FAA REVEALS UAS DETECTION PROGRAM

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The FAA says it's receiving more than 100 reports a month from pilots and others who spot unmanned aircraft flying close to airports or airplanes. The agency has partnered with CACI International to explore how the company's prototype detection technology could help detect UAS in the vicinity of airports.

CACI's proof-of-concept system uses radio frequency sensors at strategic locations around an airport. When the sensors detect frequencies unmanned aircraft typically use, it triangulates the signals and determines the exact locations of both the UAS and the operator. Law enforcement can then swoop in and nab the offending drone flier.

"The explosive growth of the unmanned aircraft industry makes evaluating detection technologies an urgent priority," said Marke "Hoot" Gibson, FAA senior adviser on UAS Integration. "This research is totally aimed at keeping our skies safe, which is our number one mission."

From January 25 to February 2, the CACI system was evaluated at Atlantic City International Airport, the first UAS detection research in a commercial airport environment. A total of 141 operations were executed over five days – 72 with a UAS on the ground and 69 with different

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small UAS in flight. In the coming months, engineers from the FAA, DHS, CACI and the University of Maryland, which also was a partner in the evaluation, will work together to compile the data for a final report due out in August.

Research on UAS detection systems may go beyond addressing the FAA's concerns with the safety of UAS in the nation's airspace. The FAA notes the effort also may contribute to keeping the skies safe from "bad actors" who want to use unmanned aircraft for malicious purposes. To that end, the agency signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with DHS in December to collaborate on the safe integration of UAS into the U.S. aviation system.

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