

Personal drones launch in your skies

January 8 2014, by Rob Lever



A DJI Innovations DJI Phantom 2 Vision aerial system drone is shown during "CES: Unveiled," the media preview for International CES, at the Mandalay Bay Convention Center on January 5, 2014 in Las Vegas, Nevada

It's not a bird, not a plane. But it could be someone's personal drone coming to the skies near you.

Some of the flying objects being shown at this week's Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas include items that are for play, personal photography and other uses which could lead to a market for the

products.

The notion of personal [drones](#) follows widespread use by the US military and growing reliance by law enforcement on such aerial technology.

Retail giant Amazon meanwhile, has hatched a plan to create delivery drones, and French-based technology firm Parrot unveiled its "mini drone" toy which can be controlled from a smartphone.

"We have civilian drones and now we have toy drones," Parrot's Nicolas Haftermeyer told AFP, describing the Parrot drone as a device designed for teenagers who enjoy a challenge of using a tablet to direct the device.

While one division of the French firm makes fixed-wing drones for mapping and other purposes, this devices, which can be held in one's hand, is purely for play, says Haftermeyer.

"It has plastic propellers, they are not dangerous. With four propellers, it can balance itself automatically."

For more serious uses, Chinese-based maker DJI unveiled its line of flying devices which look a lot like drones.

"We prefer the term aerial systems," DJI's Gabriel Chan told AFP.

Designed for aerial photography, the self-balancing flying devices can access hard-to-reach areas and produce "beautiful cinematography," Chan said.

DJI's Michael Perry said the groups has established "a platform for any user to create amazing videos from the skies."

While most of the usage so far has been for personal photography and

professional cinematographers, Perry said DJI devices were also used for search-and-rescue operations in the Philippines after Typhoon Haiyan.

Perry said that in the United States, people can use the devices to fly at altitudes up to 400 feet (120 meters) but that the Federal Aviation Administration is examining rules governing drones at higher altitudes.

The company offered a test flight of its Phantom 2 Vision which it calls "the world's first consumer quadcopter with a built-in high-performance camera."

The device can fly 25 minutes and send images and location back to a smartphone which directs navigation. It also is programmed to return home if the user loses the location.

DJI says the device can revolutionize photography by getting to places normally inaccessible, like the middle of the Grand Canyon, or close to sporting events. But there could be other uses, such as for disaster relief.

DJI has three other flying devices including one designed for professional cinematography and photography.

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Citation: Personal drones launch in your skies (2014, January 8) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-01-personal-drones.html>

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