



## NEWS RELEASE

### New Drone and Unmanned Systems Initiative Announced for Florida Public Safety Agencies

*AIRT and AUVSI's Florida Peninsula Chapter team up to launch DRONERESPONDERS Florida Public Safety Coordination Group to serve as model for supporting first responders and emergency services organizations with public-private partnerships.*

**MIAMI – October 19, 2021** – The Airborne International Response Team (AIRT), the leading 501(c)3 non-profit organization supporting the use of unmanned systems for public safety and disaster response – and official home of DRONERESPONDERS® - has partnered with the AUVSI Florida Peninsula Chapter, Inc, a 501(c)6 non-profit organization and subdivision of the Association for Unmanned Vehicle Systems International (AUVSI), the world's leading non-profit organization dedicated to the use of unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) and robotic vehicles, to launch a new public safety initiative benefiting Florida's first responders.

Under the Agreement of Cooperation, the two organizations are creating a model for supporting statewide public safety and emergency services organizations using unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) and other uncrewed, remotely piloted, and autonomous technologies used to help save lives and protect property.

Branded under AIRT's widely successful DRONERESPONDERS non-profit program, the DRONERESPONDERS Florida Public Safety Coordination Group will establish the framework for public safety agencies and emergency services organizations to directly collaborate with industry, government, and academia through the combined expertise of AIRT and AUVSI members at the regional level.

DRONERESPONDERS Public Safety Coordination Groups (DPSCGs) will operate in the U.S. at a statewide level with support from AUVSI chapters and other designated partners. The primary objectives of the DPSCGs will be to:

- 1. Support the education, adoption, and use of remotely piloted, uncrewed, and autonomous systems by public safety and emergency service organizations at the regional (state) level within the scope of established legal and acceptable community standards.**
- 2. Increase awareness and understanding of the value of drones, robotics, and related technologies by the public with increased emphasis on underserved communities.**
- 3. Provide a mechanism for government to directly collaborate with industry and academia at the regional level to stimulate innovation and better serve the Whole Community during times of emergency and crisis.**

“We have witnessed an incredible proliferation in the use of unmanned technologies by public safety agencies at the state and local level,” said John Lambert, President, AUVSI Florida Peninsula Chapter. “Our collaboration with DRONERESPONDERS will help us support our first responders who are using these systems while also allowing us to better educate the general population about the value these systems can provide during emergencies and disasters.”

The DRONERESPONDERS Florida Public Safety Coordination Group will be spearheaded by a collaborative team of UAS program managers from public safety agencies throughout the State of Florida. Sgt. Robert Dooley, Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Program Coordinator for the Florida Highway Patrol, will start as the initial point of contact for Florida law enforcement agencies operating UAS, while Rich Gatanis, Firefighter, Hazardous Materials Technician, and UAS Program Coordinator for the Southern Manatee Fire & Rescue District, will serve as the liaison for fire rescue departments operating drones and robotic systems.

“This new collaboration combining the power of the DRONERESPONDERS network with AUVSI regional chapters will establish a new model for government, industry, and academia to work together for the greater good,” said Chief Charles Werner (ret.), Director, DRONERESPONDERS. “We are excited to establish this model in Florida before expanding to other states.”

Florida public safety and emergency services personal with operational or oversight responsibility for unmanned systems or related technologies are invited to join the DRONERESPONDERS Florida Public Safety Coordination Group by contacting [FL@dronerespnders.org](mailto:FL@dronerespnders.org) or visiting [fl.dronerespnders.org](http://fl.dronerespnders.org)

#### **About AIRT**

Based in Miami, Florida, AIRT® (Airborne International Response Team) is the leading 501(c)3 non-profit organization supporting the use of unmanned systems for public safety and disaster response. AIRT offers a wide range of educational programming, training events, and mission-critical deployments in support of public safety UAS operations and designed to help people prepare for, respond to, and recover from complex emergencies and major disasters. AIRT is the official home of DRONERESPONDERS®. For more information, visit: <http://airt.ngo> or <http://dronerespnders.org>

#### **About AUVSI Florida Peninsula Chapter**

The Association for Unmanned Vehicle Systems International (AUVSI) is the world’s largest non-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of unmanned systems and robotics. The AUVSI Florida Peninsula Chapter is a 501(c)6 non-profit organization representing the AUVSI mission on a regional basis throughout most of the State of Florida. For more information, visit [auvsi.org](http://auvsi.org) or [auvsiflorida.org](http://auvsiflorida.org)

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