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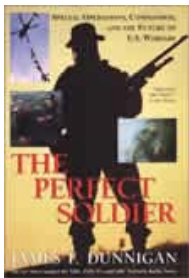
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UAVs Over New Orleans by Doug Mohney September 10, 2005

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Military UAVs are the latest assets that have been drafted into service for Hurricane Katrina relief efforts. The reserve units sent to New Orleans don't have UAVs, so the navy has come forward with UAV support.

Ten Evolution class UAVs are flying out of the New Orleans Naval Air Station to relay photos of the devastation to the Air Force. These "backpack"-size UAVs are being used to assess damage to the region's infrastructure, including damage to oil and gas facilities, dikes, and berms. This is the largest civilian mission for UAVs to date.

The Evolution weighs 6.5 pounds, is powered by lithium batteries, and can stay aloft for an hour or two, depending on the mission type. It has a range of at least 10 kilometers and can carry a color TV camera, low-light TV camera, or an infrared (heat sensing camera). The Evolution typically operates at an altitude of 300 feet. The UAV is designed to be simply snapped together and flown within 15 minutes of taking it out of its package and put together. "Flown" through an off-the-shelf laptop computer, it has a hands-off GPS autopilot, so an operator can just set up the flight path and let it go.

In addition, five Silver Fox UAVs equipped with thermal camera were to be shipped into the New Orleans region to search for survivors. The Silver Fox was originally developed by the Navy's Office of Navy Research as a quick fix to give the Navy's a bird's eye view during exercises, and to avoid migrating whales. It was later drafted into service to provide convoy reconnaissance for the Marine Corps during Operation Iraqi Freedom. The Vice Chairman of the House Armed Services committee has pushed to get the Silver Fox and other UAVs sent to New Orleans to assist in relief efforts.



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The Silver Fox also uses off-the-shelf avionics and a hands-off GPS autopilot. The Fox weighs 22 pounds, has a wingspan of 6.5 feet, fuselage length of 4.7 feet, and can be launched by hand or catapult. It carries an infra-red and high-resolution color zoom camera and breaks down to fit into a "super-sized golf bag." Powered by a small gasoline engine, the Fox typically operates at an altitude of around 300 meters with a range of up to 240 kilometers and a max speed of 105 kilometers per hour. It has a flight endurance of 10 hours, but this is expected to increase to 20 or more hours with the JP-8 engine upgrade.

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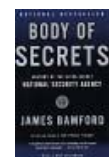
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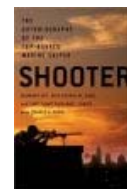


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