

CNN ANNOUNCES 'CNN AIR' DEDICATED DRONE UNIT

News / Events / Festivals



Cable television news organization CNN has launched CNN Aerial Imagery and Reporting (CNN Air), its first dedicated drone unit. CNN Air will employ two full-time unmanned aircraft systems operators “to fully integrate aerial imagery and reporting across all CNN networks and platforms, along with Turner Broadcasting and Time Warner entities,” the broadcaster announced.

An early technology adopter among news organizations, Atlanta-based CNN entered into a joint research initiative with Georgia Tech Research Institute in June 2014 to study media use of drones, an agreement that was later expanded to include cooperative research with the FAA. [The FAA announced in May 2015](#) that CNN, BNSF Railway and aerial data company PrecisionHawk would participate with the agency in a “Pathfinder” program to explore concepts for beyond visual line-of-sight and urban use of small unmanned aircraft.

CNN’s task was to research visual line-of-sight operations over people. One aircraft it acquired was the Altus Delta X8 multi-rotor drone, that company announced last fall.

Supported by contractors operating drones under FAA authorization, the cable network already has experience using unmanned aircraft to cover a variety of news events, among them the flooding catastrophe in Louisiana, the water crisis in Flint, Mich., the Republican and Democratic presidential nominating conventions, the 50th anniversary of the “Bloody Sunday” civil rights march at the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Ala., and the 10th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina.

“CNN’s cutting-edge development of technology to enhance the way we tell stories is a part of our

DNA,” stated Terence Burke, senior vice president of national news. “We are proud to continue the tradition with CNN Air, and to establish a unit that will expand our technological capabilities for newsgathering.”? ?

As of August 29, operators will be able to fly small drones for commercial purposes in the U.S. under the [FAA's new Part 107 regulation](#); previously any such operation required an exemption from the agency. Beyond visual line-of-sight operations and flights over people will still require waivers to the regulation, the agency has said.

21 AUGUST 2016

SOURCE: AIN

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