

New Zealand Army News - April 2006



The NZ Army is soon to benefit from an innovative surveying device that was developed by a New Zealand company and is being used or trialed by armies around the world.

An "ike" is a rapid data capture device for mobile mapping and damage assessment. The device, developed by Wellington company Surveylab, takes a GPS (global positioning system) a step further, adding a number of different measuring systems such as a compass, inclinometer (pitch and roll sensor), laser distance meter, digital camera, and computer.

For the military, the 1100g ike is a useful tool for gathering terrain knowledge on the battlefield. Because there is "one button push" to capture the data, the ike provides much higher accuracy than traditional terrain capture methods. It has many different applications, and is being used in the US, and is about to be used by the Australian and Canadian armies for mine mapping, disaster relief, research, and during deployment. MAJ Herman Hudepohl is involved with introducing the device into NZDF, initially to the RNZE. He says that because the collected data can be quickly transmitted back to a central analysis point, which can then process the information and send soldiers further instruction, the device extends the capability and skill set of people on the ground. "If you get some people on the ground early on, they take the photos with geo-reference locations on the images that they have taken; for example, a power station, a leak, a crash site or disaster site, and those images can go to a project team. Then all the experts can sit down and analyze the situation, and go, 'right, this is what needs to happen', and action it accordingly", said MAJ Hudepohl.

An older model of the ike has been used by NZDF in exercises such as last year's TasmanEx, when Joint Geospatial Support Facility (JGSF) used the device to obtain detailed knowledge of the hydrography of the Napier harbor and the Port of Napier. Since then, Surveylab has taken part in a cooperative research and development project with the US Army to move the device from a civilian unit to a military device. The new model, to be purchased by the NZDF, has extended features such as a longer range laser and a higher resolution digital camera. It is also now a sand color, rather than bright orange.



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