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New Technology Can Detect Enemy Faces, Explosives

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PITTSBURGH, Pa. -- When we think of the American war effort at home, we might picture "Rosie the Riveter" building military equipment.

It turns out that same spirit is alive and well at a Pittsburgh university, although Rosie has traded in her wrench for a computer and other high tech-gadgets.

The battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan may be a long way from Pittsburgh, but Carnegie Mellon University researcher Mario Savvides says in some ways, both wars are also being fought inside an Oakland facility.

"This is what makes us work until 5 a.m. in the morning with me and my grad students here. We're very proud of what we do," said Savvides.

Cylab is part of CMU, where the world's best minds develop the world's best military equipment. For example the technology that scans your iris and stores the information recently helped coalition troops capture 35 known terrorists.

At Cylab researchers are now using telescopes to scan from long distances to help troops detect an approaching suicide bomber.

CMU researchers tested the equipment on U.S. Rep. John Murtha, who toured the facility with two other house democrats. Murtha said he was a bit too tall for the iris detector.

"It didn't too well there. They've still got some work to do. But the point is, I can see the application security-wise, once they get this thing developed to the point where it's effective," said Murtha.

The researchers are also developing a device with a tiny camera that immediately finds and isolates a human face and scans its features.

Also under development is a robot on tracks, controlled by a remote. The robot is designed to pick up and inspect possible roadside bombs or explosives, equipment now saving lives in Iraq.