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**Vantis and Thales Partner**

**to Build Nation’s First Statewide BVLOS Network**

GRAND FORKS, ND – Vantis, North Dakota’s Statewide Unmanned Aircraft Systems Network, has selected a long-term systems integrator to build out this groundbreaking UAS, or drone, infrastructure across the state. Thales, a global technology leader, was one of three aviation giants providing engineering and integration services being evaluated to enable BVLOS UAS flights on Vantis. A state selection committee made up of members from the North Dakota Department of Commerce and Northern Plains UAS Test Site (NPUASTS), which administers Vantis, selected Thales as the long-term systems integrator for Vantis design, operations and maintenance.

“We’re excited for the next phase of our partnership with Thales,” said James Cieplak, program manager of Vantis. “They were chosen not only because of their outstanding technical performance and innovative approach to building this system, but because they provide the best long-term value to the state. Thales shares our vision for what a partnership of this magnitude could achieve, and for Vantis as the future of the UAS industry.”

One of the major barriers to commercial UAS flights – package deliveries, infrastructure inspections, search and rescue efforts – is that UAS currently must remain within visual line of sight of the pilot. Vantis is a State of North Dakota-funded technology infrastructure that uses radar, radios, and other communications equipment on towers distributed throughout the state to provide command, control, and situational awareness to UAS pilots flying aircraft within the network’s coverage area. With Vantis, UAS pilots can see and avoid obstacles and fly safely at a

distance – which means commercial UAS flights that are economically feasible and scalable to the size of business.

“North Dakota continues to be the nation’s proving ground for the testing, training and commercialization of unmanned aircraft systems, and this partnership with Thales to build out the first-of-its-kind Vantis statewide network will help cement our state’s reputation as a UAS leader,” said North Dakota Lt. Gov. Brent Sanford, who chairs the Northern Plains Unmanned Systems Authority. “Our state’s nearly $50 million investment in this groundbreaking technology is attracting companies, jobs and entrepreneurs and diversifying our economy for the benefit of all North Dakotans.”

As the systems integration partner for Vantis, Thales will deploy new communications and surveillance infrastructure in phases across the state. This infrastructure will be supported by a Mission and Network Operations Center (MNOC) that uses the State of North Dakota’s fiber optic telecommunications network along with robust digital services deployed on cloud-based infrastructure to support operational resilience.

Vantis infrastructure has been installed at key sites in western North Dakota, where testing is currently underway. Testing standards were developed in collaboration with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to ensure they are rigorous, do not interfere with existing manned aviation operations, and to prove the safety and reliability of Vantis moving forward. Currently, approvals to fly BVLOS must be obtained directly from the FAA on an individual basis. Working with the FAA as the Vantis network is built out and proven will enable any operator who flies on the network to receive the appropriate approvals to facilitate true BVLOS flights – something that does not exist at this scale anywhere in the country.

“BVLOS operations are the greatest economic driver for sustained commercial UAS use-cases and, until now, there hasn’t been any common, or shared-use, infrastructure to support routine BVLOS operations,” said Todd Donovan, Vice President, Airspace Mobility Solutions, Americas, Thales. “Ultimately, the approach for unmanned systems with Vantis in North Dakota will likely shape how we approach UAS integration more broadly.”

As the system matures, Vantis will continue its expansion across the state. The expansion strategy targets areas with existing use cases where commercial interests and capable UAS operators intersect, such as the initial stage in North Dakota’s Bakken oil fields. The second stage of implementation will include the Red River Valley, priming Vantis to support businesses in two of the state’s largest metropolitan areas as well as one of the major agricultural regions in the state. Then, Vantis will begin connecting these major economic powerhouse areas across North Dakota.

“BVLOS flights are the future of UAS. They are how we achieve repeatable, scalable, economically viable commercial UAS services,” said Trevor Woods, interim executive director of NPUASTS. “Vantis, through our partnership with Thales USA, is making that future a reality. We’re building the blueprint for commercial BVLOS flights across the country.”

**About Vantis**

[Vantis](https://www.vantisuas.com/) is North Dakota’s statewide unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS) network, the first of its kind in the nation. Created by North Dakota with an initial investment in 2019, Vantis provides turnkey support to commercial and public UAS operators through infrastructure and regulatory approvals allowing applications and usability over a variety of industries. Visit VantisUAS.com for more information.

**About the Northern Plains UAS Test Site**

The [Northern Plains UAS Test Site](https://www.npuasts.com/) is one of seven Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) unmanned aircraft system (UAS) test sites in the nation. The mission of the NPUASTS is to collaborate with FAA and industry partners to develop systems, rules, and procedures to safely integrate unmanned aircraft into the National Airspace System without negatively impacting existing general or commercial aviation. NPUASTS is administering Vantis.

**About Thales**

Thales (Euronext Paris: HO) is a global high technology leader investing in digital and “deep tech” innovations –connectivity, big data, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity and quantum technology – to build a future we can all trust, which is vital to the development of our societies. The company provides solutions, services and products that help its customers –businesses, organisations and states – in the defense, aeronautics, space, transportation and digital identity and security markets to fulfil their critical missions, by placing humans at the heart of the decision-making process.

With 81,000 employees in 68 countries, Thales generated sales of €17 billion in 2020 (on a basis including Gemalto over 12 months).

In the United States, Thales has conducted significant research and development, manufacturing, and service capabilities for more than 100 years. Today, Thales is present in 22 states, operating 46 different facilities and employing nearly 4,000 people. Working closely with U.S. customers and local partners, Thales is able to meet the most complex requirements for every operating environment.