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Marathon Robotics is Awarded a US$50 Million Contract for the First-Ever Smart Targets in the U.S. Military

USMC contract allows other U.S. agencies to purchase targets on IDIQ basis

SYDNEY, Australia, July 26, 2010 – Marathon Robotics (www.marathon-robotics.com), the global leader in smart targets for live-fire training, has been awarded a US$50 Million contract by the United States Marine Corps.

Marathon will provide the U.S. military's first-ever smart targets – armoured autonomous robots that look, move, and behave like real persons. Their paths are unpredictable, and their human-like motion makes them realistic and challenging targets.

The project selection was made by the Comparative Testing Office of the U.S. Department of Defense, Office of the Secretary of Defense. The contract was awarded by U.S. Marine Corps Systems Command, Program Manager for Training Systems (PM TRASYS) in Orlando, Florida as a Foreign Comparative Test project.

"We've heard from customers around the world about the urgent need to improve moving marksmanship" said Alex Brooks, CEO of Marathon Robotics. "Finally, shooters will be able to practice on smart mobile targets that mimic human motion and behaviour."

A team of robotic smart targets can execute complex pre-planned scenarios, moving in and out of sight of training instructors – behaving much as people do. For example, the system reacts to live fire: when one robot is hit, it falls, and the others immediately scatter and run for cover. To view targets in motion please visit http://marathon-robotics/videos

The smart targets can be used in a variety of different scenarios including sniper training, escalation-of-force decision-making, hostage rescue, and executive protection.

Mobile smart targets – armour-plated robots based on Segway® platforms –are able to work as a team, moving freely across the training range. The targets operate in an autonomous mode with a single operator capable of monitoring dozens of robots. Targets are networked for real-time update of the command & control station, and for exchanging tactical information between targets.

“It is universally acknowledged that there is no substitute for live-fire training” said Marathon CTO Alex Makarenko. “And our customers always stress that shooting a moving target is orders of magnitude more difficult than shooting a stationary or predictable target. We fully expect that training with live ammunition on smart targets will substantially improve moving marksmanship.”

The five-year contract includes delivery of a smart target system for test and evaluation by the USMC, and options for the acquisition of additional systems on an Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) basis. The total contract value comes to US$50 million if all options are exercised. The USMC and other U.S. agencies will be able to purchase smart targets under the IDIQ portion of the contract.

“It’s gratifying to be one of the few projects selected from hundreds of FCT proposals from around the world,” said Brooks. “Over 90% of the Marines’ FCT projects go to production, so we are confident that agencies who want smart targets will be able to get them.”

Marathon Robotics was founded by three PhDs from the Australian Centre for Field Robotics at the University of Sydney. For the past 8 years, they have collaborated closely with the Australian Defence Force to meet their rigorous requirements for improving marksmanship. The first smart target system was deployed on a range in Western Australia in 2008.

“This is a milestone for us and for robotics — to the best of our knowledge, this will be the first autonomous ground robots ever fielded by the U.S. military,” said Makarenko. “It took a phenomenal amount of engineering to bring this technology from the research lab to the field.”

Marathon Robotics has been actively supported by the Australian federal and New South Wales governments. “This is a textbook example of a successful collaboration between governments, universities, the military, and a university technology spin-off,” said Tobias Kaupp, the third co-founder of Marathon Robotics. “Without their extensive support, we would not be where we are today.”

Marathon Robotics has offices in Sydney, Australia, Huntsville, Alabama, and a European office in Toulouse, France.

About Marathon Robotics

Marathon Robotics makes the world's first smart targets for live-fire training. The company's target robots enable armed forces to train with an unprecedented level of realism. Autonomous operation is enabled by cutting-edge robotic technology and a scalable system architecture. For more information about Marathon Robotics, and a brief video of the robots on a live-fire range, please visit www.marathon-robotics.com.