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## Drone Symposium Leaves Big Impression on Small Town of Pendleton

**PENDLETON, OR** – With a wide variety of speakers and over 18 unmanned vehicles for viewing at the National Guard Armory, the Association for Unmanned Vehicle Systems International (AUVSI) Cascade Chapter’s fall symposium attracted a large, diverse crowd in the small town of Pendleton. Co-hosted by the Pendleton UAS Range, the “Drones and Droids: Unmanned Systems on the Range” symposium explored multiple industries that unmanned systems are influencing right now, and have the potential to change in the future – farming, ranching, search and rescue, first response, disaster relief, forestry, public works, defense and even personal transportation.



Cutting labor, costs, risk – though speakers and panelists spoke to a variety of industries, these three benefits continued to rise to the surface throughout the two-day symposium. For ranchers, one stationary person with a drone could do the job of a two-or-more person team actively herding all day. For farmers, using a UAS to coordinate precision spraying of fields provides significant savings in spraying and water costs. For public safety officials and especially the National Guard, drones are used in riskier situations, such as search and rescue or tracking dangerous suspects in difficult terrain and monitoring firefighting efforts.

Though the common benefits of drones dominated the discussions, it was also clear that the unmanned systems industry is working hard to get all of the systems in place to be ready for prime time commercial uses. Current drone usage laws and technical issues were the most apparent recurring problems. With restrictions on visual-line-of-sight and questions on hardware certification, any industry that requires flying in populated areas (public safety, delivery) can’t use drones in moments when they could be the most beneficial. On the opposite side of the spectrum, there aren’t established quality regulations in the UAS industry, which is why many individuals mentioned technical issues, like battery life, software, maintenance and training hindering them from using drones to their fullest potential.



With the history of unmanned systems beginning in defense, COL Al Gronewold's presentation about unmanned aviation systems in the Oregon Army National Guard made it clear how critical the UAS industry has become to the armed forces and how useful it will be in the future. The US Department of Defense uses UAS extensively in combat operations overseas as well as in domestic emergencies. From conducting reconnaissance, surveillance and target acquisition against an armed enemy to search and rescue operations and incident assessment and awareness in wild land firefighting and other natural disasters – the US Department of Defense and more specifically the Army National Guard continues to discover critical uses for unmanned systems as the industry matures.

The commercial unmanned systems industry is in the exciting innovation stage – and the display of over 18 UAS at the National Guard Armory was a testament to that. From the Resolute Eagle (with two different configurations) to the ArcticShark (used as a climate measuring tool) to a logging drone – each display was an unmanned system that offered its own unique value to the industry. And not all the displays were vehicles in use – most notably Airbus' Vahana Project, designed to be a drone air taxi. The technology demonstrator has proven the Urban Air Mobility concept is technically feasible, but is the world ready for it?

[Tom Banse of NW News Network](#) captured the feeling of standing next to Project Vahana when he wrote, "You can imagine living life like the Jetsons cartoon family."

Though Project Vahana was a showstopper, many of the other UAS displays were vehicles already completing real jobs in defense, logging, crop dusting, and more. In fact, attendees had the unique opportunity to watch the Oregon Army National Guard complete a training exercise with the RQ-7 Shadow, a UAV the army has deployed in Afghanistan and Iraq to gather intelligence.

"This was a great opportunity for individuals in other industries to explore how unmanned systems can benefit them," Jeff Ratcliffe said, President of AUVSI Cascade Chapter. "And as advocates for unmanned systems, it's important to the Cascade Chapter that educational opportunities like this symposium are offered to the public. For our industry to continue to progress, we need the public, government, and industry decision makers to understand that using drones for good is no longer a futuristic idea. It's something that is already happening!"

The next AUVSI Cascade Chapter Symposium will be held in Olympia, WA in Spring of 2020, and anyone interested in drones is encouraged to attend and get involved.

"There's still so many missions for the unmanned systems industry to grow into," Ratcliffe said, "But to solve those problems, we have to connect with other industries to guide us in the right directions and we need to earn the respect of the public so they will support that progress."



## **About the AUVSI Cascade Chapter**

The AUVSI Cascade Chapter is one of 36 federated chapters of the Association for Unmanned Vehicle Systems International (AUVSI), the world's largest non-profit organization devoted exclusively to advancing the unmanned systems and robotics community. AUVSI Cascade represents Oregon and Washington and is one of the three largest AUVSI Chapters with over 400 individual and organizational members from industry, government and academia. The Cascade Chapter supports the objectives of AUVSI and serves its members through industry advocacy, community connections, and education initiatives, such as biannual regional symposiums and various STEM initiatives. The Chapter also coordinates other networking opportunities around the region. For more information visit the chapter website: [www.CascadeAUVSI.org](http://www.CascadeAUVSI.org).

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