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Gadgets impress at police chiefs trade show

By JEFF CUMMINGS, EDMONTON SUN

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Sterling Cripps, with the Canadian Centre for Unmanned Vehicle Systems, shows off a flying surveillance robot. (JEFF CUMMINGS/EDMONTON SUN)

Looking for a small robot helicopter to chase down crooks, or a gigantic tank to get you to the nearest tactical operation, or a brand new gun that's light as a feather?

Welcome to the police chiefs trade show where you'll find the latest in crime-fighting technology — everything from body armour, guns and weapons to computers, and vehicles.

All that's missing is Robocop.

"This is a way for us to showcase new technologies and new equipment at the show," said Edmonton city police Sgt. Alex Hasham, a volunteer at the trade show.

"Many things have changed over the years, and this is one way for us to bring everybody together, including all of the police chiefs, to take a look at what's available."

The trade show is part of the annual Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police Conference, which brings police chiefs from across Canada to meet behind closed doors to plan decisions on how to handle issues like terrorism, riots, and other crises.

Police officers, including the chiefs, take some of their spare time during the busy conference to see what's the latest and greatest in policing.

New this year is an Aeryon Scout — a small, helicopter-like robot that can be used to take aerial pictures at a crime scene or collision. Or it could be used in search and rescue and covert reconnaissance operations.

"If a police officer is responding to a burglary, they can use it to find people on a roof, for example," said Sterling Cripps, vice-president for the Canadian Centre for Unmanned Vehicle Systems, a Medicine Hat-based company.

The gadget, which is equipped with an infrared and night-vision camera, is small enough to fit in a police cruiser and an officer could control it using a tablet-like device, like an iPad, as a remote.

A number of police services in Ontario are already taking advantage of the \$100,000 Scout, and Cripps says he's already getting some interest in Alberta after doing a number of demonstrations this summer.

Police will also have an easier time identifying suspects with a new device called a Secure Electronic Enrollment Kit (SEEK).

An officer could fingerprint or scan a suspect's eyes on the device that's resembles a child's lunch kit.

Once the \$15,000-device makes its scans, information from a database will instantly appear on the monitor, telling the officer if the suspect has any warrants.

"The information is instant," says Martin Ouellet, a director with Crossmatch Technologies, the maker of the SEEK device.

Ouellet says the device is still being tested with police forces across North America.