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Bell, partner look into future

They hope to lure contract to develop flying personnel carrier

12:00 AM CDT on Tuesday, July 18, 2006

By **RICHARD WHITTLE** / **The Dallas Morning News**

FARNBOROUGH, England – Batman might be jealous if he saw a futuristic concept for a flying armored personnel carrier that Bell Helicopter Textron Inc. and an Israeli partner unveiled Monday.

Bell and Israel's Urban Aerospace are seeking a \$500,000 contract from the Office of Naval Research to develop the X-Hawk, a scale model of which was displayed at the Farnborough International Airshow.

The X-Hawk can take off and land vertically like a helicopter, but without the exposed rotors that can make it difficult or impossible for a traditional chopper to operate around buildings or power lines.

Bell and its partner envision selling it for Special Weapons and Tactics teams, special operations troops and rescue squads, who could use it to get to problems fast and enter high-rise buildings from windows high above ground.

It's sort of a flying Humvee, but more

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Aerospace engineer Rafi Yoeli, president and chief executive of Urban Aeronautics, admitted that the X-Hawk's gee-whiz exterior has been a hindrance during the five years he's been working on it.

"People were thinking, 'Oh, come on, the Jetsons again,' " Mr. Yoeli said.

But Bell, the initial developer of the innovative tilt-rotor technology used in the V-22 Osprey, is all for it.

"We'll spend just over \$1 million this year" on it, said Mark Gibson, vice president of advanced concept development for Bell.

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