

Spain develops first hybrid airplane-helicopter

Spain's National Institute of Aerospace Technology has developed the first airplane-helicopter hybrid, an unmanned aerial vehicle that will be operational in 2010 and is designed to monitor borders and coastlines.

The HADA, as it is known, will be the first aircraft to take off and land vertically like a helicopter but then deploy its wings and fly horizontally like an airplane, project leader Manuel Mulero told the Spanish news agency EFE Wednesday.

He said at a later date, the HADA could be used for manned flights.

The HADA project will remain in the design phase until the middle of next year when an operational prototype is expected to be available.

Mulero said that the aircraft, which will carry instruments to transmit images, position and trajectory of targets in real time, will allow 'high efficiency' flights in less time and on one-third of fuel normally consumed.

The HADA, the first prototype of which will carry a cargo of up to 150 kg and will be able to remain airborne for 3-6 hours, could be used on missions to monitor coasts and borders, to prevent smuggling or infiltration by terrorists.

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