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AUVSI: Frontline V-STAR has 1min maiden flight

By Rob Coppinger

Denver based-Frontline Aerospace flew its prototype unmanned air vehicle for the first time in Colorado on 9 August for 1min, with its next test planned for early 2010 when a lift fan will be incorporated.

The prototype uses an electric motor ducted fan and has a mass of 41lb, including its maximum payload of 12lb, and is to be offered as a product that will compete in the small tactical class, against the likes of the **Boeing**/Insitu ScanEagle. The lift fan to be added is 5.5in in diameter. The prototype is remote controlled and its autonomous systems are under development. Frontline is also looking to use a proton exchange membrane type fuel cell using liquid hydrogen to increase its endurance.

The prototype is a one-quarter scale version of the company's original 2,360lb maximum take-off weight Vertical take-off and landing Swift Tactical Aerial Resource (V-STAR) UAV that has a 400lb payload capacity and 288kt cruise speed. The company will only develop the full-scale V-STAR if it can raise funding. Frontline is also offering a recuperator to improve engine performance. It will test this technology later this month.

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