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## High-tech firm moving to Blacksburg

Cobham plc will merge two Roanoke Valley operations into one in the New River Valley.

By [Jeff Sturgeon](#)

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A Roanoke Valley electronics manufacturer with 90 employees is leaving the valley, but not going far.

English aerospace giant Cobham plc will consolidate two valley locations of M/A-Com, which Cobham bought last year, at one Blacksburg address by the end of next year.

"A great opportunity for us, our employees and our customers" is how Ken Conklin described the planned move. He is Cobham's site manager.

The company has been looking for more room in which to manufacture semiconductor devices after an ownership change last year.

Tyco Electronics Ltd. sold M/A-Com, a microwave components provider in Lowell, Mass., to Cobham, which is strong in aerospace and defense.

The Montgomery County Economic Development Authority heard from the company while it was looking for a tenant for its Technology Manufacturing Building in the Blacksburg Industrial Park.

With negotiations done, Cobham is expected to sign an 11-year lease for 50,000 square feet of the building, said Brian Hamilton, Montgomery County's economic development director and secretary treasurer of the Economic Development Authority.

Cobham will vacate a leased building on property in Roanoke County owned by ITT Night Vision, which ITT needed, and an office at the Valley Pointe business park, Conklin said. As the move goes forward, 81 employees and several temporary workers are expected to relocate with the company, Conklin said.

Although no new hiring is expected at the outset, Cobham characterized the move as an expansion. The new address will be 8,000 square feet larger than the two existing locations the company uses in the Roanoke Valley.

"We intend, when we get set up in Montgomery County, to grow that operation," Conklin said.

The move will cost about \$7 million, including the expense of building improvements before Cobham moves in and equipment relocation. Cobham will get help, however, because the Economic Development Authority agreed to borrow \$2 million from First Bank & Trust Co. and put it toward the building upgrade.

As Cobham pays rent, the EDA will pay back the loan, Hamilton said. County supervisors blessed the deal Monday night, pledging to help the development authority if it needs assistance repaying the loan.

Signatures on the lease are expected by the end of the week, Hamilton said.