GaBiz

The Magazine for Georgia Business

GEORGIA GOES GLOBAL

A business–friendly climate and rich resources make it a prime destination for international expansion

Taking Aim at Better Training

Virtual weapons training at InVeris Training Solutions prepares military, law enforcement, and safety personnel for whatever comes their way

WITH TROUBLING HEADLINES—school shootings, officer-involved fatalities, and active shooter scenarios—demand is up for better ways to train safety personnel, teach de-escalation techniques, and ensure the best outcomes in high-pressure situations. Traditional training programs with classroom lectures and role-playing exercises don't cut it. Fortunately, new virtual reality and augmented reality options provide hands-on, tactile experiences that get as close to a real-life encounter as possible.

Based in Suwanee in Gwinnett County, InVeris Training Solutions hopes to answer the call. The company hosts both live and virtual weapons training demonstrations at its headquarters, as well as at sites across the U.S. and in more than 50 countries worldwide. Several systems allow trainees to practice with simulated weapons that are similar to their own live models, rehearse common stressful scenarios, and even maneuver spaces modeled after the important locations they protect, such as schools and government buildings.

"Our tagline is *Because Seconds Matter*," says InVeris CEO Clyde Tuggle. "Our job is to build systems to make the world a safer place and give military personnel and law enforcement officers the tools to make good decisions.

"Many of the people who work for us and with us are veterans or former law enforcement, which is part of the real magic," Tuggle continues. "They've been in uniform. They've done this training. They know what does and doesn't work and how to adapt the programs to create a better experience."

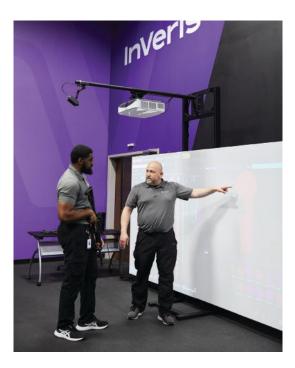InVeris is built on a 95-year history of legacy companies

InVeris staff members demonstrate the augmented reality setup (above, bottom right) and projection-based training system (top right, middle) to improve marksmanship and preparation for real-life scenarios.

based in Georgia. In 1926, Caswell International opened for business and invented the motorized target-retrieval system used in most shooting ranges. In 1977, the company developed the first shoot/no-shoot situational training and friend-or-foe range training for law enforcement.

By the mid-1980s, Firearms Training Systems (FATS) was established in Atlanta; it was the first company to produce interactive firearms training simulations for law enforcement and military personnel. The company also created the world's first stand-alone firearm that interacted with a video scenario. Throughout the 1990s, FATS introduced new technologies, including virtual marksmanship with after-action review and a digital

Training Day

InVeris offers more than a dozen virtual–reality training systems based on common scenarios its military, security, and law enforcement customers face in the line of duty, including the three below. "These scenarios are about communication, de–escalation, and decision–making," says Darren Shavers of InVeris. "It's focused on helping officers communicate in an immersive environment so everyone can go home safely in the real world."

Accuracy Under Stress

≫ Trainees practice drills with pistols, rifles, and other weapons at increasing levels of complexity on a projection–based range. They may be instructed to focus on different colors or targets and emulate distractions in the field. Advanced data analyses show the participant how to adjust grip, sight alignment, trigger control, and recoil management.

De–escalation of Force

≫ Trainees face real–world simulations of traffic stops, domestic violence calls, mental health emergencies, and more, with a headset and tactile feedback vest. Teams can even create their own scenarios. After each training session, participants can watch a replay of themselves in the virtual world, rehashing their movements, words, and lethal weapon use.

Real–World Setup

≫ Trainees use augmented–reality weapons and goggles in a setup modeled after a real location, such as a scan of an actual school, projected onto a physical set. Participants can see, rehearse, and experience a scenario together with a sense of realism, with replay options that can show eye–tracking, bullet paths, and hits.

video system with multiple branches within a scenario.

By 2008, Meggitt PLC acquired FATS and combined the FATS and Caswell brands to create Meggitt Training Systems. The company won contracts with the U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps and launched several major programs with immersive training, including 3D models that highlight marksmanship, decision-making, and de-escalation.

In 2020, Pine Island Capital Partners acquired Meggitt Training Systems and debuted the new company, InVeris Training Solutions. Pine Island, which is a private equity firm based in Washington, D.C., includes former prominent members of Congress, ambassadors, and military and defense leaders with private sector experience, such as former U.S. Senator Saxby Chambliss, who serves as board chair for InVeris. Overall, the group's goal is to improve speed, accuracy, and judgment in the use of force while reducing the time, logistics, and cost of training.

"There's a big cultural shift in focusing the training on specific skills and real-life scenarios," says Darren Shavers, vice president of business development for InVeris. "That way, when a stressful scenario happens in the real world, you know what to do and don't have to think about it."

At Valdosta State University (VSU), the police department combines traditional and virtual training in a dedicated Use of Force Lab, which includes the projection-based range and virtual reality training system by InVeris.

The officers practice responses to emergency scenarios, such as active shooter events and de-escalation situations that involve people with mental illness, as well as everyday scenarios such as traffic stops and vehicle searches.

"We all know that use of force between law enforcement and our citizens is a hot button topic," says VSU Police Chief Alan Rowe. "I have a responsibility as a police chief to make sure I'm putting out the most trained and experienced officers I can. When they encounter use of force incidents, we want to ensure they respond appropriately. The only way to do that is to train."

The VSU police department has also trained officers from law enforcement agencies in the surrounding area with the virtual simulator, with the hope of increasing professional standards across the region.

"Every tool the officer would have on his belt on a normal day, from a taser to a baton to firearms, we can have that in virtual reality," Rowe says. "We can use those to make sure, if a mistake is going to happen, we do it in training. We don't do it in the real world."

"When you turn on the TV today, you see the effects of—quite frankly—poor training and poor judgment," Tuggle says. "This is about taking the tools, solutions, and techniques to the marketplace to help us solve some of those problems and really save lives."

The InVeris team, led by Clyde Tuggle, seated, and Darren Shavers, center