

DRONE LAW ALERT

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FAA Approves Civilian Drone Use Beyond Visual Line of Sight with Radar

Avitas Systems (Avitas), a GE company specializing in enhanced, robotic-based autonomous inspection systems and intelligent inspection planning, received approval earlier this week from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to fly a drone beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS) utilizing radar and without a visual observer or a second pilot to monitor the airspace for other aircraft. The Avitas waiver marks the first such approval by the FAA under the current regulations governing drone operations in the United States.

The approval is for low-altitude operations of a UAS weighing more than 55 pounds without an observer in Loving County, Texas. The drone will perform industrial inspections of infrastructure and well pads for Shell Oil Company.

According to a press release issued by Avitas, the flights will use trailer-mounted radar to enhance flight and remote pilot situational awareness.

The Avitas waiver marks a significant step forward in the use of true BVLOS operations (i.e. without a visual observer or second pilot)—a development that is sure to further increase the use of drone technology in situations requiring flight operations over large areas or over geography marked by difficult terrain.

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