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Fancraft could fly through urban canyons

Will ducted fans bring flying cars closer to reality?

Urban Aeronautics Ltd., an Israeli company, hopes the answer is yes. Its X-Hawk, which uses a pair of directed fans, could carry up to a dozen people, take off vertically, and fly up to 155 mph for about 2 hr.



The Israeli-designed X-Hawk would use directed fans to take off vertically and fly up to 155 mph.

Bell Helicopter, Fort Worth, hopes to develop the technology for military use. The company built a mock-up of the aircraft for the Farnborough Air Show last summer. The so-called fancraft, with its shrouded motors, could rescue people from skyscrapers or carry troops into combat zones. The first flight is set for 2009.

The X-Hawk will have fly-by-wire controls, with upper and lower vanes on the rotor ducts providing lateral control with no roll. Control vanes will let the craft hover while in contact with a wall, its manufacturer claims. The company is also studying an unmanned version called the Mule for combat-zone supply and medical-evacuation missions. The Mule would be 25% smaller than the X-Hawk, with a maximum takeoff weight of 2,400 lb and a payload of 1,000 lb.

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