (hidden)), Avi Fine and his wife Rivka



Ian Fine and Anthony Cheung



A member of the local committee taught how to weld by



D) with the chairwoman of the Area Women's Committee,  
her side



L-R: Mr Wong, Ian Fine, Mr Li and Anthony Cheung



...eung, Ian Fine, Mr Li (mayor of Da Jin village),



The factory supervisor and management team



committee being  
an employee



Members of the local committee and Ian Fine, trying out the 'travelling stand' part  
of the Gerber spreading machine under employee supervision

# Keeping an eye out for the unexpected.

The Fine Group recently began working with Cobham Surveillance, a world leader in its field; providing products and integrated surveillance solutions to law enforcement, military, national security and border patrol agencies.

Cobham's range of electronic products include covert audio and surveillance equipment, perimeter protection and alarm products as well as satellite-aided emergency locator beacons. Their aim is to provide clients with advanced communications technology that significantly protects and enhances their operational capability.

The increasing sophistication and finances of modern-day

## Cobham Surveillance

criminals and terrorists – and the increasing demands of society and environments today – mean that investment in research and development is essential for innovating new technologies. Cobham's investment in innovation is market-led and guided by the specialists they employ, such as former members of the Special Forces, bomb disposal squads or government agencies. It also works with a number of specialist suppliers to source complementary products for a number of items in their range.

They approached the Fine Group as a result of a recommendation



from another Cobham plc company to produce CBRN backpacks. By the very nature of the product, Cobham Surveillance had to be sure that these backpacks were produced under maximum confidentiality. From the outset they found that we were very proactive and receptive to providing a design solution, provide CAD/CAM drawings and produce prototypes and manufacture within a very limited timescale.

*We found the Fine Group to be very switched-on and capable of meeting very tight deadlines which was fundamental to this project.*

Stuart Doe – Cobham Surveillance.

As a consequence of fulfilling these criteria, we are currently working on a number of other products for Cobham Surveillance.

# A French Connection.

## Invacare

When Invacare (France) were looking to produce a design for an adjustable backrest for manual wheelchairs, they had no hesitation in contacting the Fine Group. Having worked with the company and been delighted with the outcome in the past, they invited the company to visit their offices in France to discuss their precise requirements.

The aim was to produce an adjustable backrest that was more modern and clearly differentiated from those of competitors. The backrests also needed to adopt Invacare's new logos and corporate aesthetic. Ultimately, it was hoped that the new design would become the standard fitment for all new wheelchairs. Quite naturally, the new design had to provide some adjustment to aid comfort and posture for users.



In the first instance, the Fine Group's design team presented a range of suitable materials offering a choice of different textures, feel and colour shades. At a meeting in France, Invacare decided on their preferred materials and outlined their cost targets for the two-part system.

After much deliberation over the merits of the differing options an order was placed with Fines for sample orders to be produced at the company's Wembley production base. Throughout the pre-production process, Fines implemented a number of controls to assess the viability of a specified load on a purpose-

built test bed, together with testing for strict flame retardancy properties and biocompatibility of the chosen materials, before release to Invacare.

Once the UK pre-production samples were approved by Invacare, digital patterns and instructions were sent to the Fine Group factory in China and a larger pre-series production run initiated. A number of minor 'tweaks' were made to the design before Invacare gave the go-ahead for a complete launch to full-scale production.

Working to a very tight deadline, orders were despatched from China, directly to Invacare in France. The commissioning of a fully adjustable backrest followed and was developed in the same way. This is also now in full production.

# Bridging the Gap with MediSolve.

MediSolve



In 2005 MediSolve changed the way public and private sector organisations manage crisis events and the Grab-Bag® is their signature product. Having operated in hostile environments for many years and with extensive knowledge of conventional risk management strategies and human behaviour, MediSolve realised that if first aid equipment is only meant to meet H&S requirements, then clearly lessons have not been learned from events such as 9/11 and 7/7.

The London Assembly Report into the 2007 London bombings made reference to a lack of locally available First Aid equipment. This comment created an expectation that organisations would respond positively to these specific findings, taking whatever remedial action was felt necessary. The Grab-Bag®, which contains much more equipment than old fashioned first aid boxes and designed so they can be easily seen, carried and used, now enables organisations to meet their

HSE obligations and manage extreme situations far more effectively.

A consistent message from NaCTSO, through feedback from their Project Argus teams, is the need for emergency planners and executives to accept when terrorism is thought to be the cause of an incident, it will take longer for the Ambulance Services to arrive. Traffic chaos, hazards at the scene, Duty of Care and the threat of secondary devices, and

other precautionary measures will influence their response plans and timings. The conclusion is, that we need to manage with whatever is available, until professional help arrives.

Grab-Bags® are now seen as tangible evidence of learning from disastrous incidents and of effective risk management strategies. MediSolve's mantra is 'Bridging the Gap' and the company's objective is to make Grab-Bags® as visible and as readily available as fire

*In this respect, the company's ultimate aim is to have the medical Grab-Bag® sited alongside the fire extinguisher.*

extinguishers. In this respect, the company's ultimate aim is to have the medical Grab-Bag® sited alongside the fire extinguisher. Their rationale being that most people would know where extinguishers are sited in an emergency in their organisation, but far fewer would know where a medical or first aid kit is kept.

Initially, MediSolve sourced manufacturing overseas but was concerned about lengthy delivery times, expensive shipping costs and the inability of their previous manufacturer to share their vision. Learning about Fines Wembley manufacturing facility, the company approached the group with a view to transferring production to the UK.

There was immediate synergy between the two companies and changes were implemented to the build

quality specification, integral fixtures and fittings, all of which delivered cost savings without compromising the overall quality of the product, that had to be MediSolve's specified "Gold Standard."

Grab-Bags® are sold to organisations which can then order replaceable contents at the end of the sell-by date or when used for practical reasons.



In addition to the medical version, the Fine Group manufactures colour coded and "fit for purpose" Business Continuity, Incident Response and Tactical Grab-Bags® for MediSolve. Fines is also helping the company to develop its range of products and this combination of practical experience, manufacturing expertise and commitment, is helping others meet and overcome the challenges within our ever-changing and threatening environment.

## On the road

Throughout 2009, the Fine Group has been very proactive in spreading the word, having taken stands at the Fire & Rescue/Health & Safety exhibitions earlier this year and, more recently at Defence Systems & Equipment International and Helitech.

These exhibitions have led to a spate of enquiries which has kept our estimating and design departments busy ever since.

In October we were well represented at Rehacare – an exhibition that services the markets catering to disabilities, care requirements or chronic ailments for the elderly. It is of particular interest to those providing nursing care, nursing staff, families supporting a disabled member and also prime decision makers at authorities providing community care support and healthcare appliance retailers. Its prime focus is Rehabilitation, Prevention, Integration and Care. This was followed by Medica – a trade

show providing a comprehensive overview of innovations from within the world of medicine.

The Fine Group has a long history of engineering with textiles for the Medical care and emergency sectors. We provide personal care solutions for associations, trusts and independent living as well as solutions designed to protect expensive and difficult to replace equipment used by medical care professionals, the emergency services and the patients themselves in life critical situations.

◆ STOP PRESS ◆ STOP PRESS ◆

## Working with the Design Council

The Fine Group is pleased to announce that we are working with the Design Council sponsored by the LDA. Under their guidance we are involved in their lead immerse program and this will take over 18 months to complete. The aim of this programme is to develop and improve the way we use design in all areas of our business.



Primarily this programme should enable us to market our full range of services – **Concept, Design and Manufacturing** of which perhaps some customers have not been aware. In essence, to position ourselves across a broad platform as a 'one-stop' shop or single source for textile engineering solutions.

- ◆ Fine Concept
- ◆ Design by Fine
- ◆ Fine Manufacturing

## Customer Service Training



L-R: Bharat, Shelley, Amardeep, Trevor and Yingbo

The Fine Group's commitment to training and development has seen the customer service team drive toward excellence through NVQ training.

In conjunction with Shelley Davies from Stanmore College the

customer service team have spent the last six months undertaking the study and workplace assessments in order to achieve their qualifications. As Amardeep, Customer Services Supervisor, explains "not only is it important to the company its important

to my team that we show our commitment to the customers".

Trevor Payne, HR Director, commented "our organisational aims of ensuring that our employees are fully equipped to deliver a first class service can't be demonstrated better than through their hard work in gaining their qualifications. My thanks are given to Stanmore College and particularly that of Shelley for the many hours she committed to make certain that success was the only outcome."

Shelly is pictured here with Trevor presenting the Customers Services Teams with their certificates.

## Exhibitions

To allow our existing and potential customers the opportunity to view our products and discuss capabilities, we shall be at the following exhibitions

throughout 2010. The Fine Group will either have a stand at these shows or be represented there by some of our senior personnel.

- ◆ **Infrarail** – Birmingham – 13-15 April 2010
- ◆ **ACPO-APA 2010** – Manchester – 11-13 May 2010
- ◆ **IFSEC/Safety & Health** – Birmingham – 11-13 May 2010
- ◆ **Reha** – Germany – 12-15 May 2010
- ◆ **Cni Expo 2010** – London – 3-5 June 2010
- ◆ **Eurosatory** – Paris – 11-18 June 2010
- ◆ **Farnborough Airshow** – Farnborough – 19-20 July 2010
- ◆ **Medica** – Germany – 17-19 November 2010

## Further information

The Fine Group designs and manufactures textile assembly products to stringent BSI standards for the following markets:

- ◆ Military
- ◆ Fire & Safety
- ◆ Industrial
- ◆ Medical

Our capability is to provide bespoke concept, design and manufacture and this enables us to provide solutions for:

- ◆ Protective Covers
- ◆ Aircraft Covers
- ◆ Harnesses
- ◆ Slings and Lifting Solutions
- ◆ Head Protection
- ◆ Bags and Rucksacks
- ◆ Pouches
- ◆ Cases

For further information about these or any other product that may require integral textile assembly, please contact:

**Tel: +44 (0)208 214 8635 Email: finenews@finegroup.co.uk**

Or write to Department FN2 at the address listed below.



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