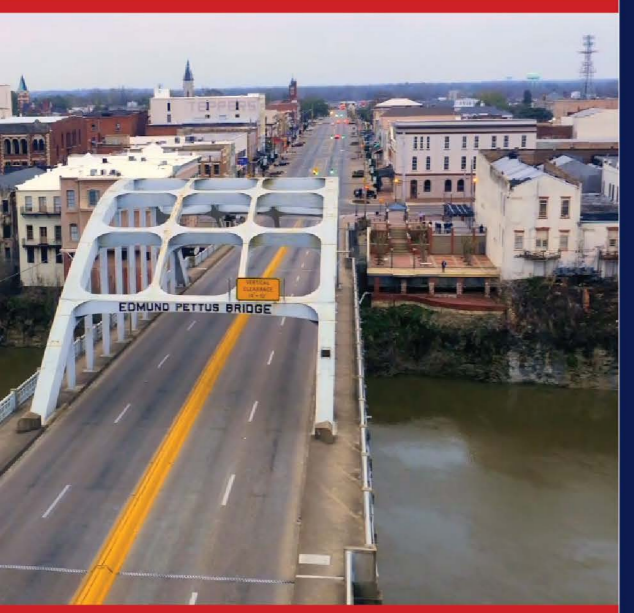


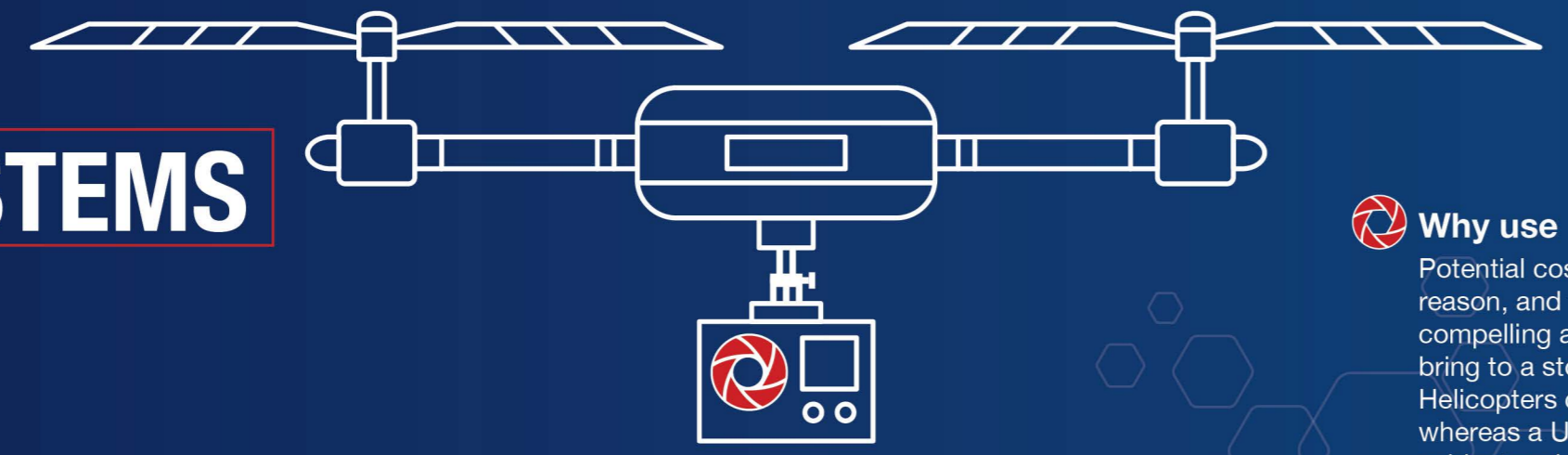
UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS IN NEWS REPORTING



In early 2015, CNN entered into a Cooperative Research and Development Agreement (CRDA) with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to advance efforts to utilize Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) in newsgathering and reporting. This agreement integrates efforts from CNN's existing research partnership with the Georgia Tech Research Institute.

In March 2015, CNN and Georgia Tech piloted the use of UAS while reporting on the 50th anniversary march of "Bloody Sunday." On March 7th 1965, 600 civil rights supporters were beaten by state and local law enforcement on the bridge outside of Selma, Alabama. The Edmund Pettus Bridge became an iconic symbol of the struggle for voting rights. Exclusive footage of the scene of that event was captured by UAS to enhance the spirit of the story. CNN also used UAS to capture footage supporting its coverage of the 70th anniversary of the Auschwitz liberation, in a special network documentary aired in early 2015.

Catch highlights of a conversation with Greg Agvent, an executive in the News Operations group at CNN. Greg has been instrumental in piloting the use of UAS at CNN.



Describe the partnership between CNN, Georgia Tech and the FAA.

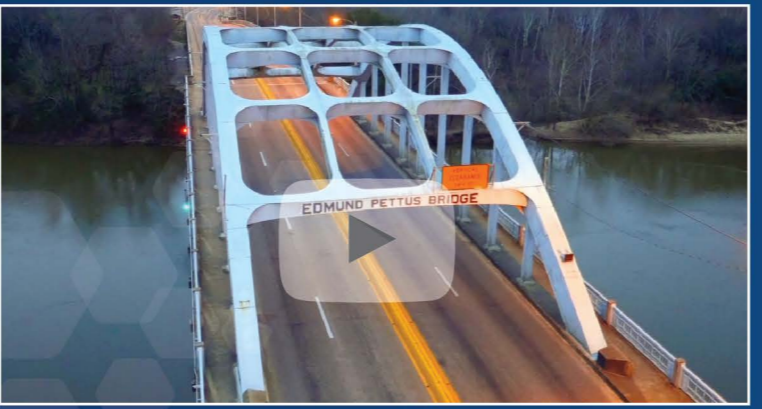
We're trying to determine the safest way to incorporate UAS into the national airspace. CNN's role is obvious: to bring the newsgathering focus and expertise to the table. Georgia Tech brings a critical engineering eye to what we are doing, by documenting the efforts and developing best practices. They also bring a deep technical expertise in aerial systems and operations. We hope that the FAA will benefit from our research, and that it will help to shape UAS rules and regulations.

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Why use UAS for newsgathering?

Potential cost advantages are often cited as the first reason, and that is true. But I have found the most compelling advantage to be the level of intimacy you can bring to a story through low-level aerial footage. Helicopters can't really provide that intimate experience, whereas a UAS can get in much closer proximity to your subject and provide spectacular footage. Will people turn to us just because we use UAS? No. But will UAS enhance our ability to tell the story? Yes! UAS can help differentiate our coverage by adding a cinematic quality to our visual storytelling.

At the end of the day, we are not flying UAS just to fly them. There has to be a value to our storytelling and it needs to add a new layer. That's why our Selma coverage using UAS worked well – the bridge itself was central to that story.



Click Here
To See the Video of CNN UAS in Action
cnn.it/selma_bridge_uas

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What are some limitations?

There are a couple of limitations presently (I'm talking in the U.S. – rules can be different abroad):

- UAS are not currently permitted to fly over non-involved parties (e.g. the general public). There is a 500-foot offset requirement. So, for example, in our Selma coverage, if a jogger were to cross over the bridge, we'd have to pause filming.
- UAS are restricted from night flights.
- Flight duration is short.
- Currently, the operator must be a licensed pilot, rather than just certified to fly UAS. It actually requires a three-man team to fly a UAS: the pilot, the cameraman, and a "spotter" tasked with situational awareness of their surroundings.
- The vehicle must remain in the operator's line of sight. So while the cost of operating a UAS can be lower than a helicopter, a helicopter can go distances and speeds that a UAS cannot presently. I don't feel UAS will ever replace the news helicopter – they'll supplement them. The choice of which to use will depend on the situation.

Describe the regulatory environment.

Some would say fast-moving – while others would say not fast enough! The FAA recently issued a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for UAS, and in several ways they are favorable for the news industry. I'd say the regulatory environment is understandably cautious at this point, as the ultimate goal for all parties is safety.

Over time, our hope is that regulations will continue to get more accommodating, but we, the industry and its stakeholders, must build a demonstrated record of safety and trust first. Where I see a divergence is between how commercial UAS are regulated, versus hobbyists. Commercial users, flying high-end UAS systems and expensive cameras, have much more on the line, and are likely to be more prudent in how they use UAS as they have a lot of investment tied up in it.



Big play for local news...
because UAS can enhance the storytelling and the context dramatically.



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cnn.it/selma_uas_package

How do you see local news organizations adopting UAS in their newsgathering?

I see a big play for local news here. What will ultimately control growth is the regulatory environment. It could take 18-24 months before small UAS rules are agreed upon and adopted. For example, it's possible that the private pilot rule may be relaxed a bit, perhaps to a different certification level.

CNN is going down two paths simultaneously, using both "tethered" and "free flight" UAS. I can see value in local news truck using a tethered UAS that simply rises to an altitude of 150-200 feet, which provides a much better perspective of the immediate surroundings. You can show a lot more about an extreme traffic situation at 150 feet than you can at 60 feet. But it goes way beyond traffic and weather for local news; I expect local journalists will use UAS the same way CNN does, to enhance storytelling and provide greater context and perspective.

What lessons did CNN learn from using UAS in the Selma anniversary coverage?

Bigger picture, we learned that in the right situation, UAS can greatly enhance our storytelling ability. We also learned a lot of operational lessons, like:

- Don't skimp on batteries! Have a way to change them in the field.
- If you're flying over water, capture your footage after every flight.
- There are very few scenarios where you'll have to fly at ridiculous altitudes – the value in the storytelling is the intimacy and not the altitude.
- Along the same lines, have a clear purpose for your flights.
- If you want high quality pictures – you need high quality equipment – and trained and capable people – separate roles for pilot, camera operator and spotter may not be mandated in the future – but they add to the quality of your video and safety of those around you.

Are UAS evolutionary or revolutionary?

Both! They are certainly another tool in the newsgathering and storytelling toolbox, but at the same time, they can make your story much more intimate, more engaging and more compelling.

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