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ATA Wins \$6M Contract to Develop New "Northfinder" Technology

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ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — The U.S. Army has awarded Applied Technology Associates (ATA) a \$6 million, three-year contract to design and build a new technology to find north.

The Earth-Referenced Attitude Detector Technology Demonstrators (ERAD-TD) addresses the Army's need to provide fast and highly accurate attitude and vertical angle information for improving Far Target Location (FTL). ERAD-TD uses the Earth's rotation and gravity vectors as the reference rather than the Earth's magnetic field. This approach is not degraded by local magnetic field interference, battlefield environments, GPS denial or weather. Other inertial based approaches have similar advantages but are limited by size, weight, cost and power consumption of high performance gyroscopes. ATA's novel mechanism offers an azimuth determination solution insensitive to many errors that plague current field operations and offers a path to game-changing capability: sub-milliradian accuracy with acquisition times in the tens of seconds.

The precision of current weapon delivery systems exceed that of the target designation system. This disparity requires the use of larger weapons to assure target destruction. In close ground combat situations, larger weapons may lead to undesired collateral damage or fratricide.

"ATA's new technology is crucial to reducing collateral damage and friendly fire casualties while enabling weapon capabilities. With this technology commanders can make battlefield decisions more quickly while knowing we can attack the enemy without fear of hurting innocents," said US Senator Jeff Bingaman.

Army, Navy, Marine, and DARPA organizations have emphasized the urgent need for new technology like ATA's ERAD-TD. ATA's new technology may benefit many other applications such as aircraft, nautical ships, unmanned vehicles, astronomers, mining operations and more.

Anthony R. Tenorio, the president and CEO of ATA, said, "Winning this ERAD-TD program has been a top priority for ATA because it provides a major step forward for ATA's 'north-finding' technology."

ATA has performed proof-of-concept demonstrations in the laboratory, and basic development of the rotational assembly is in progress under separate Army funding. The ERAD-TD effort benefits from these related technology development efforts.

A-Tech Corporation, d.b.a. Applied Technology Associates (ATA), is a privately held small business located in the Sandia Science and Technology Park in Albuquerque, N.M.

ATA is a precision measurement, sensing and controls company providing services and products to government and commercial customers. ATA has demonstrated a remarkable ability to transition technology to operational use and commercial products by building off government funded research and development.

ATA manufactures angular rate sensors, actuators, and subsystems used in crash testing, aerospace controls, platform stabilization, vibration and motion measurement, inertial navigation, and line-of-sight imaging systems. ATA services and products span ground, air, and space applications. Small, light-weight, fast beam steering mirrors are ATA's latest product line using ATA sensors to achieve sub-micro radian pointing stability.

Currently, 11 patents have been granted to ATA with two patents pending. The company was founded in 1975 and in 2008 employed 170.