

## NEWS

### **MIT Lincoln Laboratory names Cascodium as its 2014 Small Business Vendor of the Year**

*The engineering firm was also honored by the U.S. Small Business Administration*

At a ceremony held on 25 September at MIT Lincoln Laboratory, C. Scott Anderson, Assistant Director for Operations, presented the Laboratory's Small Business Vendor of the Year award to Cascodium Inc. (formerly Vtech Engineering Corporation) of Andover, Massachusetts. Accepting the award was Cascodium president, Patrick Cobler, a founder of this electrical engineering company that develops advanced electronics products and prototype assemblies.



*C. Scott Anderson, Assistant Director for Operations, MIT Lincoln Laboratory, (far left) congratulates principals from Cascodium on the company's recognition as the Laboratory's 2014 Small Business Vendor of the Year. The Cascodium team includes, left to right, Patrick Cobler, President; Paul Butler, Senior Development Engineer; Michael Dynok, Senior Development Engineer; and Michele Andersen, Business Manager.*

In May, the then Vtech Engineering was named the 2014 National Subcontractor of the Year by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). Lincoln Laboratory had nominated the company for this honor in recognition of the firm's significant technical contributions to the Laboratory's development of prototype systems.

Cascodium has been providing Lincoln Laboratory with services, such as design, integration, and testing of advanced electronics, and supplying electronic components, both off-the-shelf and customized, since 2002. The majority of the company's work with the Laboratory has been for an ongoing program to develop a system to detect

airborne biological agents. Most recently, the company provided three complex printed circuit boards for the Rapid Agent Aerosol Detector (RAAD), which samples particles in the air and provides a warning of biological threats. The firmware and digital signal processing software for the boards, comprising thousands of lines of code, were written by Cascodium technical staff.

At the ceremony, Paula Ward, assistant leader of the Laboratory's Control Systems Engineering Group and the program manager for the latest design iteration of the RAAD sensor, spoke about Cascodium's contributions to the RAAD program: "They were involved in earlier iterations in addition to both the study and the design phases for this iteration. Their recommendations and design for modifying the system's physical decomposition allowed us to meet our goal of reducing RAAD's overall size, and they played a major role in improving the system's functionality. Their suggestions for simplifying the design contributed to a reduced cost of production of the sensor."

"We were pleased and proud to be part of the RAAD team," says Cobler. "Lincoln Laboratory does not work on easy problems, but Cascodium has an experienced and capable staff that thrives on challenging electronics development work."

In its nomination of Cascodium for the SBA recognition, the Small Business Office at Lincoln Laboratory cited the technical excellence of the company's staff, their close working relationship with Lincoln Laboratory project engineers, and judicious project management as characteristics that made the firm an exceptional business partner.

"Because of the technical depth and breadth of the Cascodium team, their solid understanding of the RAAD requirements, and their commitment to the project, working with them is very similar to teaming with another technical group within the Laboratory," says Ward.

Cobler says that this type of collaboration is essential for the work they do: "Since technology development is inherently risky, progress requires continual decision making by all project participants. Baked into our culture is the idea that Cascodium succeeds by helping its clients succeed, and that means that when we make all those decisions, we are framing them primarily with the question, 'What is good for our client's project?' This approach fosters trust which is required among team members in order to overcome challenges. Essentially, we become an extension of the internal team, and that dynamic has worked particularly well for Lincoln Lab."

Cascodium Inc. has been selected to provide similar support for a RAAD-related program. "Teaming with Cascodium has helped Lincoln Laboratory move ideas and concepts out of the laboratory and into fielded prototypes, and ultimately transfer the technology to industry," says Ward. "Their technical and business strengths make them excellent partners."

The [Small Business Office](#) established the Small Business Award in 2011 to recognize the vendors and subcontractors who have a significant impact on the success of Laboratory programs.

"Our Small Business Program allows the Laboratory to work with some of the most innovative vendors in the area of research and development," says Michelle Simoes, Small Business Liaison Officer at Lincoln Laboratory. "Small businesses are wonderful to work with because they are able to provide service on a more personal level."

Annually, the Laboratory does business valuing about \$400 million with companies supplying goods and services, and approximately 53% of that is with small businesses. The Small Business Office's aggressive program to connect with small businesses is helping fuel economic growth, particularly in local communities.

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