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## Cedar Rapids recruits manufacturer of drone aircraft

No comments [George Ford](#)

CEDAR RAPIDS — A California developer and manufacturer of unmanned surveillance drone aircraft will be launching a final assembly, testing and sales operation early next year near downtown Cedar Rapids.



An unmanned surveillance drone developed and manufactured by AirCover Integrated Solutions of El Dorado Hills, Calif., is shown during a demonstration flight at the Oroville, Calif., Municipal Auditorium on Aug. 26. The company is planning a final assembly, testing and sales operation in Cedar Rapids. Mary Weston/Oroville Mercury-Register

AirCover Integrated Solutions of El Dorado Hills, Calif., plans to lease space in the Cherry Building at 329 10th Ave. SE to assemble, test and sell its QuadRotor unmanned surveillance systems to non-military commercial users, such as police, firefighters, farmers, forest rangers and railroads.

The project, which is contingent on approval of state and local incentives, represents \$5 million in capital investment and will create 15 to 25 jobs over the next three years. State approval could come as early as next week.

James Hill, president of AirCover Integrated Solutions, said the miniature vertical takeoff and landing aircraft, which weigh less than 5 pounds, are equipped with cameras and heat sensors to produce real-time streaming video. Hill said there's about a \$15 billion market for the unmanned aerial vehicle market, particularly in the military and public safety sectors.

"Our systems are designed for first responders to deploy rapidly and get feedback so we are addressing what we call 'dirty, dull and dangerous missions,'" Hill said. "We are not displacing aviation, but augmenting it. We believe we are a compliment in an extended way of what the next generation of aviation will be as we go forward."



An unmanned surveillance drone developed and manufactured by AirCover Integrated Solutions is shown in flight. AirCover Integrated Solutions photo

the conventional systems used by the military, making them attractive for purchase by first responders, police, firefighters and hazardous material crews. He said first responders can be trained fairly quickly to operate the aircraft, which would provide valuable information on potential hazards and "hot spots" not available at ground level.

Hill said the QuadRotor unmanned surveillance systems, developed by military veterans and design engineers who formerly worked for Hewlett-Packard, Caterpillar, Deere and other Fortune 500 firms, are designed to fly at "billboard level" or about 100 feet above the ground. They can operate as high as 8,000 feet above the terrain, but are more effective at the much lower altitude.

Hill said the QuadRotor unmanned surveillance systems are more affordable than

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### Local Life



### NewBoCo



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The unConference took place on Sept. 2, 2011 at CSPS in Cedar Rapids.

#### Contact the Business Editorial Staff

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### Eastern Iowa Stocks

Quote	Web	LAST TRF
COL - NYQ	Rockwell Collins, Inc. Common S	\$52.7
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AGCO - NYQ	AGCO Corporation Common Stock	\$34.5
ADM - NYQ	Archer-Daniels-Midland Company	\$24.5
LNT - NYQ	Alliant Energy Corporation Comm	\$38.5
GIS - NYQ	General Mills, Inc. Common Stoc	\$38.7
HNZ - NYQ	H.J. Heinz Company Common Stock	\$50.4
PENX - NGM	Penford Corporation	\$5.1
PEP - NYQ	Pepsico, Inc. Common Stock	\$61.5
PG - NYQ	Procter & Gamble Company (The)	\$63.7

Priority One, in partnership with the Entrepreneurial Development Center, worked to recruit AirCover Integrated Solutions and assist the company with the application process for tax credits and indirect financing.

Hill, who expects to begin local hiring in January, said a number of factors influenced the company to select Cedar Rapids.

"Cedar Rapids has a family-oriented environment and it also has a dynamic young tech sector," Hill said. "The amount of engineering talent to draw from is tremendous. I don't know that I've ever seen one that is that concentrated."

"Cedar Rapids also is close in proximity to the University of Iowa, where we already have a relationship with the UI Operator Performance Laboratory and Tom Schnell's organization. It's tremendously important to our road ahead and we're already working on some things collaboratively."

Schnell, associate professor and director of the Operator Performance Laboratory, said he is looking forward to continued collaboration with AirCover Integrated Solutions.

"Air-launching unmanned aerial vehicles is a capability that is in high demand in the first responder and military user communities," Schnell said. "Infrastructure at the Operator Performance Laboratory will be made available for joint projects, including the development of a fully integrated pilot-to-ground interoperability system for public safety and commercial applications."

Hill said his company also is exploring potential partnerships with several existing businesses and local law enforcement and first responder agencies, including the Cedar Rapids Fire Department.

Dee Baird, president of Priority One, said in a statement that recruiting AirCover Integrated Solutions is an example of economic development collaboration.

"The Entrepreneurial Development Center used its expertise to manage the financial assistance process, while Priority One was able to focus on site selection," Baird said. "Our organizations worked hand-in-hand to bring a cutting-edge firm to downtown Cedar Rapids. We look forward to working with EDC on additional projects in the future."

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- [Shores Event Center Grand Opening](#)  
Sat Oct 1, 2011 10:00am Cedar Rapids, IA
- [Mall Walking For Peace](#)  
Sun Oct 2, 2011 4:00pm Cedar Rapids, IA
- [Passion Driven Professionals Business Retreat](#)  
Sun Oct 2, 2011 4:00pm Ely, IA
- [Women's Power Networking Group](#)  
Mon Oct 3, 2011 10:30am Hiawatha, IA
- [River City Toastmasters](#)  
Mon Oct 3, 2011 5:30pm Coralville, IA
- [Women's Power Networking Group](#)  
Tue Oct 4, 2011 5:30pm IA
- [IowaFathers.com Meeting](#)  
Tue Oct 4, 2011 6:00pm Coralville, IA
- [Knitting Club](#)  
Wed Oct 5, 2011 2:00pm Marion, IA
- [ABWA CR Chapter October Meeting](#)  
Wed Oct 5, 2011 5:45pm Cedar Rapids, IA

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