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Nevada National Security Site Signs Cooperative Research & Development Agreement for Unmanned Aerial Systems

Las Vegas, Nevada – Finding ways to use unmanned aerial vehicles to make communities safer is the goal of a new research and development agreement between National Security Technologies (NSTec) and Praxis Aerospace Concepts International (PACI). NSTec, the Nevada National Security Site (NNSS) management and operating contractor for the Department of Energy, will work with PACI to develop and test advances in unmanned aerial systems (UAS) hardware and software. The systems will be developed to aid with traffic management, command and control during emergency situations, and UAS countermeasures. NSTec and PACI will also work on the development of systems that can travel beyond visual line-of-site, a limitation that exists with many UAS platforms.

This cooperative research and development agreement (CRADA) benefits the NNSS by advancing the research and development of unmanned systems, part of the NNSS' global security mission. The focus will include the development of first responder training using unmanned vehicles to detect chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive agents. The partnership will also allow the companies to study how to integrate unmanned vehicles into the existing manned aviation portfolio used for various missions at the NNSS. NSTec will provide personnel, services, facilities, equipment, intellectual property or other resources; PACI will provide those resources as well as funds towards research and development.

“The CRADA between Praxis Aerospace Concepts International and NSTec is another outstanding collaboration that addresses the significant need for additional research of operations for unmanned systems,” said Jim Holt, NSTec president. “NSTec and PACI will collaborate to establish guidelines and recommendations for safe UAS operations in commercial and government airspace. I am very pleased that PACI and NSTec will work together to solve issues that address elements of safety and structure in such an important national problem.”

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The NNSS launched its UAS program in 2015 with two unmanned aerial vehicles at the NNSS Remote Sensing Laboratory (RSL). Today, the fleet boasts 11 operational vehicles. RSL is the nation's premier response team for detecting and assessing nuclear and radiological threats. RSL staff at Nellis Air Force Base and at Joint Base Andrews in Maryland provide coast-to-coast coverage for mapping radiological and nuclear data. RSL teams are deployed for special events such as the Super Bowl, major political conventions, and other large gatherings to detect radiological and nuclear threats. In 2011, RSL teams responded to the Fukushima Power Plant disaster in Japan to map radioactivity levels following the reactor meltdown in Japan. Many of these missions require the use of manned aircraft. By entering into this CRADA with PACI, NSTec will be exploring ways to incorporate unmanned aerial vehicles into its missions related to detecting and assessing nuclear and radiological threats.

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National Security Technologies LLC (NSTec) is dedicated to devising integrated solutions and forging new partnerships at the NNSS. The NNSS and its related facilities help ensure the security of the United States and its allies by: supporting the stewardship of the nation's nuclear deterrent; providing nuclear and radiological emergency response capabilities and training; contributing to key nonproliferation and arms control initiatives; executing national-level experiments in support of the National Laboratories; working with national security customers and other federal agencies on important national security activities; and providing long-term environmental stewardship of the NNSS's Cold War legacy.

The NNSS falls under the jurisdiction of the National Nuclear Security Administration, a semi-autonomous agency within the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). The Site's operations are government-controlled and contractor-operated. They are overseen by DOE's Nevada Field Office, headquartered in North Las Vegas.

For more information, visit us at www.nnss.gov.

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