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Singapore factory making 'anti-mine' combat boot

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SINGAPORE, AP

A Singapore factory has begun producing a locally invented combat boot designed to protect against foot injuries from anti-personnel land mines.

Samples of the boot have been sold for "evaluations and trials" to defense agencies in about a dozen countries including the United States, Spain, Turkey, Sri Lanka and Saudi Arabia, said Ashley Vaz, business development manager for manufacturer BFR Singapore.

The "blast and fragment resistant" or BFR boot, unlike other anti-mine boots, is light enough for combat, Vaz said.

Other boots, used mainly for de-mining work, "are like a boot plus an overboot," Vaz said. "They're huge and heavy. You can't run in them."

The Singapore boots weigh about 900 grams (32 ounces) each and are light enough for running, he said.

The boots are reinforced with woven synthetic material similar to that used in bulletproof vests, Vaz said. The soles have a "sandwich" of corrugated stainless steel and alloy plates which "collapse on impact," partially absorbing the force of the explosion and protecting the foot, he said.

"What the boot will do is mitigate, not eliminate, damage," said F.K. Lee, chairman and chief executive officer of the manufacturer's Hong Kong-based parent company, BFR Holdings Ltd.

Lee said he hoped the boot would make land mine injuries "reparable as opposed to irreparable. If the sole of the boot is completely smashed, chances are your foot is going to be smashed as well."

Current events in Afghanistan "heighten people's awareness" of the land mine problem, Lee said. There are an estimated 10 million land mines in that country.

The Singapore boots will initially be priced at about US\$168 per pair, Vaz said.

BFR Singapore expects to manufacture about 15,000 pairs of boots by the end of this year, and is capable of putting out about 120,000 pairs a year, Vaz added.





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