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Pelatron to add as many as 60 workers

Defense contractor also will need more space to fulfill NOTM contract

Premium content from Pacific Business News by Mark Abramson, Reporter

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Pelatron is hiring as many as 60 people and adding manufacturing and warehouse space to help it fulfill a \$32 million contract that is being finalized with the U.S. Marine Corps.

The contract calls for Pelatron to provide equipment that will be mounted in vehicles and used to monitor battlefields and operations as part of a project called Network On The Move, or NOTM.

“There could be a market for tens of thousands of these if it is the premiere system in its class,” said [Dan Goure](#), vice president of the **Lexington Institute**, a military think tank in Arlington, Va.

He said there is a “massive market” for this kind of technology, which is also known as mobile command and control.

Pelatron, the Honolulu-based defense contractor that was named the fastest-growing privately held company in Hawaii last year by Pacific Business News, will be hiring for assembly workers and engineers, among other positions. It also will need an as-yet undetermined amount of space because the size of the contract is expected to grow, Pelatron officials said.

The company already has tripled the size of its facilities to 25,000 square feet in the past month, and plans on adding another 5,000 square feet of space by June in the same building at 3375

Koapaka St., said [Harvey Kim](#), president and chief operating officer of Pelatron. Kim owns the Native Hawaiian business along with [Thomas Aimoku McClellan](#), whose title is chairman and CEO.

The positions Pelatron plans to hire for the contract range from manufacturing personnel making \$15 an hour to engineers who could earn more than \$80,000 a year. Of those, the company plans to hire 30 people in the near future, and already has added some key staff.

"We have hired a production manager, floor supervisor and we have hired the key people who will do all of the training," Kim said. "We had about five of them at a General Dynamics plant in Scottsdale, Ariz., who returned recently. They were learning production standards and quality control. Quality is everything, so we had to really learn how to step it up."

Pelatron also hired three vice presidents a little more than a year ago because of this project. Production likely will start this summer.

Although the Marines have ordered only 16 of the units so far, Pelatron officials said they expect that number to grow. One reason they believe that will happen is because the Office of Naval Research and the Marine Corps Systems Command spent \$15 million on research and development on the system.

"This is the contract leading most of our growth at present," said [Janice Kato](#), Pelatron's director of corporate communications.

Last year the company had \$17 million in revenues, and it currently has 110 employees.

Marine Corps officials who will have a say in how many NOTM units are purchased were in Hawaii this week to look at the technology, but they could not be reached for comment.

Pelatron officials believe there could be other buyers, including the Army and Air Force, which would boost their business significantly. The Navy Seabees, who specialize in construction and engineering work, also have expressed an interest, Kim said.

There also could be a market from U.S. allies purchasing it, Goure said.

Typically, the services monitor what each other is doing and sometimes end up purchasing some of the same equipment or partnering to develop it.

The Marines, for example, developed an assault breacher vehicle that entered service in 2009. It was based on a tank chassis and was modified for clearing roadside bombs. The Marines came up with the idea, but the Army jumped on board with its development and ended up buying more than three times the number of vehicles that the Marines purchased.

"It's something the military has been chasing for a decade," Goure said about the technology Pelatron is developing.

Mobile command and control basically means that military vehicles no longer would have to stop or set up antennas or other systems to send and receive information electronically, such as maps,

video from unmanned aerial vehicles, intelligence and information about friendly and enemy forces, Goure said. It also enables the military to transmit and get orders for units while they are on the move.

More than likely this type of technology wouldn't be put in every vehicle. It would go in commanders' vehicles — whether those are tanks or some other type of military vehicle, he added.

"The fact that [Pelatron] is going this far means they are already way down the path to success," Goure said.

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