

Jetpack maker in US tie-up ahead of float

ANTHONY KLAN
DEALS

THE company hoping to become the world's first commercial manufacturer of jetpacks has teamed up with an American company hoping to deliver its products to government departments and emergency services in the US, in a boost to the group ahead of its planned Australian Securities Exchange listing before Christmas.

New Zealand-based Martin Aircraft Company yesterday said it had signed a partnership with US company Avwatch, which provides technology advice and "prototyping" services for the US Department of Defence.

"The two companies will work together on improving specific capabilities targeted at assisting the first responded sector, including search and rescue, security, police, ambulance, fire and natural disaster recovery through the ... supply of Martin Jetpacks and relevant products and services," Martin chief executive Peter Coker said.

Mr Coker yesterday told *The Australian* Avwatch was a "small niche company" but one which

had a "lot of influence" in the first-responded sector in the US.

He said Martin had been approached by Avwatch and the two companies had been in negotiations for several weeks before finalising the agreement.

While founded and headquartered in NZ — where the device was invented, developed and refined by Martin executive Glenn Martin over 34 years since 1981 — Martin would become a "global company" and the deal with Avwatch would see some existing Martin employees relocated to the US, with new US appointments expected, Mr Coker said.

Avwatch was founded in 2008 by former US Coast Guard rescue pilot Chris Kluckhuhn to develop improved strategies to "responders and remote command centres".

"It has since grown to include many additional leaders in the first-responded community and is a proven leader in tactical networking and advanced aerial reconnaissance," Mr Kluckhuhn said.

"The Martin Jetpack is a disruptive technology, much like the helicopter when first developed, with substantial capabilities ... we can offer our customers," he said.