

Maryland UAS Team

2015 AUVSI SUAS Competition Journal Paper

The Maryland UAS Team is competing in the AUVSI Student UAS Competition for the first time this year. Their Ouroboros system is based on the RMRC Anaconda Airframe and Pixhawk autopilot system. Comprised of a team of 9 flight line operators and a safety pilot, this team plans on completing the autonomous waypoint navigation, search area, and actionable intelligence tasks. The team is very confident in their ability to complete these three tasks based on information gained from numerous ground and flight tests that have happened over the course of the past six months to verify the system's capabilities.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SYSTEMS ENGINEERING APPROACH	3
MISSION REQUIREMENTS ANALYSIS	3
DESIGN RATIONALE	4
AIRFRAME	4
AUTOPILOT AND MISSION PLANNER	4
PAYLOAD	4
EXPECTED TASK PERFORMANCE	5
PROGRAMMATIC RISKS AND MITIGATION METHODS	5
SYSTEM OVERVIEW	6
AIRFRAME	6
MODIFICATIONS	7
PROPULSION SYSTEM	8
AUTOPILOT	8
MISSION PLANNER	8
ELECTRONICS	9
PAYLOAD	10
COMMUNICATION PROTOCOLS	10
TESTING AND EVALUATION	11
MISSION TASK PERFORMANCE	11
PAYLOAD SYSTEM PERFORMANCE	11
AUTOPILOT SYSTEM PERFORMANCE	11
SUPPORT FOR LIKELY MISSION ACCOMPLISHMENT	12
SAFETY APPROACH	12
SAFETY CRITERIA FOR OPERATIONS AND DESIGN	12
SAFETY RISKS AND MITIGATION METHODS	13
APPENDIX 1: TESTING SCHEDULE	14

SYSTEMS ENGINEERING APPROACH

MISSION REQUIREMENTS ANALYSIS

The systematic approach the Maryland UAS team took to create Shell Shock can be divided into two parts: (1) understanding competition constraints regarding system

characteristics, environmental constraints, mission tasks, safety, and competition layout and (2) designing, building, testing and unmanned aerial system capable of meeting these constraints. Having never competed in the competition before, the Maryland UAS team had to first focus on competition layout and mission task constraints to gain an understanding of what generally the system needed to be capable of and how its success could generate points in competition. From this understanding, the team could develop a vision for what the mission of the system would be and how they would make it a reality using the function, design, safety, and competition procedural constraints as a basis for all design, construction, and verification. Originally, the team's goal was to accomplish as much as possible starting with the primary tasks and building up. The team had high aspirations and put little off the table. The work was largely mission task requirement focused, and it was divided amongst four sub-teams: autopilot, communication systems, imaging, and mechanical systems. In early stages of system design, each sub-team utilized past competition journal descriptions of successful systems. Being the team's first year, the design was to be made up of established hardware and software and the focus was to be on integration of these parts rather than part design.

As the sub-teams started building their respective subsystems, they gained an increasingly better understanding of the different competition constraints and continually improved their processes. For starters, the sub-teams were re-organized into imaging, software, mechanical, and electrical. Beyond that though, as design and construction progressed, the safety and systems requirements became increasingly important to keep in mind as systems requirements are the glue that holds the aircraft system together and safety requirements help bridge the transition between design, construction, testing, and verification (and compliance with them are necessary for the plane to leave the ground). The team's leadership implemented a continual feedback loop of adjusting competition mission goals based on team progress and timeline/Gantt analysis. Because timelines and work breakdowns could not be based on prior experience, the team's leadership continually assessed what could actually be accomplished based on competition timeline and sub-team progress and interdependencies. Once in the construction and testing phases, internal timelines were constructed based on safety. It was crucial that each part of the system was safely constructed, inspected, and tested. The team put safety in the forefront of construction, inspection, and testing by ensuring that all systems met competition safety requirements and by completing a COA ().

In creating and implementing a systematic approach to ensure that all necessary requirements were met, the team found that how the requirements were presented to the subteams was just as important as making sure that all of them were compiled, met, and verified correctly. At first, the requirements were compiled in a spreadsheet that attributed each requirement's section in the competition rules,

which subteam(s) the requirement applied to, how they would be verified, which testing iteration of the plane they would belong to, and what each sub-team needed to do and needed from other sub-teams to make see the requirement come to fruition. At the end of the day, this spreadsheet was converted into a checklist of requirements by task (and in general) that sub-teams could more easily use.

DESIGN RATIONALE

AIRFRAME

The RMRC Anaconda was chosen due to its simplicity in setup and the built-in capability to carry a variety of payload items, such as FPV and belly-mounted cameras. Since the airframe was purchased as an Almost Ready to Fly (ARF) PNP kit, it only required the team to set up the power system and chosen payloads, reducing the amount of time necessary for setup and increasing the amount of time the team had to conduct test flights. Competition requires that the UAS be able to fly for extended periods of time along with having the capability to take images. The Anaconda airframe meets these requirements. The FPV cavity has been repurposed by the team to house the imagery antenna in order to increase separation in transmitting components to reduce interference and to help maintain a proper center of gravity for safe flight. In addition to this modification, a hole was cut into the bottom of the fuselage for the camera placement. These modifications will be gone into further detail in the system overview.

AUTOPILOT AND MISSION PLANNER

The Pixhawk system is the plane's autopilot. We chose this system for a variety of reasons, most notably because it is the most advanced autopilot in the price range (sub \$500), and because it is open-source. The Pixhawk system has a large community, therefore, many people have extensively tested it, and it is fast and easy to troubleshoot any potential problems using online forums.

Mission Planner is also an open source platform that happens to be free. Those two factors, as well as our team members' familiarity with the program, were the primary reasons that this program was chosen. With the open source nature of the program, the team felt that Mission Planner would be a much more long term system to maintain since we would be able to continuously update the program as the competition evolves.

PAYLOAD

The camera chosen for our system is the Nikon J4 mirror-less DSLR with an 18.5mm fixed lens. This camera was the final choice due to its lightweight build, overall small size, and ability to exchange lenses for optimal image capturing. The camera is an orange color, which provides high visibility in the event of a crash. The team wanted a camera that took relatively high-quality images to be able to accomplish automatic image recognition in the future and also to be able to zoom in on the image without losing a large amount of resolution. We also wanted a camera that

had a manual mode since autofocus during flight would result in a delay in taking pictures, which could potentially lead to missed targets. The lens was picked because of its fixed focal length so that the camera would not try and auto-focus when taking a capture

Gphoto2 is a powerful command line interface (CLI) tool that allows remote control of a camera tethered to the system running it. Using this interface allows us to write scripts to control the operation of the camera. These scripts are stored on the ODroid and are called by the ground control station while connected to it over the network. Gphoto2 also provides us with the ability to not only control the image capture but also the download the images from the camera to the ODroid while in flight. These images are then placed into a folder, which is synced with a folder on the ground control station. There are other programs that provide a similar functionality, however they do not make use of a CLI, creating difficulties when trying to run it while SSH'ed into the ODroid.

BitTorrent Sync is commercial syncing service that creates a system of folders across all our devices that are continually synced with each other while connected to a network. This service is run on the ODroid and our ground control station systems. When an image is downloaded from gphoto2, it downloads to the current directory at the time of download. Using Sync allows this folder to be synced across all approved devices on our network. So when an image is captured and downloaded, seconds later it appears in a folder on our ground control station. One big advantage of Sync is its security. In order for folders to be synced, a key or link is used to approve it on the second device, otherwise the syncing does not occur. Prior to choosing Sync we experimented with scripts to secure-copy the images from the ODroid to the ground control station. However, this meant that all the images would need to be taken in order to copy them over and we would be connecting/disconnecting/reconnecting multiple times thought the flight. In an effort to find a better solution we found a program called Syncthing that provides a similar service. However, a few weeks into using this service, devices were experiencing problems connecting to each other. This prompted us to find another solution, leading us to BitTorrent Sync. In addition, we found that Sync is quicker and more efficient than using secure-copy.

EXPECTED TASK PERFORMANCE

This year's system was built with the intention of completing RC takeoff and landing, autonomous navigation, and image capture and transmission for the Search Area and Actionable Intelligence tasks. Since this is a first year team, we wanted to make sure we could create a solid system that could reliably perform a small number of tasks prior to attempting the entire slew of competition tasks.

The flight and search area tasks were chosen since they are required of the system prior to being able to complete further secondary tasks. These tasks have been the main focus of our flight tests so we have a high confidence in their completion.

Since our system is capable of transmitting imagery from the air, we are also going to pursue the Actionable Intelligence task as our first secondary task. The imagery ground control team will do the target detection manually. With the test images that we have been able to obtain from the camera, we are also confident in our ability to complete this task as well.

PROGRAMMATIC RISKS AND MITIGATION METHODS

While we initially tried to implement a formal risk management system using a risk matrix and mitigation plan. However, this was simply too cumbersome for our application. In order to simplify things we divided risks into two categories. The first category was “showstoppers”. These were risks that had a reasonable chance of degrading our performance significantly or worse. Any showstopper was mitigated immediately before any further flight-testing. The next category was “projects.” These were things that while they would not prevent flight, they did need to be addressed soon.

SYSTEM OVERVIEW

AIRFRAME

For the competition, the MUAS airframe needed to meet certain specifications based on design preferences and competition requirements. To produce a successful system, key requirements need to be met by the airframe: easy modifications, quick build time, and affordable. As a team, we decided that the RMRC Anaconda, as shown below in Figure 1, was the aircraft that met these specifications.

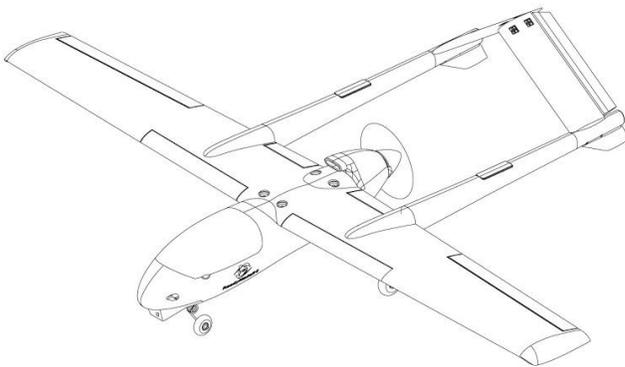


FIGURE 1 - RMRC ANACONDA AIRFRAME



FIGURE 2 - ADJUSTABLE FUSELAGE TRAY

The RMRC Anaconda was purchased along with the PNP kit, which includes an installed motor, esc, and servos. The Anaconda is an inverted-V tail pusher design geared towards aerial photography and FPV. The Anaconda has an approximate flight time of 45 minutes, which means the plane can stay in the air for the entire flight window of competition. Due to its lightweight design and large wing area, the

Anaconda has great stall characteristics that allow for clearer pictures to be taken than in other airframes. The smooth foam construction of the airframe also allows the team to easily modify the frame. As well, the foam retains durability in the case of impact with the ground. In addition, the fuselage has dimensions of 26.5in x 6in x 3in. This allows for ample room to store all of the internal components including the PNP components with the added MUAS components including a camera, ODroid, Pixhawk, GPS module, and Ubiquiti Bullet.

Along with that, the fuselage contains an adjustable center of gravity tray, shown in Figure 2. This helps with compartmentalizing and organizing the electrical components as well as making changes to the center of gravity to make sure the RMRC Anaconda is balanced. The tray has the ability to move two inches, which is more than enough to fine-tune the location of the CG, which should be set at 3.12 in. from the leading edge of the wings. Another positive feature of the model are the front and back flaps. These additions to the wings allow for greater control, especially with landing and the stall control as mentioned before. Additionally, the booms of the plane contain audio jacks that connect the V-tail servos to the fuselage of the plane for ease of connection during setup.

Below are the dimensions and specifications of the major mechanical components of the plane. These components are required for flight, either RC or autonomous, and therefore make up the backbone of the system.

Wingspan	81.10 in.
Wing Area	759.5 in. ²
Length	55.5 in.
Flying Weight	10lbs
Propeller	APC 15x4E
Servos	3x30g, 2x17g, 2x16.44g metal gear digital
Battery	2x Li-Po 4s 5100 mAh
Motor	RMRC Tiger Motor Brushless Outrunner AT3520-5, 800 kv
ESC	RMRC Tiger Motor 80A ESC with switch mode BEC and 10A Castle Creations BEC

TABLE 1 - AIRFRAME PARTS AND SPECIFICATIONS

MODIFICATIONS

For imaging capabilities, a camera needed to be mounted in the Anaconda. The Anaconda has a gimbal-mounting area, yet the team wished to place the camera farther back in the setup. An RC trick for camera mounting, through the utilization of a sponge, was implemented to simplify the mount. As shown below in *Figure 3*, the camera interfaces with the sponge with industrial-strength Velcro while the sponge then interfaces with the fuselage bottom with Velcro again. This setup allows for security while dissipating the vibrations reaching the camera, as the sponge acts as a spring-damper system. A 2.3 in. diameter hole is cut out of the bottom of the

fuselage, 8.5 in. from the back of the plane for the lens of the camera to see through. This hole, in *Figure 4*, is a tight fit around the lens, which further limits motion of the camera while it is mounted.



FIGURE 3 - CAMERA SHOCK-ABSORBING SPONGE



FIGURE 4 - UBIQUITI BULLET AND PITOT TUBE MOUNT

Due to the overall effectiveness of the Anaconda design off the shelf, not much else had to be modified. The antenna for the telemetry link for the Pixhawk also had to come through the bottom of the fuselage, so a 0.5 in. hole was cut for that. In addition, the team needed a spot for the Ubiquiti Bullet antenna where it would be out the way for space and interference reasons. Figure 4 shows the team's solution, placing it in the FPV camera module area. Wood inserts in this mount area allowed zip ties to be the form of attachment of the antenna to the airframe. A pitot tube extends off of the front of the Bullet, giving the Pixhawk accurate speed-readings.

PROPULSION SYSTEM

As mentioned before, the Anaconda is an electric plane that uses the RMRC Tiger Motor Brushless Outrunner AT3520-5 and an APC 15x4E propeller. The motor is coupled with an 80-Amp RMRC Tiger Motor electronic speed controller (ESC), a 10-Amp Castle Creations BEC switching regulator, and two RMRC 4S 5100mAh lithium polymer (Li-Po) batteries connected in parallel.

AUTOPILOT

The Pixhawk system is the plane's autopilot. This is an open-source autopilot which allowed our team to make a number of changes very simply as opposed to other autopilots that were researched. Included in the system are GPS, airspeed sensor, gyroscope, ppm encoder, 915MHz telemetry radio, compass, accelerometer, magnetometer, current sensor, and barometer. These sensors allow the plane know where it is and what it is doing, making it safe and allowing it to execute missions reliably.

The Pixhawk system is also flexible, not only can it control a plane but also rovers, quad-copters and helicopters. This flexibility allowed us to test the autopilot features, such as waypoint navigation, on a rover before putting a plane into the air. Testing on a rover first allowed us to familiarize ourselves with the system safely, before putting it into a plane.

Among the Pixhawk's various capabilities is the ability to update the mission in air. As a result, we are able to change the plane's path remotely, while it is in the air. This not only helps us at competition, but also adds another layer of control to the plane, making it safer to fly.

MISSION PLANNER

Mission Planner is the Pixhawk's control software, and allows us a remote link to view everything related to the Pixhawk. Like the Pixhawk, Mission Planner is also open source, and has a large community surrounding it, which helped us in understanding various features of the software, as well as troubleshooting some issues we found while testing.

Mission Planner has numerous features. It has a 915MHz radio link to the Pixhawk, allowing us to see real time information of the plane, including the battery charge level, the position and orientation of the plane and more. Mission Planner fully supports all of the Pixhawk's abilities, which means we are able to use it to update the mission mid-flight, making our system as flexible and robust as possible.

Perhaps one of the most important features of Mission Planner is the ability to set various fail-safes. Fail-safes add an extra layer of safety to the system and allows the Pixhawk to handle events, which would otherwise be disastrous, to be handled as safely as possible. Without this feature, competition officials would not allow us to compete at competition. Mission Planner allows the Pixhawk to control the plane safely in the event of low battery, a link drop to the pilot or Mission Planner computer, GPS loss, and avoiding a no-fly area. If any of these events occur, we can set the plane to loiter, fly in circles, return to launch, or in a worst-case scenario, spiral into the ground.

ELECTRONICS

For the electrical subsystem, the most important task was to make sure that all necessary components of the vehicle received an appropriate amount of power and current. If the electrical system does not function properly, then none of the other teams could be expected to have their systems function either.

Based on the selection of motor by the mechanical team, a 4S (14.8V battery) was selected. This was the lowest battery rating that would give the motor the power required to generate the lift necessary for flight. We chose Ready-Made RC 5100mAh 35C battery packs. To get a better flight time (and because our plane had the space) we place two of the batteries in parallel for each flight.

To convert the voltage from the battery down to a level that the Pixhawk is capable of handling, we are using an APM power module that is designed for compatibility with the Pixhawk. The APM power module converts the voltage from the battery into a maximum 5.3V to power the Pixhawk without overloading the Pixhawk itself. One end of the power module is connected to the battery, the unregulated output goes to the ESC, and the regulated output is directed to the Pixhawk.

The electrical circuitry also includes a ESC (electronic speed controller). The main purpose of this addition is to convert the DC power from the battery into AC current so that the motor can function properly. We elected to use a T80a ESC based on reviews and custom aerial vehicle builds we found, as well as recommendations from our pilot, who has significant experience building aerial vehicles. The input for the ESC comes from the non-regulated output of the APM power module, and the output of the ESC connects to both the ESC and the motor.

In the event of some kind of power failure, our goal is to be able to bring the vehicle down safely. To implement this, we added a Castle Creation UBEC (battery eliminator circuit). The model we selected was a Castle Creation 7A UBEC for use at 12V. In the event of a power failure, such as a battery disconnection or low battery, the UBEC will cut the power to the motor and direct all available power to the servos. This allows us to maintain control of the craft and steer it to a soft landing. Without the UBEC, any low power battery would cause the entire system to fail and the vehicle to crash. The input of the UBEC comes from the ESC, and the output connects to the servo rail as a backup power supply.

With our use of the Pixhawk, we are also using a number of included modules, included the airspeed sensor, GPS, transmitter, master switch, buzzer, and LED. The airspeed sensor and GPS are use by the software team for location purposes, the transmitter is used to return the data to the ground, and the master switch, buzzer, and LED are all used in the powering up of the system to let us know whether it has been successful or not. All of these have special ports on the Pixhawk and are powered by the Pixhawk, so there was no extra work done to include them.

To transmitting commands to the vehicle, we are using a Spektrum transmitter and receiver combination. This change came about due to an issue with our old receiver, in which the signal being transmitted to the vehicle was not very strong and was being interfered with by other components. By upgrading to this more advanced model, our signal is now strong enough that interference from wiring and the imaging system in the plane is negligible. The commands sent by the transmitter are picked up by the receiver and connected to the Pixhawk, which is responsible for relaying the signals to the servos that control our direction in the air.

PAYLOAD

The imaging system operates on a 2.4GHz Wi-Fi local area network, powered by a TP Link WDR4300 a/b/g/n Router, as well as a LAN between the computers at the

ground control station. The router generates a signal with data transfer rates of up to 300Mbps, allowing for quick image and data transfer rates between computers. The LAN allows for all three ground control station computers to quickly images and data between each other for seamless operation.

In order to extend the range of our Wi-Fi network, a Ubiquiti Nanostation and Ubiquiti Bullet were purchased. The Nanostation is capable of transmitting 150Mbps across distances of at least 13km and will be located at the ground control station. The Bullet is rated for 100+Mbps over approximately 50km, depending on the antenna and will be attached to the belly of the plane. A TRENDnet Omni Antenna was purchased for the Bullet, rated at 2.4GHz and 5dBi for 802.11 a/b/g/n/ac networks.

Connected to the Wi-Fi network is an ODroid U3 single-board computer that is located on the plane to control the camera and data link. The ODroid runs the lubuntu operating system as well as the gphoto2 command line interface, which allows the ground control station to remotely operate the camera from either a command line script or through a Secure Shell (SSH) connection to the ground control station.

The camera that was chosen for the system was the Nikon 1 J4 mirror-less DSLR camera. This camera takes 18.4MP images, and the body weighs only 6.8oz, compared to other DSLR's at a similar quality coming in at 18oz before a lens. Along with this body, the 1NIKKOR 18.5mm f/1.8 lens was purchased to replace the default 10-30mm adjustable lens. This lens has a 47 degree field of view, allowing us to see a large portion of the ground below the plane without distortion.

Once the camera captures the photos, they are downloaded to a specific folder on the ODroid that is synced using a tool called BitTorrent Sync. Sync is a commercial syncing tool that allows a folder or folders to be shared among a group of computers that are connected to the same network. This ensures that when our photos are taken, they are immediately synced to the ground control station over the Wi-Fi connection for immediate processing and classification.

COMMUNICATION PROTOCOLS

The imagery system used a 2.4GHz 802.11b/g/n Wi-Fi network between ODroid and GCS using Nanostation, TP Link, and Bullet. This link was secured using WPA2 security to ensure that it met the competition standards. The autopilot communicated on a 915MHZ link with one of the ground control station computers. The RC Controller operates at the 2.4GHz band as well. The controller uses DSM2 to communicate with the AR7000 receiver and avoid radio interference from other transmitters to maintain full control of the aircraft at all times.

TESTING AND EVALUATION

MISSION TASK PERFORMANCE

The team was able to do a number of RC flight tests to verify our system's performance. Our safety pilot conducted these flights at the Free State RC field. These flights began with sandbagged RC flights with the minimum flight systems. After these were proven successful, systems and capabilities were added to flights to verify those systems. These included: the addition of the Pixhawk for telemetry data, the RC control of the plane through the Pixhawk, RC flight through the Pixhawk with fail-safes activated, RC flight through Pixhawk with the imagery system running, RC flight through Pixhawk with fail-safes active and imagery system running, future autonomous flight with sandbags, and future full system flights. This sequence of events is detailed in Appendix 1: Testing Schedule.

PAYLOAD SYSTEM PERFORMANCE

The payload system went through a large number of range and speed tests in order to verify that the team would be able to use the system to compete. The goal of these range tests was to reach 2500ft with a low level of transmission speed loss. At the moment, the team has only been able to test the imagery system up to 1200ft due to line of sight constraints at available spaces. Other issues with testing included our portable power system, which provided 12V instead of 24V to the ground control station antenna. After the purchase of a generator, the team plans to retest the range of the imagery system to accomplish competition ranges. If the imagery system is unable to attain the full goal range, the team is still able to compete and acquire imagery data. The limitation will be the frequency in which the data will be downloaded to the GCS.

After the range tests were completed to the best of the team's ability, the system was then tested on the plane for image quality. These were very subjective tests where the goal was for team members to be able to identify the test target characteristics from the images. At an altitude of 300ft and a ground speed of 35mph, the team was able to clearly see all images of test targets when the plane was in level flight.

AUTOPILOT SYSTEM PERFORMANCE

In order to be sure that everything was as safe as possible, and to maximize our chances of success, we performed extensive testing before attempting to fly autonomously. First, we loaded the rover firmware to the Pixhawk and tested waypoints and pilot controls on a rover. This allowed us to familiarize ourselves with Mission Planner and the Pixhawk in a safe and controlled environment, without having to worry about damaging the plane or any of the safety concerns of operating the plane.

Next, we removed the propeller, loaded the plane firmware, and set waypoints using Mission Planner. This allowed us to walk the plane to each waypoint and double

check that the control surfaces were moving in the correct way to move the plane to hit the waypoints.

In addition, we performed fail-safe tests on the ground, manually triggering each fail-safe and verifying that the plane reacted as it was configured. We also performed range testing of the 915MHz link from Mission Planner to the autopilot, in order to check the max distance that we could fly before experiencing problems with the link.

SUPPORT FOR LIKELY MISSION ACCOMPLISHMENT

So far, the team has successfully verified all capabilities of the aircraft and ground control systems up to autonomous flight. Many of these systems have had greater than ten successful test flights and all systems have had greater than 5 successful ground runs. The team feels very confident in their ability to successfully complete the portions of the competition listed above, including autonomous flight after testing, due to the testing and verification processes listed above.

SAFETY APPROACH

SAFETY CRITERIA FOR OPERATIONS AND DESIGN

Both mission and safety requirements were at the forefront of the design, creation, and testing phases. Although mission requirements are undoubtedly important, the plane's ability to ultimately pursue mission requirements depends heavily on the ability to meet safety requirements. Safety requirements are flight critical requirements that demand safe mission completion. That is, even a failure of the system's critical systems, the plane will have the ability to terminate its flight without damage to other property or human life. The majority of the team's safety requirements were either derived from the competition rules or from risk analysis. In addition, the team pilot's prior flying experience added depth to the team's understanding of both the nature and importance of safety requirements.

From the competition rulebook, the team primarily used the safety requirements section and the pre-flight checklist as primary sources for safety criteria. The safety requirements section primarily provided environmental requirements, failsafe requirements, and safety-pilot requirements. The team identified the provided pre-flight checklist as a means for ensuring flight-critical systems are properly functioning and components of the system are properly secured for flight prior to takeoff. During the design phase, these competition safety requirements were utilized in choosing the system components discussed earlier. During the construction and testing phases, the pre-flight checklist was largely utilized to ensure system components were properly assembled and secured for safe flight.

In addition to the competition rulebook, internal risk analysis and lessons from the team pilot yielded insight with respect to criteria for meeting these requirements.

The biggest decision stemming from these discussions was the use of a pre-flight checklist. Prior to first flight, each sub-team made a list of the final things that need to be checked prior to take off. Their list was checked by the entire team (especially the pilot) and then edited from flight to flight-based on lessons learned. The list includes software, imaging, and electrical set up as well as final mechanical checks (to be sure system elements are secure for flight) and final pilot checks (to be sure flight control surfaces are reacting correctly). Not to mention, a number of ground tests were carried out prior to every flight test upon addition of any new mission capability. Some of the ground tests included battery life testing, communication link interference testing, telemetry range testing ground fail-safe testing, and ground waypoint testing.

All in all, safety was undoubtedly at the forefront of operations and design throughout the design, construction, and testing phases of system development. Using the competition rules, risk assessment, and prior experience the team established a broad, deep understanding of both the nature and importance of safety criteria both in its ability to reduce risks to property or human life and its ability to help the plane get in the air to successfully complete its mission.

SAFETY RISKS AND MITIGATION METHODS

The team did not have a formal risk evaluation and mitigation process this year. The overall process followed included risks observed or calculated by members informally, alerting relevant team members of said risk, evaluating methods of mitigating risk, and deciding upon mitigation method based on time and money necessary to mitigate risk. Some risks were unable to be mitigated based on the time available to be completed versus severity level. These risks were always a low threat level with a low frequency of occurrence. In these cases, if they were flight critical, the team noted such to appropriate staff at the test field and had backup systems available in case of a damaging landing.

APPENDIX 1: TESTING SCHEDULE

Flight Type	RC/ Autopilot	Components/ Systems	Speeds Requested	Height Requested	Distance Requested	Time requested	Re...
Ground	RC	Software, Electrical	N/A	N/A	(Subject of test)	N/A	Tel aut cor
Ground	N/A	Imaging	N/A	N/A	(Subject of test)	N/A	Car
Ground	RC	Electrical, Mechanical, Software	10% increments up to full throttle	N/A	N/A	(Until battery dies)	Sys
Ground	RC	Software, Electrical, Mechanical	25 mph	N/A	N/A	N/A	Tes
Ground	RC	Software, Electrical,	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Int

		Imaging					
Flight 1	RC	Electrical, Software	10% increments up to full throttle (as pilot sees fit)	200-400 feet	.25 mi	20 minutes	Pro rea
Flight 2	RC	Electrical, Mechanical	10% increments up to full throttle (as pilot sees fit)	200-400 feet	.25 mi	20 minutes	Pro ele flig
Flight 3	RC	Electrical, Mechanical, Software	10% increments up to full throttle (as pilot sees fit)	200-400 feet	.25 mi	20 minutes	Pro anc
Flight 4	RC	Electrical, Mechanical, Software	10% increments up to full throttle (as pilot sees fit)	200-400 feet	.25 mi	(Until battery life not suitable for flight)	Sys
Flight 5	RC	Electrical, Mechanical, Software	(Subject of test)	(Subject of test)	.25 mi	N/A	Ma spe tes
Flight 6	RC	Full	10% increments up to 50%	200-400 feet	.25 mi	20 minutes	Pro sof det
Ground 5	Autopilot	Software	N/A	N/A	.25 mi	20 minutes	Wa me wa
Ground 4	N/A	Imaging, Software, Electrical	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	GP pai det wa
Ground 7	Autopilot	Software, Electrical, Mechanical	25 mph	N/A	N/A	N/A	Tes
Flight 3	Autopilot	Electrical, Mechanical, Software	(Competition speed*)	200-400 feet	.25 mi	20 minutes	Pro me sys nav
Flight 4	Autopilot	Full	(Competition speed*)	200-400 feet	.25 mi	20 minutes	Pro me sof
Future Flights	Autopilot	Full	(Competition speed*)	200-400 feet	.25 mi	N/A	Sol pra

TABLE 2 - TEAM TESTING SCHEDULE