

## GOING ON THE OFFENSE FOR DEFENSE: NC DEFENSE MANUFACTURER TAKES STEPS TO ENSURE PROSPERITY

**ABOUT MSI DEFENSE SOLUTIONS.** MSI Defense Solutions, LLC is a Mooresville, North Carolina, defense equipment manufacturer shifting the organization's contemporary motorsports experience to military vehicles and systems in the form of components, technology and processes. MSI Defense employs over 100 people, 20% of those are engineers ready to engineer and prototype designs for their defense customer's urgent and complex needs.

**THE CHALLENGE.** David Holden, the president of MSI Defense Solutions says the transition to becoming a defense manufacturer wasn't easy. "We went from a motorsports company to a defense manufacturer in 2008. The defense industry is much more regimented than the racing industry", Holden stated. This shift brought the desire for guidance. MSI Defense knew of NC State University Industry Expansion Solutions, part of the MEP National Network™, through the North Carolina Defense Industry Diversification Initiative (NCDIDI). "With IES, we saw an opportunity to elevate our game regarding export control and training, cybersecurity and market growth. We had various ideas but needed someone to come in, 'clean up the clutter' and help us hone in on objectives," Holden remarked.

**MEP CENTER'S ROLE.** When MSI Defense needed assistance innovating how they approach exports, IES referred MSI Defense to industry experts at Strategic International in Cary, North Carolina. Strategic International created an export "playbook" to help with foreign military sales by evaluating the organization's system via export compliance audit and export compliance education proposal. As a result of the solutions, MSI Defense bolstered their export. "In 2022 our foreign military sales business jumped up 25% thanks to the support from IES. For us, that's a big deal."

When MSI Defense aimed to become Cybersecurity Maturity Model Certification (CMMC) compliant, they contacted IES. IES connected MSI Solutions to another client, Reef Systems. Reef Systems is one of two North Carolina organizations with Certified Third-Party Assessor Organization (CP3AO) authorization and one of 21 CP3AO-authorized organizations nationally. Reef Systems conducted a cybersecurity compliance assessment. MSI Defense system administrator Emily Whitaker said, "It was an eye-opening experience. The information we gathered continues to benefit the information technology and the cybersecurity team." Through the assessment, MSI Defense continues to develop a cybersecurity model to achieve its CMMC certification. Holden says MSI Defense continues to choose to work with IES because they understand their organization and collaborates with them to create an individual, customized plan to complement their goals.

"The NCMEP is also always a resource we can turn to even for a quick question to get pointed in the right direction. We have seen growth in new businesses in North Carolina and believe that having such a resource would strengthen North Carolina's competitive stance."

-David Holden, President

## RESULTS



16 created or retained jobs



\$4,000,000 in new or retained sales



\$535,000 in new investment

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