

# Catching up with Talus Ridge

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Winner of xTechSearch 7 for a ballistic carrier system that fits comfortably underneath body armor, increasing Soldier protection and lethality across operational environments.





Talus Ridge received \$45,000 in cash prizes, plus an Army SBIR Phase I contract award of \$250,000 for their xTechSearch 7 win in July 2023.

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*The Phase I Army SBIR award from xTech provided Talus Ridge with much-needed funding to cover one of the hardest periods of any startup. We've also gained some incredible relationships from that award that have continued to help us on our journey that we would otherwise not have.*

**Sara Ford**

Talus Ridge founder and CEO

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Not only did Talus Ridge reap the financial benefits from xTechSearch, but the company made new leads within the Army ecosystem that are putting the small business on the road to transition via an Army experimentation event — a major opportunity that enables companies such as Talus Ridge to conduct technology demonstrations with real-life users.

David Rolen, technical point of contact for Talus Ridge and chief of innovation of the U.S. Army 1st Special Forces Command (Airborne), recommended the company to attend the International Special Operations Forces Range 2024 in April 2024.





At the event, Talus Ridge offered displays of the result of their Ballistic Carrier System Platform, showcasing the increased lethality and effectiveness of the body armor while highlighting its unique design — one that is comfortable, sweat-wicking and odor-preventative for both men and women. The company's participation enabled it to gain exposure to key end-users and vendors, while obtaining real-time feedback as the company moves through the Phase I contract — and vies for a follow-on Phase II.





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*We wouldn't have had this opportunity if we hadn't both participated and won xTechSearch 7. It has been the single largest catalyst that has launched our company forward.*

**Sara Ford**

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Army leaders such as Rolen advocate for small businesses, especially those working on Army SBIR contract awards, to attend experimentation events.



*Oftentimes, the Army limits a Phase I SBIR contract to a feasibility study. Having additional information gained from the feedback of actual operators and engineers can be beneficial to scoping and potentially earning the opportunity to submit for a Phase II.*

## David Rolen

Chief of Innovation of the U.S. Army 1st Special Forces Command (Airborne)





As xTech continues to evolve and expand, the benefits of experimentation events are being woven into the structure of a new competition, xTechSpecial Forces.

In coordination with the U.S. Army 1st Special Forces Command (Airborne), the competition provides a forum for innovators to share their world-class solutions with the Department of Defense. Most notably, businesses that receive a Direct to Phase II contract in this year's xTechSpecial Forces competition will have the unique opportunity to participate in experimentation events that will occur during or after their contract award.





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*We designed the xTechSpecial Forces competition with user involvement and experimentation from the start. We have actual users serving as initial judges, and those same operators will support final selections and serve as the TPOC.*

**David Rolen**

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According to Rolen, TPOCs may choose from several experimentation opportunities, from local training and experimentation, Special Operations Command Technical experimentation events, or from invitations to larger training exercises. These events allow access to far more stakeholders than just the user and are amazing networking opportunities for small businesses who may be unfamiliar with acquisition stakeholders.

The submission window for xTechSpecial Forces is open until **June 12, 2024**.





Visit the xTech and Army SBIR  
websites for more information on  
how these programs transform  
technology concepts into equipment  
in the hands of Soldiers.

**[www.xtech.army.mil](http://www.xtech.army.mil)**  
**[www.armysbir.army.mil](http://www.armysbir.army.mil)**

