

Jersey law enforcement buys into Amherst-bred robotics

BY DAVID BERTOLA

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Allen Mann recently sold \$367,000 worth of products to the state of New Jersey. And if all goes well, none of it will ever be used.

His Amherst-based company, Lithos Robotics Corp., sells digital-controlled radio units that are mounted to robots used by bomb squads. Its latest product, sold to the Garden State, is the Sentinel, a remote surveillance device that works in parallel with its radio unit.

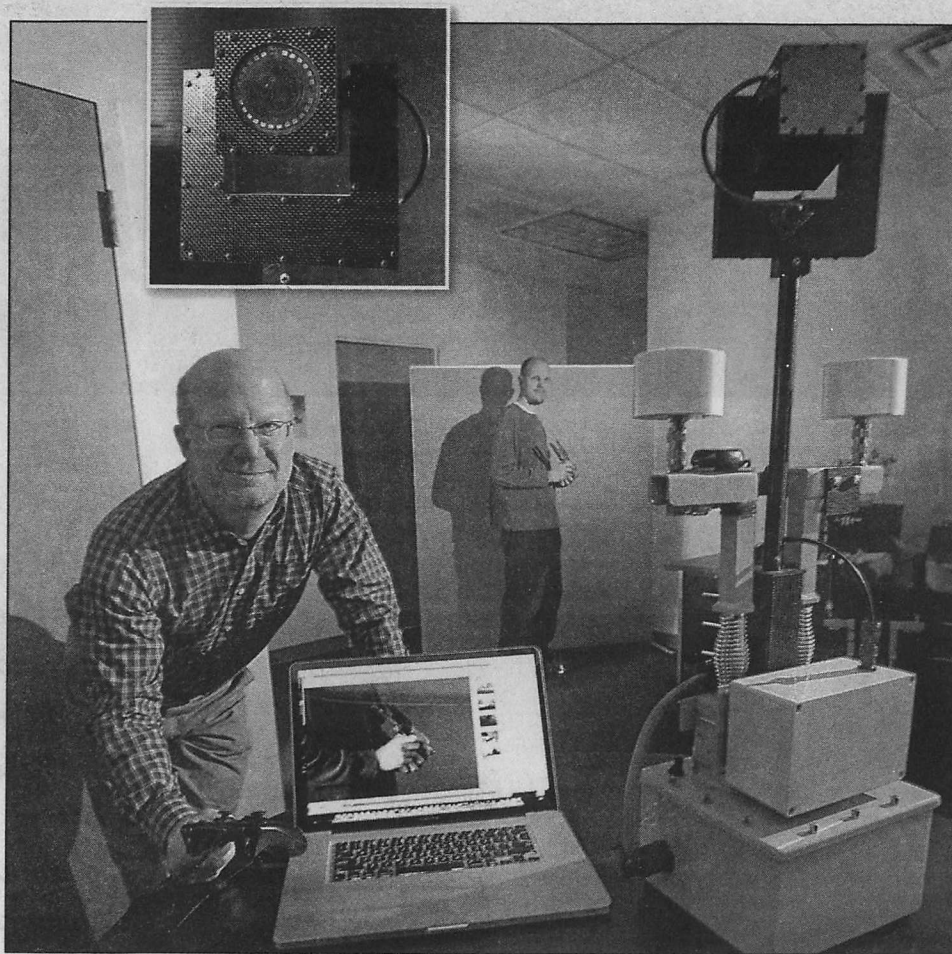
As Mann explains, the Sentinel is placed on the ground and used to see around corners of buildings.

"You position it so that the officer is out of harm's way," said Mann, president.

Outfitted with a camera with a powerful zoom lens, the Sentinel is carried to a space far from a suspicious package or hostile situation. Then a SWAT, hazmat team or bomb squad can monitor the situation from a safe distance.

"From a tactical standpoint, an officer on the scene can use an iPhone to see instantly what's going on as they watch video coming off any piece of equipment," Mann said. "Usually they'd need to wait for a relay signal from a command center – a big truck operated by a SWAT commander. With our products, they don't have to depend on a relay."

The Lithos Megalith Digital Radio consists of a base unit and a digital control module and is capable of a mile line-of-sight range. The Sentinel is a camera system with a digital repeater, a device that effectively doubles the distance over which the control system works or boosts the radio signal, which cuts through radio interfer-



Allen Mann, left, and Joe Pulver of Lithos Robotics demonstrate their remote surveillance device with zoom lens. At top is detail of the camera head. At right, Mann sets up the unit behind a tree to demonstrate the benefit of its Wi-Fi capability.

ence in places such as large buildings.

According to Mann, the Sentinel also provides better depth perception for operators,

who can use it to see reverse angles. This new feature was a major selling point to New Jersey, said marketing director Richard William-



Jones of the New Jersey State Police. "It's another set of eyes and makes you more efficient."

Last year, Lithos launched its first line of reconnaissance, SWAT, hazmat and Explosive Ordinance Disposal robots.

All feature the Megalith digital-control system, which allows multiple robots to be run from the same controller set, or multiple robots from different controllers in the same vicinity.

Mann said New Jersey bought nine megaliths and nine sentinels, which totaled about \$367,000.

The Megalith/Sentinel combination is priced at approximately \$40,000. Alone, the Sentinel costs \$15,000 and the Megalith, \$28,000.

son. The state took two years to test Lithos products against others, he said.

"They bought our system for all 10 of their bomb squads that comprise the Detection and Render Safe Task Force," Williamson said. "Everybombrobot and truck has our system on it."

"You get depth perception. You can change the view to give you the best angle," said Lt. Dwayne

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