

Device detects nanogram-sized explosives

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U.S. researchers have developed a prototype of a tool that can fight terrorism by detecting nanogram-sized samples of explosives.

R. Graham Cooks, who leads a research team at Purdue University, says he thinks a portable tool based on the technology used in the prototype could prove valuable for security in public places worldwide.

"In the amount of time it requires to take a breath, this technology can sniff the surface of a piece of luggage and determine whether a hazardous substance is likely to be inside, based on residual chemicals brushed from the hand of someone loading the suitcase," said Cooks.

"We think it could be useful in screening suspect packages in airports, train stations and other places where there have been problems in the past," he said. "Because the technology works on other surfaces, such as skin and clothing, as well, it also could help determine whether an individual has been involved in the handling of these chemicals."

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