



Press Release

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Leading Experts to Address Vertical Flight Aircraft Autonomy

*Vertical Flight Society Hosting “Progress Towards Autonomous Vertical Flight”
Workshop on August 10, 2020*

Fairfax, Virginia, USA, August 4, 2020 — The Vertical Flight Society (VFS) is hosting its fourth annual panel, “Progress Towards Autonomous Vertical Flight,” on Monday, August 10, 2020. The half-day webinar is sponsored by Near Earth Autonomy and is supported by the Association for Unmanned Vehicle Systems International (AUVSI).

This online workshop brings together a dozen of the top experts on autonomy in vertical flight and aviation, to discuss the challenges, progress and the applications that autonomy will enable. More information and registration for the event is at www.vtol.org/xpo-2020

The future of vertical flight will be enabled by autonomous flight. The webinar will cover autonomy for helicopters and advanced rotorcraft, as well as electric vertical takeoff and landing (eVTOL) aircraft for passenger and cargo delivery. The Vertical Flight Society has brought these innovative leaders together to share their progress, and discuss the milestones required to reach the ultimate goal of pilotless flight. VFS is excited to present this program virtually to reach even more participants this year.

The program — chaired again this year by Graham Warwick, Executive Editor for Technology at Aviation Week — consists of three topic areas, breaking down the need, development and application of autonomy. Each topic features a keynote presenter, and a corresponding discussion panel.

The first session starts with a presentation featuring Sanjiv Singh, CEO of Near Earth Autonomy, establishing the framework of why we need to pursue autonomy, followed by a discussion on “Enabling Autonomy” with technology leaders Luuk van Dijk, CEO of Daedalean; Francis Govers, Platform Autonomy Lead at Bell; and Maxime Gariel, CTO of Xwing.

The second session features Gary Gysin, CEO of Wisk, outlining the process for Designing for Autonomy and panel discussion on applying autonomy with technology leaders Dave Merrill, CEO of Elroy Air, and Igor Cherepinsky, Director of Innovations at Sikorsky, a Lockheed Martin Company.

In the final session, Col. Nathan Diller, US Air Force, Director of AFWERX and the Air Force’s Agility Prime lead, will present “Applying Autonomy in Operations.” This will be followed by a panel discussion

on “Certifying Autonomy” with technology leaders Daniel Moczydlower, President and CEO of EmbraerX; Wes Ryan, Unmanned and Pilotless Aircraft Technology Lead for the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA); and Steve Cook (Northrop Grumman), representing the work by standards development organization ASTM International.

The annual VFS Autonomous Vertical Flight panel has historically been held at the AUVSI’s XPONENTIAL trade show, which had been planned for the week of August 10. The panels are intended to educate AUVSI members and XPONENTIAL attendees on the promise and progress of autonomy for vertical flight. With the subsequent postponement, and eventual conversion to a virtual program of this year’s XPONENTIAL, the program is now a stand-alone virtual event, and has expanded to a dozen industry and government experts representing four continents, North America, South America, Europe and Australia/Oceania.

The annual panel is organized by AUVSI and VFS members Ajay Sehgal (KBR) and Barbara Lindauer (Sikorsky, a Lockheed Martin Company), and by VFS Director of Strategic Development, Jim Sherman.

The Vertical Flight Society has worked to advance autonomous vertical flight aviation for more than two decades. Autonomy in aircraft systems has the potential to significantly reduce pilot workload, increase air transportation safety and enable new air transportation markets.

VFS was founded as the American Helicopter Society in 1943 by the visionaries of the early helicopter industry, who believed that technological cooperation and collaboration were essential to support this new type of aircraft. Today, history is repeating itself with VFS playing a similar role helping to advance today’s revolutionary vertical takeoff and landing aircraft. Over the past three-quarters of a century, VFS — the world’s only membership organization that spans the global civil/military and manned/unmanned vertical flight community in industry, governments and academia — has played a key leadership role in advancing the industry.

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The Vertical Flight Society

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