

CBP Unmanned Aircraft System Providing Imagery Above Mississippi

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Washington — U.S. Customs and Border Protection's Office of Air and Marine (OAM) began providing imagery Monday to the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) along the Mississippi River basin in support of flood response efforts.

The remotely piloted Predator B Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) is providing streaming video and Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) mapping and change analysis of areas affected by flooding, such as levee integrity along the Mississippi River, all the way to Memphis, Tenn.

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The CBP MQ-9 Predator B Unmanned Aircraft is used to fly a variety of missions, including disaster relief support along the Mississippi River Valley. Pilots in Grand Forks, N.D. and Corpus Christi, Texas are providing images to the U.S. Geological Survey and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to help determine the integrity of the levees along the Mississippi River.

Photo Credit: Kris Grogan

The Predator B is launching from the National Air Security Operations Center-Corpus Christi (NASOC-CC) and then flown by pilots in North Dakota.

“This is the farthest we have operated into the interior of the United States,” said Director of Air Operations NASOC-GF, John Priddy. “This year alone, we have flown over 124 hours from Grand Forks in support of emergency responders in the national air space, and provided thousands of images to law enforcement and other agencies to help state and local governments respond appropriately.”

The real-time video stream, known as Big Pipe, is a video distribution system that CBP provides to federal, state and local law enforcement agencies so that responders have access to real-time video and still imagery. The images can be viewed anywhere there is an internet connection, including smart-phones.

The CBP UAS program expanded to the Northern Border in early December 2008 and provides reconnaissance, intelligence, surveillance, tracking and acquisition capabilities in areas that are difficult to access or otherwise considered too high-risk for manned aircraft or CBP personnel on

the ground. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2010, the UAS flew over 500 hours in support of law enforcement and emergency responders.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection is the unified border agency within the Department of Homeland Security charged with the management, control and protection of our nation's borders at and between the official ports of entry. CBP is charged with keeping terrorists and terrorist weapons out of the country while enforcing hundreds of U.S. laws.

Contacts For This News Release

Jacqueline Wasiluk
CBP Public Affairs San Diego
Phone: (619) 744-5245

CBP Headquarters	Phone: (202) 344-1780 or
Office of Public Affairs	(800) 826-1471
1300 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.	Fax: (202) 344-1393
Room 3.4A	
Washington, DC 20229	