

[Advanced Searches](#) [Articles](#) [World Aerospace Database](#) [Fleet](#)

Article Display

[Print This Article](#) [Add to MyAWIN](#)

Related Content

Programs

AeroVironment Pairs With Aerovel For FTUAS Bid

Aerospace Daily & Defense Report Oct 10, 2018 , p. 2

Steve Trimble, Graham Warwick



Flexrotor: Aerovel

[AeroVironment](#) has teamed up with Washington-based Aerovel to enter the small tactical unmanned aircraft systems market to compete for a U.S. Army contract for a new fleet of Group 2-class UAS.

The agreement unites the Army's biggest supplier of Group 1-sized UAS with Tad McGeer, the founder of Aerovel and original designer of the [Textron Systems Aerosonde](#) and [Boeing Insitu ScanEagle](#).

McGeer departed Insitu more than a decade ago to concentrate on pursuing the commercial market for small UAS, so the new partnership with AeroVironment marks a reluctant return to the defense market.

"Aerovel must manage military demand for the aircraft, which is pressing, with our ambition to make a success in the civil market," McGeer told Aerospace DAILY. "A necessary but not sufficient condition is to avoid becoming a defense contractor and so being stuck with the associated inefficiencies. We therefore supply the military through intermediaries."

The AeroVironment/Aerovel team will offer the roughly 50-lb. Flexrotor UAS to the U.S. Army for the first aircraft acquired under the Family of Tactical UAS (FTUAS) program.

The Army released a request for proposals on Sept. 28 for a Group 2 or Group 3 UAS, seeking multiple suppliers to supply three complete systems that can perform a 96-hr. continuous surveillance orbit. After bids are submitted by Oct. 29, the Army plans to select multiple aircraft to perform a two-year series of demonstrations. The data collected during that phase will inform requirements for a fleet acquisition program.

The FTUAS is expected to be divided into two separate fleets. The first UAS acquired by the Army will be smaller and support the Brigade Combat Teams, says Dave Sharpin, vice president of AeroVironment's Tactical UAS business. A second program is expected to emerge for a larger, Group III-sized aircraft to support the Army's armored cavalry units, Sharpin says. Requirements for the larger aircraft, also known as the Advanced UAS, remain largely unknown by industry, he adds.

Unlike the often violent launch and recovery methods used for current Group 2 UAS, the Army's FTUAS seeks a new aircraft of more than 50 lb. that can take off and land vertically, yet possess the range for long-endurance surveillance

missions, Sharpin says.

Aerovel's Flexrotor achieves that performance as a tailsitter that rises vertically on takeoff, rotates forward for cruise flight, then slows to a hover and returns to land vertically. Aerovel has demonstrated a 32-hr. flight with the Flexrotor.

A crowded field of competitors will compete for the demonstration phase. Boeing Insitu and Textron Systems have not revealed the details of their proposals, although the latter is experimenting with vertical takeoff and landing quadrotors, such as the X5-55. Other companies, including Arcturus and PAE ISR, have added quad-rotor lift systems to their existing fixed-wing designs. L3 Technologies, meanwhile, has developed the 117-lb HVR90 to offer for the FTUAS demonstration bid.

Copyright © 2018. All rights reserved. Informa Exhibitions.
[Terms of Service](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Cookie Policy](#) | [Contact Us](#)

