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Atomnia, the Belgian startup that wants to win over the Defense

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"We have proven the effectiveness of this technology commercially. We now hope to demonstrate its effectiveness in the military," said Anthony Senter, CEO and founder of Atomnia. ©Antonin Weber / Hans Lucas

Atomnia is one of two startups awarded by the Belgian Defence's START2DEF program. Created by an Irish entrepreneur who moved to Belgium, it has developed an "all-in-one" cybersecurity platform.

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The summary

- Atomnia, a start-up based in Waterloo, is a winner of START2DEF, the Belgian Defence incubator.
- Its Omnia platform offers "all-in-one" cybersecurity, including in internet-isolated mode.
- Atomnia illustrates the paradigm shift that has taken place in Belgium, where tech startups are no longer shunning the defense sector.

While Belgium has some historical flagships in the military industry, it lacks young startups that could both respond flexibly to the needs of its army and take advantage of the European rearmament effort **to develop in new promising niches, such as drones, artificial intelligence or cybersecurity**.

"The army showed interest in what we could do with it, or for it."

ANTHONY SENTER
CEO AND FOUNDER OF ATOMNIA

Several tools have since been put in place to support startups and SMEs working on promising defense technologies. **Belgium actively participates in Diana, a NATO program that accelerates young companies developing dual-use technologies**—that is, technologies for both civilian and military applications.

The Ministry of Defence, which has unprecedented financial resources to support this innovation effort, has itself launched its own incubation program, called START2DEF, designed to directly address

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own incubation program, called **START2DEF**, designed to directly address the needs of the Belgian armed forces. [↗](#)

At the recent arms fair in Brussels (Bedex), the names of the first two winners of this initiative were published: **they are Atomnia, in the field of cybersecurity, and Max Prototypes, active in the drone sector .**

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An ultra-secure connection

"With START2DEF, we were able to raise our profile with the military," explains Anthony Senter, CEO and founder of the small company based in Waterloo. "The army showed interest in what we could do with them, or for them, in very specific use cases. We were very happy to be selected as finalists, **but even more so to win, because it proves that we have complete mastery of what we build.** We have proven the effectiveness of this technology commercially. We now hope to demonstrate its effectiveness in the military," continues the young Irish entrepreneur.



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Originally founded in the UK to develop SD-WAN (software-driven wide area network) solutions, **Atomnia relocated and relaunched in Belgium after Brexit, developing an all-in-one cybersecurity platform called Omnia.** Omnia provides ultra-secure and ultra-fast connectivity, protects against cyberattacks, and automatically detects threats using artificial intelligence. The solution also operates completely offline for the most sensitive applications.

This tool offers businesses modular, military-grade security solutions and next-generation connectivity technologies on a single smart device—a small, easy-to-install hardware unit. "Wherever a person is located, whether they're working in an office, in the field connected to Starlink, or working abroad via a local internet connection, **we can secure them and protect their data,**" Anthony Senter further explains.



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Anthony Senter and Theo Francken. ©Atomnia

Atomnia already connects and protects around 250 sites across the UK, Europe, South Africa and the Philippines. It believes it can guarantee the continuity of **critical infrastructure networks, particularly in the energy and transport sectors**.

"What start-ups need to understand is that very few of them will sign directly with the Ministry of Defence."

A contract with a bonus

"The big challenge for them was to have contact with an end user – a prime – to better understand the needs of the Belgian Defence. For its part, the latter offered them the capacity **to test their technology in a real**



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DAVID DALLA VECCHIA
CEO OF IGNITY

environment," emphasizes David Dalla Vecchia, the general manager of Ignity, the Walloon incubator for technology start-ups, which supported Atomnia and the

other applicants.

"Now, we need to see if the Ministry of Defence sees an interest in going further with them, through a bonus that will integrate the technological block that has been developed. Because what the start-ups need to understand is that very few of them will sign directly with the Ministry of Defence. The military tells us that it is not the sub-blocks of technology that interest them. **The contractual path with the Ministry of Defence goes through main contractors,**" observes David Dalla Vecchia.

The success story of Atomnia illustrates the paradigm shift that has taken place in Belgium, a country now seen as a land of opportunity for startups eager to develop in dual-use or military technologies 100%.

Ignity is thus increasingly involved in defence-related support programmes: START2DEF with the Belgian Defence, Woodi, which brings together FN Herstal, Thales Belgium, John Cockerill and Ignity, **NATO's Diana programme and two other initiatives funded by the European Union.**