Unmanned aircraft have untapped commercial use, industry panel says

By DOUG SHERWIN
The Daily Transcript

Privacy concerns and a lack of Federal Aviation Administration resources have slowed the integration of unmanned aircraft into the national aerospace system, industry experts say.

And those experts, who gathered at California Western School of Law last week for the inaugural Air & Space Law Symposium, said without the commercial use of unmanned aircraft in the United States, it will hurt the country's economy.

"The use of UASs [unmanned aircraft systems] in the wars has shaped the perception of what the use would be here," said Steve Morrow, CEO of Insitu Inc., a subsidiary of **Boeing** (NYSE: BA). "And I can tell you from a capability standpoint, if you have used a cellphone or if you have surfed the Internet, you are orders of magnitude closer to relinquishing your privacy than through a UAS.

"Those invasions into your privacy examine the way you think, the way you shop, the way you travel. The energy that's being expended talking about UASs — we need to shift that energy in talking about the real threat to privacy."

The panelists said the term "drone" is a derogatory — and inaccurate — term for unmanned aircraft that came out of a Senate hearing, and it has negatively affected people's understanding of the industry.

Ben Gielow, general counsel for the trade organization Association for Unmanned Vehicle Systems International (AUVSI), said most of the bills circulating Congress and state legislators aim to restrict the government's use of unmanned aircraft.

"We have not seen too many looking to restrict the commercial use of these aircraft," he said. "Most of them are against the government. Right now there's a deep mistrust of the government. That's what I'm seeing that we're up against."

Gielow said it's important to clear the privacy hurdle because, accord-

Aircraft ——

Continued from Page 1A

ing to an AUVSI report, the unmanned industry will create more than $80 billion and more than 100,000 jobs within the next 10 years.

"The imagination can run wild in how you can use this [technology], but we do see a large benefit," he said.

The potential benefits include monitoring crops, fighting forest fires and delivering vaccines to remote parts of the world.

Steven Pennington, director of bases, ranges and airspace for the Department of Defense Policy Board of Federal Aviation, said the industry, government and academia need to work together to drive the public discussion.

And it needs to be done from an economic standpoint.

"If we don't lead in the U.S., that means someone else is going to lead," he said. "And if someone else leads, what happens is industry will go there fairly quickly. That would be bad for the U.S."

In a case in Virginia, an administrative law judge recently ruled the FAA doesn't have the ability to regulate unmanned aircraft because there are no rules in the books.

The ruling is being appealed, but Gielow said it makes it more important that regulations be drafted.

"We told the FAA, 'It behooves you to get rules out soon because if you do not, people will continue to fly illegally and without any guidance and it will not be safe,'" Gielow said. "It will not be safe in national airspace because there's no framework, and it will cause an accident and that accident will reverberate around the industry."

Pennington said the FAA is operating with a manpower deficit, and it needs more resources to write effective regulations.

The panelists agreed members of the unmanned aircraft industry must get involved and help.

"The industry has to educate lawmakers and regulators," said Boston attorney David Bannard, a partner with **Foley & Lardner**, "and we have to bring them a reasonable standard under which to operate, so that we can make this work because it is an exciting technology."

doug.sherwin@sddt.com
Source Code: 20140317czg