

Drone big enough to carry people passes another milestone

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Credit: Urban Aeronautics

(Tech Xplore)—Israeli aeronautics firm Urban Aeronautics has announced to the press that its Cormorant drone, named after the aquatic bird, has successfully passed another milestone—flying itself over uneven terrain. The company reports that the 1,500-kg drone is able to carry a 500kg load a distance of 30 miles while traveling at speeds up to 185 km/h and at altitudes up to 18,000 feet.

The drone, which is approximately the size of a car and formerly called the Air Mule, has been in development for about 15 years and is meant to be used for search and [rescue missions](#) in the aftermath of a disaster or on the battlefield, shuttling cargo or troops in and out of places where planes and helicopters cannot fly. Unlike other aircraft, it is neither a plane nor a helicopter; instead, it has internal rotors and duct fans housed in shields to prevent damage, which allows the craft to take off and land vertically and to dart around in various directions once airborne—reps for the company claim that its unique abilities will soon allow the drone to fly between buildings or under power lines, for example, and into areas that have been contaminated with chemicals or radiation.

The drone can be flown manually via remote control or can fly autonomously, which company reps say allows for making split-second decisions regarding the successful completion of a mission. They believe their drone will eventually become a workhorse of sorts, regularly delivering supplies to places that are difficult to reach by other means, including those at sea. First, though, they must iron out some technical issues revealed during testing involving navigational sensors, and make some modifications to the craft to meet government aviation certification standards.

The company has also been rumored to be developing a smaller version of the [drone](#) that could be used by private citizens as a flying car—but that will not happen until the company begins selling and delivering Cormorants to customers, which the company expects to start doing sometime in 2020—for \$14 million apiece.

More information: www.urbanaero.com/

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