

## Netra off the radar after induction

The drone developed by IIT-Bombay alumni was inducted in defence forces last month but names of agencies using it have been kept secret

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It took off from Pune about three years ago and took a new turn in New Delhi last month. Netra, the drone which featured in the Bollywood blockbuster Three Idiots was officially inducted in the defence forces and it will be used in counterinsurgency operations. However, the drone's location and by whom it is being used has been kept secret.

Soon after the induction there have been speculations that the drone is being used by paramilitary forces. However, its developers have decided not to disclose the location where the drone is being used as it is a matter of national security.

The quadrator, developed by four alumni of IIT-Bombay, was first introduced in Pune at an exhibition organised by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) in 2008.

Speaking to Mirror about speculations on the location of Netra, founder director of IdeaForge Ankit Mehta said, "People are speculating that Border Security Force or Central Reserve Police Force are using it. But it is not true. It has been officially inducted in the defence services but these two agencies are not using it."

"As per our agreement with the defence, we are not allowed to reveal where it is being used," said Mehta.

When asked why it took three years for the induction after being unveiled, Mehta said, "In fact, we are ahead of time. Since all the technologies were developed indigenously and several modifications had to be made, it is a feat that we completed in three years. We have supplied 10 units to the defence forces."

After the robotic invention had impressed one and all at the DRDO's golden jubilee celebrations, Mehta with his friends-cum-partners Amardeep Singh, Rahul Singh and Ashish Bhat were in talks with the DRDO for selling their product. Pune Mirror had reported the quartet's invention on November 8, 2008.

The company is now working on the next version of Netra in order to increase the flight time from the present 30 minute per battery charge.

The device weighs about 1.5 kg and it is made using carbon fibre composites. This allows it to be carried along with the control station. Each unit costs around Rs 15-20 lakh.



**SALIENT FEATURES** Netra flies using four high-speed propellers that allow vertical take-off and landing and provide the power to soar through the skies. It has a wireless video transmitter and high resolution CCD camera with pan/tilt and zoom that sends images back to the operator. The built-in intelligence in the controller allows for fail-safe operations wherein in case of either a communication failure with base station or low battery, the UAV returns to take-off position automatically. Netra can help in capturing the images of the movement of Maoists hiding in difficult terrain. However, it was used during a recent political rally in Chandigarh at the request of police. IANS



**FLASHBACK** We published this story on Nov 8, 2008 on IdeaForge's invention