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## Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma to Pursue Federal Aviation Administration Drone Integration Pilot Program Designation - sUAS News

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DURANT, Okla. (December 12, 2017) – The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma has submitted a declaration of intent to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to seek an FAA Drone Integration Pilot Program designation as a tribal government.

The designation would permit the Choctaw Nation to participate in an initiative unveiled in October 2017 by President Trump, who directed U.S. Secretary of Transportation, Elaine L. Chao to begin to safely test and validate advanced operations for drones in partnership with tribal, state and local governments in select jurisdictions. Results from this Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) pilot program will be used to accelerate the safe integration of UAS into the national airspace and to realize the benefits of unmanned

technology in our economy.

The initiative will tackle the most significant challenges in integrating drones into the national airspace and reduce risks to public safety and security. It is designed to provide regulatory certainty and stability for tribal, state and local governments as well as UAS owners and operators who are accepted into the program. A minimum of five (5) tribal, state and local governments will be selected as pilot sites in early 2018. These governmental entities are required to team with private companies and industry as part of the program.

“We realize that this technology has the potential to change our daily lives in many positive ways, but we also recognize that it is important to understand and address local stakeholder concerns as we develop operational rules and regulations,” said Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Chief Gary Batton. “This program will enable and foster that type of balanced perspective in developing rules at the local and national levels.”

The program will help the U.S. Department of Transportation and FAA develop a regulatory framework that will allow more complex low-altitude operations; identify ways to balance local and national interests; improve communications with tribal, state, and local jurisdictions; address security and privacy risks; and accelerate the approval of operations that currently require special authorizations.

“The Choctaw Nation has always supported technology innovations,” said Chief Batton. “We are eager to participate in this important UAS initiative and help the U.S. remain globally competitive in emerging aviation technology fields. We will emphasize efforts to protect the safety, security, privacy and general well-being of residents in our communities even as we promote job growth, economic development, and important educational opportunities for our citizens and our neighbors in southeastern Oklahoma.”

About the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma is a federally recognized Native American tribe with a tribal jurisdictional area comprising twelve

tribal districts in 10 ½ counties of southeastern Oklahoma.

The Choctaw Nation is the third largest federally recognized Native American tribe with more than 223,000 enrolled members. For the past eighteen months, the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma has collaborated with James Grimsley, CEO of DII, LLC, to advance and expand the tribe's existing aviation technology-related focus.

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