

Drones; for Good or Evil?

Session Summary

Rory Paul, Volt Aerial Robotics

Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) have been around for a long time. Rory Paul described them as an extension of hobby planes and helicopters that individuals have been flying for years. However, this technology has been improved upon and additional features have been added to the aircraft to make them more useful as tools. When he started Volt there weren't other UAV companies that were involved in the agricultural field, now there are a number of companies in the field.

UAVs can revolutionize farming by helping to decrease costs, help improve production and save time for farmers. For a farmer with a large field they could use a camera equipped drone to fly over their field and see if there are any spots in the field where there are growth issues that they wouldn't be able to see easily from the ground. The drones can create detailed images down to about 2 inches of detail on the ground. As of now the flight time for these drones is limited to about 15 minutes so they are more useful for spot checking than for constant monitoring.

There are some issues with drones in general. Privacy concerns are a major concern in many states as individuals do not own the airspace over their property and there is concern that people will use the drones to spy on their neighbors. Additionally, a drone could be used to deliver something dangerous to someone's house. Some states have looked at things that can be done to address these concerns about drones. Alaska Representative Shelly Hughes mentioned that she is working on some legislation that will allow the growth of drones, but provide law enforcement with additional tools to address improper usage of drones.