The Raven small unmanned aerial vehicle (SUAV) is a hand-launched reconnaissance and surveillance tool. The system transmits live airborne video images, compass headings and location information to a ground control unit (GCU) and remote video terminal (RVT). The Raven aircraft is hand launched without the need of special equipment or landing area required. The system employs a self-stabilizing aircraft configuration with stability augmentation avionics and provides ease of control and steady video imagery. The optics package includes an electro-optical (EO) color camera nose payload (side and forward look on the same payload) and two infrared (IR) thermal nose payloads (a side look payload or a forward look payload). The Raven system is typically operated by a two person team consisting of a Pilot and Mission Controller.