

Iowa Guard set to fly drones this year

William Petroski, The Des Moines Register 11:04 p.m. CST February 7, 2015



Military pilots are scheduled to begin conducting remotely piloted aircraft missions later this year from new facilities at the Des Moines Air National Guard Base, a top general told The Des Moines Register last week.

Brig. Gen. Drew DeHaes, deputy adjutant general of the Iowa Air National Guard, said the Iowa pilots will be operating MQ-9 Reaper aircraft via satellite links. The combat planes, commonly known as drones, will be flown on missions outside of Iowa, typically overseas. None of the drone aircraft will be based in Des Moines.

DeHaes talked about plans by the Department of Defense to realign the role of the Guard's 132nd Fighter Wing following an annual Condition of the Guard address to the Iowa Legislature by Maj. Gen. Tim Orr, the Guard's adjutant general. Orr told lawmakers that about \$15 million to \$20 million will be spent to upgrade facilities at the Des Moines Guard Base, which is at the north side of the Des Moines airport.

DeHaes said a new intelligence surveillance reconnaissance group will also have initial operating capability later this year. But a planned cyber-security squadron in Des Moines likely won't be operational for several years, probably around 2018, he said.

The 132nd Fighter Wing has a long history in Des Moines, and its pilots most recently flew F-16 combat aircraft.

— William Petroski

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