

Defence and Security Industry: Sarah Phillips UK Patent Attorney

A 3 minute conversation with patent attorney Sarah Phillips about the variety and enjoyment of working with innovators in this cutting edge industry.

How did you get involved in this sector?

I have a long-standing interest in the defence industry, dating back to my student days, where I learned to fly a small fixed-wing aircraft as a member of my university air squadron in Cambridge. After graduating in natural sciences, I contemplated various career options, before deciding on mechanical engineering and later, intellectual property (IP) law, as a physics/engineering patents specialist.

My first graduate job was an engineering position with an engineering consultancy in Bristol. My work included aerospace and civil nuclear industry projects, including a secondment to a nuclear power station.



What's your current role?

I'm a patent attorney at Abel & Imray, and a significant proportion of my work is focussed on defence and security technologies covering a wide variety of subject matter including sensors, motor control systems, optics, and ad-hoc network communications. The sector is highly innovative and I feel privileged to work on novel technologies, which not only have important defence-related applications, but also often prompt advances in other related sectors.

One small UK-based enterprise I particularly enjoy working with is Shield Sights Ltd. They are a family business with over 30 years' experience designing and manufacturing red-dot sights for military, law enforcement and civilian use. Led by Director, James White, the team is passionate about innovating to produce the highest quality products, for an improved shooting experience. Shield Sights actively seek to protect their IP in their new product lines, and have a growing patent portfolio.

"Following the success of our earlier product lines Shield Sights has grown considerably over the past 5 years. In the interest of protecting our latest designs for upcoming products and the future of our family business, we decided to focus more attention on our IP protection. We have had a long relationship with Abel & Imray and value their expertise in guiding us through the process of product protection and have been extremely lucky to work with some of their best patent attorneys. Sarah has always been part of this team and shows an exceptional understanding for our products with a professional approach to helping us move our patent portfolio forward."

James White, Director, Shield Sights Ltd



Another, much larger, UK company I have been delighted to work with is BAE Systems Plc. I have regularly visited BAE Systems on-site over the course of two years, to provide support to their in-house IP team. Working closely with the team has given me a valuable insight into how IP is managed within a large defence organisation. I have become familiar with BAE Systems' internal IP processes, from invention capture and education to patent strategy, filings and overseas liaison. Of course, working with BAE Systems has also enabled me to work on a wide range of interesting technologies.

"We have a long standing relationship with Abel & Imray, as one of our trusted firms. In the last few years Sarah has been supporting me directly with the prosecution of one part of our patent portfolio. Sarah drove the initiative to further support us by working in-house as part of our team for a couple of days a month. We've benefited from the closer working relationship, the most significant impact has been the increased interaction with the inventors, at a much earlier stage, leading to improved outcomes for the patent families."

Richard Duncombe, Patent Attorney, BAE Systems Plc

I look forward to seeing how the sector develops and changes in the next phase of my career, and supporting businesses to respond strategically as new important technologies emerge.

How can we help you?

At Abel & Imray, we use our specialist patent and trademark experience to support businesses in the defence and security sector. We assist both multinational and small businesses to understand and use IP, and to protect their own IP and to assess the risks posed by others' IP.

To contact Sarah, please email sarah.phillips@abelimray.com or call 01225 469914.

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