

Rivada confident in its pursuit of FirstNet

RCR Wireless News By Dan Meyer

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Recent bolstering of leadership, vendor partnership agreements show Rivada aggressively positioning itself in FirstNet bid

Few companies have been more public in expressing their intent regarding a partnership with the First Responder Network Authority than Rivada Networks, which is looking to garner a significant share of FirstNet's plans to build-out a nationwide public safety broadband network.

Rivada recently formed its [Rivada Mercury division](#) in partnership with a handful of vendors, including Harris Corporation, Ericsson, Nokia, Intel Security, Fujitsu Network Communications and Black & Veatch. The companies plan to pool their resources behind Rivada as it bids in the ongoing FirstNet process that is to culminate with the building of a nationwide public safety network using 20 megahertz of spectrum in the 700 MHz band.

The company last week publicly added satellite communications services provider Hughes Network Systems to its partnership role in a move that should help Rivada Mercury add coverage to rural and remote areas that could be out of the reach of traditional cellular networks.

Declan Ganley, co-CEO of Rivada, noted the company had initially reached a deal with Hughes in January, and that the satellite company was part of its request for proposal submitted to FirstNet.

In terms of bolstering its leadership, Rivada has been busy tapping long-time industry veterans, many of whom were formerly employed by Sprint. Earlier this month, the company [added former Sprint and C Spire CTO Stephen Bye](#) for the same position at Rivada, which followed the hiring of [four former Sprint executives](#) to senior positions at its Rivada Mercury business. The new hires included Pierre Elisseeff, Peter Campbell, Bill Esrey and Todd Rowley.

Those moves followed the [hiring earlier this year](#) of longtime Sprint CFO Joe Euteneuer as

co-CEO and CFO Americas, to run the organization alongside Ganley. Euteneuer left his position as CFO at Sprint last August amidst numerous management changes at the carrier, and was replaced by current CFO Tarek Robiati.

“We are extremely confident that we have an unbeatable wholesale team,” Ganley said. “People who have experience in monetizing through wholesale networks, and also adding further to our engineering and technical team.”

That monetization is expected to be an important component of the business case for whichever firm partners on FirstNet, which has around \$7 billion in funds set aside to assist in the build-out of the public safety network. The more valuable component is the 20 megahertz of spectrum assets, that when not being used by public safety can be used to support commercial wireless services.

While FirstNet is not expected to announce partnerships until Nov. 1, Rivada’s moves show a company very confident in its mission.

“We have spent a decade preparing for this, before there was even talk of FirstNet or what it would look like,” explained Ganley. “We are highly confident that we have put forward the best possible solution for the nationwide public safety broadband network.”

Ganley added the recent moves will allow the company – should it garner a piece of the FirstNet deal – to “hit the ground running,” which he noted was important as recent flooding in Louisiana showed the continued vulnerability of cellular networks.

“We are proceeding in the highest of confidence that we will be selected for the job and it would be a disservice to not be fully prepared to hit the ground running,” Ganley said.

Despite the confidence, Rivada is aware other companies are also likely to be considered for partnership with FirstNet, which Ganley said was of importance as it will result in a better prepared network regardless of the FirstNet decision.

Among larger telecom operators that might be interested in working with FirstNet, [AT&T has said](#) it will pursue the FirstNet opportunity “aggressively,” while Verizon Wireless has kept its cards close to the vest.

In terms of more announcements possibly forthcoming from Rivada leading up to the FirstNet announcement, Ganley said the company has all of its partnerships in place, but “we haven’t announced them all yet.”

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