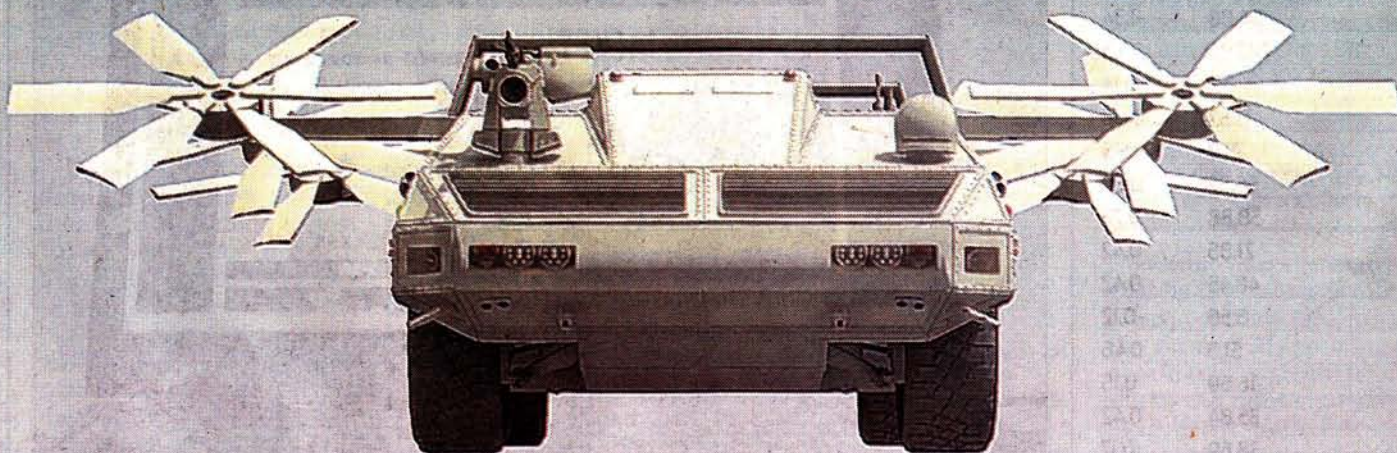


Every Wednesday » Federal/Military/NASA



But will it *Fly?*



MACRO Industries

The Mohawk Strider looks like a military vehicle until it spouts wings to fly, above.

Macro sets its sights on real Transformer

Local company to vie for contract in design competition

By Budd McLaughlin
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"The objective of the Transformer (TX) program is to demonstrate a four (4) person flyable/roadable vehicle that provides the warfighter terrain-independent mobility. This presents unprecedented capability to avoid traditional and asymmetrical threats while

avoiding road obstructions. TX will enable enhanced company operations of future missions with applicable use in strike and raid, intervention, interdiction, insurgency/counterinsurgency, reconnaissance, medical evacuation and logistical supply. The TX vehicle will have Vertical Takeoff and Landing (VTOL) capability with a minimum combat range of 250nm on a single tank of fuel."

With those instructions from the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), Macro Industries

is on a mission to design a flying car for the Army.

But it's not the first time someone from the Huntsville company will have designed a flying car. In fact, Macro is basing its design on a concept company co-owner/president Norris Luce came up with as a 16-year-old - SkyRider.

"Norris always wanted to build a flying car," said company co-owner/vice president Marcia Elkins. "Unfortunately, we never had any money to build one."

Well, if Macro wins the DARPA competition, Luce

will finally get the money to build a flying car. The program will award the eventual winner nearly \$43 million over three phases. Elkins said Macro is incorporating a lot of the civilian SkyRider's elements into its military version - the Mohawk Strider.

"The designer based it on a military vehicle - like a Humvee - and our own flying car," she said. "We have a lot of military vehicle experience."

Here are some of DARPA's

Fly

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design requests: The vehicle can be manually driven like an SUV. It rapidly configures between ground and flight configuration. It has Vertical Takeoff and Landing (VTOL) capability, automated takeoff/landing flight control and has a cruise speed equivalent to a light aircraft.

Elkins said Macro's design meets and/or exceeds those requirements as well as offering a 250 nautical mile range on one tank of fuel; ability to fly at 10,000 feet altitude; speeds of 130 mph on the road, 30 mph in rough terrain and 120 mph in the air; and conversion from road to flight mode in 60 seconds.

And, Elkins said, citing Macro's main business, "ours is armored."

While the company's goal "is to produce civilian transportation systems of the future," Macro's business is selling armor products to the military, everything from helmets and body armor to aircraft armor to impact-resistant structures for vehicles.

"Our customers are helicopters now," Elkins said.

She said the company has grown from seven employees a year ago to 18 today.

With the growth, comes the need for more room. So Macro is moving from its longtime home on Putman Drive to Cummings Research Park.

"We're continuing to grow," she said. "We recently purchased the former National Scale Technology and Measurement Specialists buildings.

"We've have two fantastic years."

And, for Macro Industries, the sky's a great limit.