

The 'Vorsphere' and Our Protection



By Simon Weston, OBE

Hi, I'm Simon Weston.

Unfortunately I have firsthand experience of what explosions and fire can do when I was aboard the troop ship Sir Galahad, when it was hit by a 500lb bomb.

The date was June 8, 1982 and the place was named rather inappropriately I feel - 'Port Pleasant' which it wasn't on that day I can assure you.

I actually saw the bomb coming directly at us. It smacked into the bulkhead where my section were playing cards. In seconds it was like Hiroshima, everyone was on fire including myself.

My friends lay about ablaze and dying, I looked at my hands they were melting in front of me.

I was blinded by smoke and confusion, I got small waft of fresh air and knew it was my only chance, I charged through the fires towards what I hoped would be safety, I ran and collapsed into friendly arms who beat out the flames.

Out of thirty men in my platoon, eight of us survived, all of us in a mess.

The affects of those few moments will last forever.

Physically I'm as good as I'll ever be. Mentally, I'll leave that for you to decide.

75+ major operations and surgical procedures.

I am the new reconstructed Simon Weston.

I had gone as low as anyone could go and came through the other end with renewed purpose, life had a slightly different meaning and I value those around me more than you could imagine.

Anyway, my life has turned around and I now have a renewed vigour, I enjoy life, I love my wife and my children.

But, my experiences have helped me understand how difficult life can be. You can create a new life, you can create a niche where you do fit and you can enjoy life again.

My new found life has created an unexpected opportunity, my courage (well everyone calls it that) has enabled me to help others.

It has also empowered me with respect and dare I say it some semblance of influence.

I am using this influence to support all my friends in the military, to help them get through tough times, and to try to ensure they are provided with the best technology available.

In the modern battlefield our troops are subjected to a myriad of dastardly and despicable devices that cause death and physical harm.

These devices are designed to deter, cause maximum inconvenience and to slow down large scale enemy advancement.

They target people and vehicles.

Many remain dangerous long after the conflict has ceased for which they were deployed, killing and injuring civilians, and rendering land impassable and unusable for decades.

Anti-personnel landmines or APL's are widely considered to be unethical weapons because their victims are commonly civilians.

Explosive landmines were being used as far back as 1277 AD by the Song Dynasty Chinese against an assault of the Mongols, who were besieging a city in southern China.

The estimated number of new landmine casualties each year: 15,000 to 20,000

Some statistics:

There are in excess of 110 million landmines in the ground on every continent.

It will cost in excess of £20 Billion to remove only these mines (if no others are planted), which, under present de-mining rates will take 1,100 years to clear?

Despite our civilised world, there are **2.5 million New landmines laid each year!**

An IED is an improvised explosive device. This is a homemade bomb constructed and deployed in ways other than in conventional military action. They can be constructed of conventional military explosives or an array of chemicals, some which can be found in the local supermarket.

IED's are used in terrorist actions or in unconventional warfare by guerrillas or commando forces in a theater of operations.

They have been responsible for over 40% of coalition deaths in Iraq.

They are sometimes also known as **roadside bombs**.

IED's are not new and they are designed to be lethal.

They can be detonated just like landmines, but they can also be set off remotely and electronically, carried aboard vehicles or strapped to the human body to create the suicide bomber.

My experiences have led me to inspire and motivate those who have been affected by or are suffering from life changing events. Not just in the battlefield arena, but in the civilian environment.

Our troops undertake a responsibility on behalf of our country and in defence of our people and understand the threats they encounter.

Many suffer death, and many suffer debilitating injuries which alter their entire lives.

Many people in the civilian environment including policeman, fireman, the security services and many others place their lives and health at risk for our benefit.

I believe it is our duty to ensure that we provide those who are prepared to protect us with all and any technologies at their disposal.

Fewer than one third of military personnel are satisfied with the vehicles and helicopters available to do their job.

Inquests have been told of troops being denied potentially life-saving and battle ready equipment – including night-vision goggles, adequate machine guns, grenade launchers and armoured vehicles.

Landmine clearance has become extremely expensive and whilst some methods are efficient they leave the land barren and contaminated.

(<http://maic.jmu.edu/JOURNAL/11.2/feature/morin/morin.htm>)

Uncontested priority is given to efficient and effective mine clearance, rather than on the environmental contamination it causes.

My life has lead me to encourage businesses and entrepreneur's to develop innovative ideas to support and defend our armed forces and anyone threatened by IED's and ERW and to ensure that the process is environmentally the best option available.

I came across Aiolusion Ltd and their innovative Vorsphere range of blast containment devices which offers a portable bomb containment devices that are utilised for landmine clearance and the safe removal and containment of IED's and ERW.

It is probably not as quick as other forms of landmine clearance, but it ensures that the environment, vegetation and water supplies remain uncontaminated which should be our main priority for us and future generations.

The Vorsphere range is cost effective and requires minimal operational skill and can be used in conjunction with extended manipulators and ROV's (Robotically Operated Vehicles) ensuring it is risk free.

The Vorsphere is also ideal for the security services in the civilian environment to deposit and contain terrorist IED's and suspicious packages and letters.

It is perfect as a blast proof litterbin to provide protection for the public in the high street, open air events, exhibitions and sporting events like the Olympics.

We should all press our politicians to provide equipment such as the Vorsphere to ensure the protection of our troops, those suffering in landmine infected areas and the public in general.

Our safety *must* come first.

Too many people are hurt unnecessarily because finance was not available, priorities where elsewhere, decisions could not be made and there were too many fingers in the pie.

We should have Vorsphere's available for our troops in action, accessible to those threatened by landmines and placed strategically throughout our cities and parks and on hand to protect us at music and sporting events.

We shouldn't have to wait to be protected and we shouldn't be able find out that some new technologies are not being utilised because of cost restraints. Our protection must be paramount.

Simon Weston OBE

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