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Lifting tomorrow's Army

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For The Times

Retired general to lead Huntsville company in pursuit of cargo solution

The recently retired deputy commander of the U.S. Army Special Operations Command at Fort Bragg is general manager of a new company in Huntsville.

Howard W. Yellen, who retired from the Army this month as a brigadier general, is the new head of Global Military Aircraft Systems. GMAS is a joint venture of Integrated Systems, a subsidiary of L-3 Communications, and aircraft manufacturer Alenia Aeronautica, a division of Alenia North America Inc.

The company's new office at 1526 Perimeter Parkway, Suite 150, was established as the program office for the C-27J Spartan aircraft, which GMAS plans to submit as a solution for the Army's Future Cargo Aircraft program.

Gary Upshaw, director of business development, said GMAS also will pursue other Pentagon opportunities.

Upshaw said L-3 and Alenia formed a partnership to create a "total systems solution," including training, logistics and modification capabilities.

The two companies have long been crossing paths, said Upshaw, who lives in Greenville, Texas, home of L-3's Integrated Systems division. "As an integrator, we have worked with many of the original equipment manufacturers for many, many years," he said.

When the Future Cargo Aircraft program was announced, Alenia approached L-3 about joining forces. "We realized that our capabilities meshed well together. We were familiar with one another," he said.

Yellen will be the "direct point of contact for any issue that may arise on the Army side," Upshaw said.

A graduate of Temple University with two master's degrees from the U.S. Naval War College and more than 24 years of military service, Yellen was scheduled to begin his new job in Huntsville on Monday.

The Army proposes to replace its C-23 Sherpa, a small cargo aircraft, with the Future Cargo Aircraft, which will have a bigger cargo capacity and will be used to transport soldiers and provide medevac services, among other duties.

Bob Hunt, a public affairs specialist at Redstone Arsenal, said bids for the contract to build the new fleet are expected to be issued by year's end. The number of competitors seeking the business is unknown.

L-3 is a provider of Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance systems, secure communication systems, aircraft modernization, training and government services. The company is based in New York.

Alenia North America is part of the Finmeccanica Group, which designs and produces commercial and military aircraft. The company is affiliated with many of the world's largest aerospace corporations and groups.

GMAS initially will employ 15 to 20 people in Huntsville. "As the program progresses, we will expand, based on the needs and the capabilities on the Army program office side," Upshaw said.

The joint venture represented "a long-term commitment on the part of both companies with the objective of setting up an industrialized entity within GMAS, a new company that will lead all pursuits," he said.