

# AEgis celebrates leap to next-level location

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New headquarters will nearly double its existing space

Bill Waite and Steve Hill started their company 20 years ago, working out of the basement of Waite's home with equipment they scraped together, including an \$80 dot-matrix printer they found through a newspaper ad.

On Friday, the co-founders of AEGIS Technologies Group celebrated with employees and community business leaders to break ground for a new 50,000-square-foot headquarters in Cummings Research Park. The Huntsville-based defense contractor specializes in modeling, simulation and microsystems technologies.

"We believe that technology can make a difference in the world," said Waite, the company's president.

"We're looking to take the company to the next level and have fun doing it," said Hill, the CEO.

The company has grown from the two co-founders, who previously worked together before their employer closed its Huntsville office, to 175 employees in locations across nine states. Hill said AEGIS could add up to 125 jobs by 2010.

AEgis has diversified its customer base over the years to include the Department of Defense, Department of Homeland Security, FBI, CIA, NASA and municipal governments, Hill said.



Dave Dieter/Huntsville Times

**Work is progressing on the corporate headquarters for Aegis Technologies off Jan Davis Drive. The work is expected to be completed by late spring or early summer. Aegis is involved in a range of projects, including nanotechnology, directed energy, microphotronics, training simulation development, 3-D imagery terrain geospatial services and systems engineering. The company, now on Discovery Drive, has 175 employees. The contractor is Fite Building in Decatur, and the architect is Chapman Sisson in Huntsville. Its Web site is [www.aegistg.com](http://www.aegistg.com).**

The new building at 410 Jan Davis Drive off Old Madison Pike will feature a laboratory designed for nanoscale research and manufacturing, a conference room that accommodates 100 people, "collaboration" rooms and offices with windows for about half the employees.

Fite Building in Decatur is expected to complete the building, designed by Chapman Sisson in Huntsville, by late spring or early next summer. AEGIS now occupies a 26,500-square-foot building on Discovery Drive.

NBC used snippets of model images during the "Today" show this week, including part of a segment on Tiananmen Square and the Imperial Palace.

It looks you're flying around Beijing and into the Olympic sites, but it's a model.

Under its agreement with NBC, the logos of AEGIS and satellite image provider DigitalGlobe - which supplies Google Earth, among others - will appear each time the 3D images are used.

The Beijing project - which follows the simulation firm's work modeling the Green Zone in Baghdad and the Super Bowl in Arizona - was done on behalf of the U.S. government for Olympic security.

NBC, which faced no-fly zones and other restrictions on where and how it could film, became aware of the technology and wanted its own copy to offer views it couldn't otherwise provide.

"It just blew people away when we gave it to them," said David E. King, vice president of AEGIS simulation development group, crediting his team of five programmers and 15 modelers who worked on the Beijing project for three months. "We put a lot of really neat capabilities in there."

King said his team had gotten so immersed in building Beijing, they dreamed about it at night.

The technology, which uses off-the-shelf software, satellite images from DigitalGlobe and publicly available pictures, has multiple applications, including real-estate sales, architecture, disaster planning and event security. The models provide lines of sight for security and route planning, distances from a rooftop to the road, tools to add obstructions, weather and even Beijing's notorious smog.

Because they use open source images, the technology is not considered classified, said AEGIS CEO Steve Hill. This makes the entire production and delivery process to government customers run much smoother. King said he's not sure how much the security sensitive Chinese government knows about what is actually available about its capital on the Web.

AEGIS has been developing its 3D digital modeling over the past three years, led by King and Scott Allman, director of geospatial programs. The company recently hired four additional computer modelers, the oldest a 20-year-old. The young modelers have been doing it on their own for fun for years, using freely available software from Blender.org.

Hill said the company plans to help pay for their college education while they work at AEGIS.

AEGIS delivered the software package to NBC last week, provided training and even did some last-minute modifications in preparation for the two weeks of coverage, Hill said.

With more than a billion people expected to follow NBC's broadcast around the world, Hill said AEGIS hopes that a tiny segment of that huge audience will get curious about the technology and want to learn more.

"We certainly don't expect a huge boom in sales; it's more of an awareness of the technology and how you can use 3D visualization technology," Hill said. "If all it does is heighten people's awareness, that will be really good for us."