PICTURES: UNMANNED AIRMULE MAKES FREE-FLIGHT DEBUT

News / Manufacturer

On 30 December 2015, Urban Aeronautics' AirMule completed its first autonomous, untethered flight at Megiddo airfield in northern Israel.

Asset Image

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UrbanAero

Rafi Yoeli – chief executive of UrbanAero, the parent company of Tactical Robotics, which developed the vertical take-off and landing aircraft – says the test schedule in Megiddo includes plans to demonstrate the AirMule's cargo delivery capability. It also intends to make a beyond line-of-sight flight along a path running through an adjacent, forested area.

"All in all, we expect that in 2016 we will finally be able to demonstrate some of AirMule's unique capabilities," Yoeli says.

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UrbanAero

Meanwhile, UrbanAero has achieved so-called “category 2” certification for an export variant of the unmanned aircraft – named Cormorant – under the terms of the international Missile Technology Control Regime (MCTR). “This is an important element in the eventual marketing of the aircraft,” the company says.

The Cormorant variant will be able to carry a useful payload of 440kg (970lb) for 162nm (300km), or an increased load over a shorter distance. The aircraft’s maximum speed will be 100kt (185km/h), and its service ceiling 18,000ft.

Internal lift rotors enable the single-engined AirMule to fly over obstructed terrain, where helicopters cannot operate.

The first untethered flight event was delayed, with UrbanAero revealing that its activities in 2015 were interrupted following “a ground incident that damaged our AirMule demonstrator”. The company adds that it used a subsequent pause in testing to integrate new equipment and additional safety features with the platform.

04 JANUARY 2016

SOURCE: FLIGHTGLOBAL
ARTICLE LINK:
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