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PICTURE: Urban Aeronautics reveals Panda unmanned air vehicle

By Arie Egozi

Urban Aeronautics expects to start flight testing of a tactical variant of its Mule vertical take-off and landing unmanned air vehicle in October.

The new model, designated Panda, is significantly smaller than the Mule, but replicates its twin embedded ducted fan configuration. Urban rolled out an electrically powered prototype earlier in August.

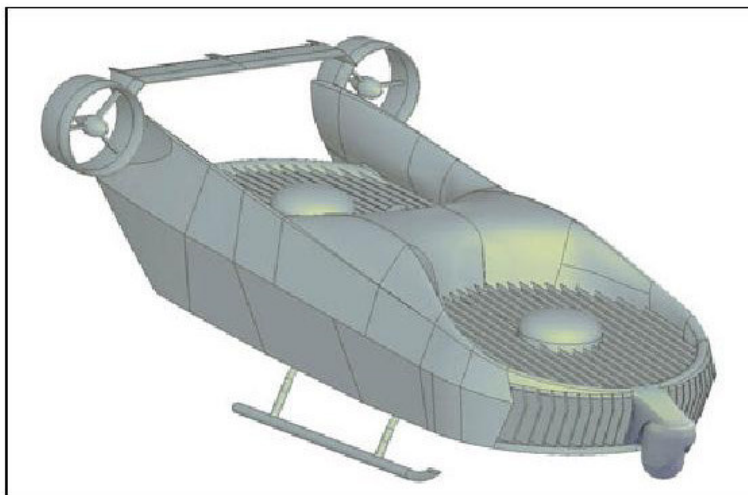
Panda is 1.5m (4.9ft) long and 0.8m wide. It has a maximum take-off weight of 22kg (48.5lb), with a useful payload capacity of 1.5kg.

The two rotors have a diameter of 0.5m, with each having its own electric engine. The UAV is intended to be carried and deployed from a Humvee-class vehicle.

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Urban chief executive Dr Rafi Yoeli says the Panda is intended for use in urban intelligence missions. "The steady hovering and the ducted fan system's capability to compensate for platform drift are assets that are appreciated by anyone who has to keep operational status in an urban area," he says.

Yoeli adds that the ducted fan configuration also enables the installation of sensors at various points on the Panda's airframe without the risk of causing rotor downwash interference.

Urban's larger Mule system is being designed for front line forces resupply and medical evacuation duties.

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