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U.S. Department of the Interior Awards Contract for Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems

Drones will allow Department missions previously deemed impossible

Boise, ID – The U.S. Department of the Interior has awarded a contract to 3D Robotics of Berkley, California for up to 40 small, unmanned aircraft systems (UAS). The award follows a lengthy process to develop performance requirements and select the most useful type of aircraft.

“The contract is extremely important to the Department, as it will allow us to conduct many missions that were previously impossible due to limited resources and costs associated with using manned aircraft,” said Deputy Assistant Secretary for Public Safety, Resource Protection, and Emergency Services Harry Humbert.

The aircraft weigh 3.3 pounds, are capable of carrying a variety of sensors, and are easily customized for the types of fieldwork and emergency response operations performed by the Department. The size and weight of these small UAS provide operators a simple, efficient and inexpensive tool to collect aerial data. Their design allows for rapid deployment of new payload options, as new sensors become available.

“The Department expects to use these aircraft for a diverse set of missions including, wildlife and vegetation surveys, fire management, search and rescue, hydrologic study, cultural resource inventory, and surface mining monitoring, just to name a few,” said the Department’s Office of Aviation Service Director Mark Bathrick. “These UAS will not only provide us with better science and reduce the risk to our employees, but they will result in cost savings and better service for the Department and the American people.”

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