

MAKING MORE OF OUR BRIGHT IDEAS:

Go-between to develop UK research

Britain does great academic research. The country's security industry is well-regarded worldwide. Why shouldn't the two, academia and industry, help each other? Dr Tristram Riley-Smith is a go-between with the job of making more connections happen. He spoke to Mark Rowe.



Dr Tristram Riley-Smith speaking in October at the Association of Security Consultants' annual conference, Consec

Photo courtesy of the ASC

More details

IMPRINTS for example has published its final report, on research from eight projects about user expectations for new forms of identity management: visit www.imprintsfutures.org. Dr Tristram Riley-Smith is part of the Centre for Science and Policy at the University of Cambridge: visit www.csap.cam.ac.uk. For the umbrella body RISC (Security and Resilience Industry Suppliers Community), visit www.riscuk.org.

Watch this space

As we've reported, the Government is looking into a 'kitemark' for security exporters. Also look out for SIDC, the Security Innovations and Demonstration Centre, launched last month, aiming to help small firms.

organised crime. What can university researchers tell you about organised crime, you might ask? A researcher is inside the National Crime Agency - security-cleared - looking at what police in the NCA need to know, to work more effectively. What's the overlap between cyber, and terrorism, for instance; what intelligence tools might help; even, what cultural differences are there between the Sicilian mafia and the triads, two international crime groups? And what of the victims of crime? He singles out here Prof Monica Whitty, of the University of Leicester. Now she describes herself as a 'cyber-psychologist'. So how can that help private security?! She has researched romance scams. That's a sort of cyber-fraud, whereby western women (and men) have an online conversation with someone overseas, fall in love, and are asked to send money, for an airline ticket, or whatever; and guess what? It's a con. One intriguing finding is that a fair proportion of the victims *fall for the same scam again*. Wouldn't it be useful to know why, to warn others against falling victim?

Academic marketplace

PaCCS has recently launched an 'academic marketplace' with RISC - the umbrella body for security sector bodies, such as the BSIA, the defence trade association ADS, the PSSA for perimeter security manufacturers, and the UK Cyber Security Forum. About 15 universities are involved so far. The aim is to match academic research with commercial promise so industry can develop bright ideas. To use a piece of jargon, 'pull-through'.

Challenge

Tristram says: "What is the challenge? The challenge is this." We're sitting in the cafe of the Royal Society for Arts, in a tasteful building between the Strand and the Thames in central London. The people and conversation around us are learned, international and high-powered. "As a nation we have the most extraordinarily rich and high quality research base. We have this extraordinary intellectual base. To be frank with you, we suffer from market failure when it comes to

taking that research and developing it into products and services. And the reasons for market failure are various." Partly, as he says, it's Britain's culture; partly, the security community is (understandably) reluctant to talk about where it's weak ('capability gaps') and hence investors won't know where there's opportunities. Here Tristram gives the example of Prof Sean Gong of Queen Mary University of London, a professor of visual computation, who works on video content analysis; how to recognise behaviour, and identify and re-identify people on video, whether missing persons or shop thieves. Tristram says: "His system is world-class and unique; no-one else in the world can do it, but as I have gone out and talked to investors, a common response I have is, 'I have seen this in the films, it exists in Spooks and The Bourne Identity'. Day in, day out, security teams are having to waste hours and hours of time trawling through video, picking out victims, or suspects; and so there's a real challenge there." Investors, security practitioners and researchers, then, could all do with understanding each other more. Researchers want to do more research - and get more grants for research - rather than necessarily seeing their research developed commercially. Tristram speaks of 'a very, very risk averse' investment community: "I don't believe our venture capital community even deserves the term venture; they are constantly avoiding taking risks, and as a result it's very difficult for academics to find money to put in." Part of Tristram's task, then, is to find academics who are interested in putting their work in the proverbial shop window, and find an industry partner, investor, or customer. Tristram's job, then, is to be a go-between, meeting government officials, business people, and researchers. It's all with the aim of capitalising on the UK's good reputation for delivering security, and being resilient; and yet the UK has nowhere near the exports market for security products that it has in the related field of defence. Whether making better CCTV, biometrics, or screening at airports, it should aid security on the ground too. □