Lockheed Martin Flies First 360-Degree Infrared Sensor On Small Unmanned Aircraft System

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Lockheed Martin recently completed a successful test of a new infrared sensor turret aboard its Desert Hawk III Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS), marking the first time a small UAS has flown with a 360-degree infrared sensor.

Battle-proven, the hand-launched Desert Hawk III has provided the British Army with critical Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities in both Iraq and Afghanistan. The small UAS (54-inch wingspan) is specifically designed to operate at high altitudes, in high winds and extreme temperatures.

Successful flight tests of the Desert Hawk III's new payload offering, held September 23- 24 at the Minnesota National Guard's Camp Ripley unmanned vehicle proving grounds, validate the UAS's ability to greatly improve nighttime ISR for ground forces. By providing 360-degree infrared coverage, troops obtain greater target location accuracy and superior image stability. Combined with an upgraded 360-degree color Electro Optic (E/O) sensor, operators gained 10 times continuous zoom capability, significantly aiding in contact identification.

"To assist the warfighter, we have miniaturized the infrared payload, so it fits into a turret weighing less than two pounds," said John Nikolai, director of electronic products & logistics at Lockheed Martin's Tactical Systems business in Eagan, MN. "The E/O camera has been upgraded as well, for improved target identification. With the introduction of these sensor capabilities, users will experience vastly improved nighttime situational awareness."

Lockheed Martin's Desert Hawk III features an open architecture environment and consists of a lightweight, hand-launched, ruggedized air vehicle with snap-on Plug and Playloads(TM), a portable ground station and a remote video terminal. The snap-on payload capability allows a single operator to swap sensors on the air vehicle in less than one minute to meet immediate and rapidly changing mission requirements.

Currently, the Desert Hawk III offers five modular capability payloads for mission flexibility. The payloads include a 360-degree turret with a mix of E/O and/or black and white low-light imagers, an infrared stabilized imager in a roll axis out to 90 degrees, a signals intelligence sensor, the new 360-degree infrared sensor and the upgraded 360-degree E/O imager with continuous zoom.

Headquartered in Bethesda, Md., Lockheed Martin is a global security company that employs about 140,000 people worldwide and is principally engaged in the research, design, development, manufacture, integration and sustainment of advanced technology systems, products and services. The corporation reported 2008 sales of $42.7 billion.

Video Footage and Images Available Upon Request

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