# NASA SBIR 2009 Phase I Solicitation

## O2.01 Automated Collection and Transfer of Launch Range Data (Surveillance/Intrusion, Weather)

**Lead Center: KSC**

**Participating Center(s): GRC, GSFC**

NASA is seeking innovative technologies for sensors and instrumentation technologies which expedite range clearance by providing real-time situational awareness for safe Range operations from processing to launch and recovery. These sensors and instruments are expected to operate, as a payload, on mobile or deployable Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS), High Altitude Airships (HAA), buoys, etc. NASA is also seeking innovative technologies to remotely measure electric fields aloft in order to reduce the threat of destruction of a launch vehicle by rocket triggered lightning.

Purpose: NASA is embarking on a new era of space exploration with new launch vehicles and demands for availability to support launch times within hours of one another to ensure mission success. This availability requirement is allocated across the entire launch operations which includes the Range that provides clear corridor of land, air and sea for the vehicles to transit through, as they ascent or return. The current Range infrastructure is aging, labor intensive and independent, and would benefit from new sensors and instrumentation that improve the situational awareness (including weather) of those that are responsible for ensuring public safety, mission assurance and efficient operations.

To aid in this situational awareness the new sensors and instrumentation must be able to operate in the environment that takes advantage of mobile or deployable Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS), High Altitude Airships (HAA), buoys, etc. Use of these vehicles as a platform is intended to increase the Ranges availability while reducing the cost of operations. Size, power, weight and stability of these systems, that operate on these platforms, will be a major constraint their use.

These sensors and instrumentation provide for the remote detection, recognition, and identification of persons and objects that have intruded into areas of the range that must be cleared in order to conduct safe launch operations. This would include a wide spectrum of optical, infrared, Radio Frequency (RF), and millimeter wave sensors for this purpose. In order to achieve accurate identification, time and position of intruding entities multiple sensors and instruments may be used, or combined through the use of neural networks and data fusion techniques. This will require the use of standards for communications, so that, data from individual sensors or instruments can be combined on a platform and processed on-board, or communicated to central location where a fused solution is processed.

The sensors, instrumentation and algorithms to remotely measure electric fields aloft will reduce the threat of destruction of launch vehicles during ascent by improving the prediction of potential lightning strikes to vehicles due to triggered lightning. Potential candidate technologies include new algorithms to take advantage of existing dual-polarized Doppler five-cm weather radar capability, or entirely new technologies for the remote sensing of electric fields. The ability to economically measure the incremental ballistic wind velocities along the predicted trajectory of launch vehicles at remote and evolving launch ranges at altitudes up to 100 kft via fixed and mobile LIDAR approaches is also highly desirable.

Research should be conducted to demonstrate technical feasibility during Phase 1 and show a path toward a Phase 2 hardware and software demonstration and delivering a demonstration unit or software package for NASA testing at the completion of the Phase 2 contract.