

Rivada Mercury unveils key partners of team pursuing FirstNet contract

Urgent Communications By Donny Jackson

June 7, 2016

While others seeking to build a nationwide public-safety broadband network for [FirstNet](#) remain silent, the one publicly confirmed bidder today announced that its legal name will be Rivada Mercury and identified several key partners on its offeror team.

Led by Rivada Networks, Rivada Mercury includes more than two dozen companies that will form a “first-rate” team that will be dedicated to the FirstNet project to build and maintain a nationwide public-safety broadband network in the United States, according to Rivada Networks CEO Declan Ganley. Some of the key Rivada Mercury partners unveiled today were:

- [Harris](#) , which has decades of public-safety and federal-government contracting experience;
- Ericsson and Nokia (which recently completed its purchase of [Alcatel-Lucent](#)), the two leading [LT](#)
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equipment providers that serve the U.S. market;
- Fujitsu Network Communications, a leading [backhaul](#) provider and logistics manager;
- Black & Veatch, one of the largest telecom construction firms in the U.S.; and
- Intel Security, which is tasked with developing and implementing the critical cybersecurity strategy for the proposed first-responder system.

In addition, Rivada Mercury will have carrier partners—one “major carrier partner” and rural carrier partners, Ganley said. Having carrier partners is crucial for any offeror team, because the FirstNet request for proposals (RFP) stipulates that the contractor must provide coverage to 95% of the U.S. population on non-Band 14 spectrum six months after the contract is signed—perhaps by this time next year—that public safety can use until the nationwide public-safety LTE network is built on FirstNet's 700 MHz Band spectrum.

“I cannot disclose who our carrier partner is, but suffice to say the following: We will have the largest non-Band 14 MVNO footprint in America,” Ganley said during an interview with [IWCE](#) 's *Urgent Communications*

. “So, we have a very strong non-Band 14 solution and appropriate partners and teaming

agreements in place to deliver that. It's obviously highly competitively sensitive, so we're not going to be telling our competitors today who that is."

Leading the Rivada Mercury team will be CEO Joe Euteneuer, who recently was announced as co-CEO of Rivada Networks.

"The Rivada Mercury team is comprised of proven technology companies—each leaders in their field with unmatched technology capabilities and experience serving the public safety community with innovative and forward-leaning solutions," Euteneuer said in a prepared statement.

"Our team's approach to FirstNet offers many benefits for America's public-safety community, namely we will provide public safety with a purpose-built Band 14 network and immediate turn-key access to the largest non-Band 14 coverage footprint in the U.S."

Rivada Mercury's CTO is Dennis Martinez, who also will continue his in role as the Harris CTO. Martinez also expressed excitement about the Rivada Mercury team.

"The depth of the team is unprecedented; it is very, very unique," Martinez said during an interview with *IWCE's Urgent Communications*.

"I can't speak on behalf of the other competing teams, but it's hard to imagine that they will have assembled a team with the depth that we have. I am personally very excited about the consortium that we've put together. We feel very good about what we've done. We feel like we've put together a very compelling proposal."

Ganley said that some key components of the Rivada Mercury proposal include "an aggressive rollout schedule for Band 14—we will exceed [FirstNet](#)'s requirements in every county in America" and favorable pricing for the traditional public-safety entities of fire, EMS and law enforcement.

“We will have a highly attractive offer for public-safety first-responder use of the network, which is designed to rapidly drive public-safety adoption of the FirstNet network,” Ganley said.

Rivada Mercury also will have special pricing packages for “extended” public-safety user groups, according to Ganley.

“I would say that the extended user group also gets a highly attractive package, but maybe not quite as highly attractive [as the pricing for the primary public-safety users],” he said. “It will be extremely competitive.”

In addition, Rivada Mercury has outlined plans to build a 700 MHz Band 14 [LTE](#) system with unprecedented coverage, Ganley said.

“This will have—by some degree—the largest geographic coverage and population coverage of any network in America,” Ganley said during an interview with [IWCE](#)’s *Urgent Communications*. “It will cover a higher percentage of population and a much larger geography than any other network in America.”

And that coverage will not be limited to urban markets, Ganley said.

“The rural guys are going to be very happy with what they see,” he said. “The odd polar bear may not be covered without a deployable, but otherwise, I know rural guys are going to be very happy with what they see, if we win.”

To address those situations when coverage is needed outside the proposed fixed LTE network, Rivada Mercury’s deployable partner is Oceus Networks, Ganley said. Oceus Networks has developed deployable solutions for several pilot projects and early-builder projects, including the high-profile JerseyNet system in New Jersey.

Some in the public-safety community criticized Rivada Networks for its discussions with key

state officials about the opt-out alternative, which allows a state or territory to deploy its own radio access network (RAN) instead of letting FirstNet build it. Earlier this year, Rivada Networks was one of five bidders that submitted a response to the RFP issued by the state of New Hampshire.

But Ganley said that Rivada Mercury's nationwide FirstNet bid is so strong that states and territories will not want to pursue the opt-out alternative.

"As I have said, I don't think there is going to be any need for any state to opt out; I don't see it right now," Ganley said. "Knowing what we have submitted in that FirstNet RFP, there's going to be no incentive for states to actually opt out.

"Obviously, I can only speak for what's in our submission. But knowing what's in our submission, if I was a governor of a state, I would not believe that I would have any incentive or reason to want to opt out."

Martinez said that [Harris](#) is the "public-safety face of Rivada Mercury" with primary responsibility in the following areas: customer acquisition, customer care and the development of open ecosystems for devices and applications.

"It is [FirstNet](#)'s intent—and we will implement accordingly—to ensure that these are open markets," Martinez said. "Any and all vendors will be encouraged to bring their devices and applications to the table, as well as their related services."

In addition, Rivada Mercury will leverage the Harris public-safety experience as it seeks to optimize the reliability of the first-responder broadband system, Martinez said.

"There are areas in which Harris is playing an engineering-support role," he said. "We don't have primary responsibility for construction, but we are playing an advisory role as it relates to mission-critical reliability, sustainability and public-safety grade."

Financing the robust nature of Rivada Mercury's proposed system is the Rivada Network business model of leveraging its Dynamic Spectrum Arbitrage (DSA) technology to monetize network capacity that is not used by public safety by selling it to the highest secondary-use bidder in an open marketplace.

"At the end of the day, this business will not be successful, if it isn't financially sustainable," Martinez said. "I think Rivada Networks brings two very important things to the table. One is a technology that allows for dynamic sharing of spectrum between the primary use of public safety and the secondary use on a commercial basis. And, quite frankly, without the revenue that you get from the secondary use of the spectrum, you can't achieve sustainability."

Ganley said that the Rivada Mercury proposal has "very strong backing from multiple household names from Wall Street," although those financial supporters are not being disclosed at this time. In addition, the DSA concept is being supported by "some very large exchange partners, so this is going to be a commodity that's going to be traded on exchanges around the world."

Rivada Networks plans to participate in public-safety [LTE](#) and wholesale-broadband procurements throughout the world, but the Rivada Mercury team is unique to the U.S. initiative to build and maintain a nationwide public-safety broadband network, Ganley said.

"You may see some of the same team members, but it's not exactly a cookie cutter," Ganley said. "What is common and consistent in what you will see anywhere that Rivada Network is involved in taking one of these projects on is that the commoditization of bandwidth in the open-access marketplace is really central to the economics of all of them."

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