

Think-A-Move receives Army contract

By **SCOTT SUTTELL**

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Think-A-Move Ltd., a Beachwood company that develops device control and communications systems, said it has received a \$340,000 contract from the U.S. Army to develop a field-deployable prototype of its hands-free system for controlling a military robot.

Under the contract, issued by the Army's Tank-Automotive Research, Development and Engineering Center, Think-A-Move will develop what's known as an iRobot PackBot with speech commands.

The Army uses military robots for Improvised Explosive Device (IED) detection and surveillance in Iraq and Afghanistan. Think-A-Move says more than 1,000 robots have been deployed, mainly in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"Currently, no systems use speech commands to control military robots because of their inability to work well in noisy environments," according to a statement from the company. "Think-A-Move addresses this problem through its algorithms for ambient noise cancellation, enabling a soldier to effectively use speech commands for robot control."

Soldiers at present control military robots by using joysticks connected to personal computers or through video game controllers. These methods "have several drawbacks, including limiting the soldier's situational awareness of his environment," according to Think-A-Move. "In addition, a soldier does not have his hands free to hold a weapon, if necessary, and also requires a security detail to guard him."

Think-A-Move's technology would help overcome these limitations on using military robots and increase the effectiveness of the soldiers operating them, the company said.

Think-A-Move previously was awarded Army contracts totaling more than \$800,000 to demonstrate the feasibility of the technology.

Jim Harris, president of Think-A-Move, said the new Army contract "demonstrates the value the Army places on developing a hands-free and heads-up control system for military robots. Think-A-Move's system provides the robot operator with increased situational awareness and potentially decreases the size of the security detail required to guard the operator."

Mr. Harris said Think-A-Move anticipates work under the new contract will be completed by September 2008.