



FIRST IS-BAO REMOTE PILOT AIRCRAFT SYSTEM (RPAS) REGISTERED OPERATOR

Company: Phoenix Air Unmanned, LLC
 Managing Director: William 'Will' Lovett
 Industry: Aerial Survey, Cinema, and Inspection Services
 Publish Date: March 11, 2022

IS-BAO FOR REMOTE PILOT AIRCRAFT SYSTEM RPAS FIRST OF MANY

Phoenix Air Unmanned, LLC (PAU) recently became the first Remote Pilot Aircraft System (RPAS) operator to achieve International Standard for Business Aircraft Operations (IS-BAO) registration. Based in Cartersville, Georgia, PAU provides high-quality imagery for many industries requiring aerial survey, cinema, and inspection services. PAU's passion for achieving a higher standard in all their work brought them to IS-BAO.

As the internationally recognized voluntary safety standard for business aviation, IS-BAO was first introduced twenty years ago by the International Business Aviation Council (IBAC). IBAC is a non-profit, international trade association proudly representing the interests of the global business aviation industry through its observer status at International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and its safety programmes that also include the International Standard for Business Aircraft Handlers (IS-BAH).

The PAU team came to IS-BAO after searching for safety standards that could help them advance their safety culture and supplement other safety efforts.

The IS-BAO edition for RPAS was still in development in 2021 and provided an opportunity for PAU to contribute. They quickly became involved with the

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Managing Director, William (Will) Lovett

RPAS beta development team and offered real-life experiences to enhance the progress of the new RPAS program, and eventually challenge them with addressing any gaps in their existing safety practices.

PAU began its operation in 2015 at a time when there were no Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) standards and very few regulations at that time. Managing Director, William (Will) Lovett, said, "We began the business using SMS policies and procedures that we knew about from working with commercial aircraft

operations. We then began to integrate UAS best practices from our operations and third-party audit standards and procedures. Our goal with IS-BAO RPAS was to validate our procedures and further enhance our program with anything learned from the audit process."

Phoenix Air Unmanned is the sister company to Phoenix Air Group, an internationally recognized firm that provides a range of air ambulance transport, high priority air cargo services, and government and military contracting services. Phoenix Air Group has been an IS-BAO-registered operator for more than ten years and operates a fleet of 49 Gulfstream, Learjet, and Embraer aircraft.

"Attention to detail is critical in all that we do," says Will Lovett, a US Army (CW5) retired veteran. Will took on



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IS-BAO FOR REMOTE PILOT AIRCRAFT SYSTEM RPAS - FIRST OF MANY CONT...

the managing director role at PAU and helped launch the new business after a successful risk management career in the aviation insurance industry.

"PAU is constantly seeking ways to improve operations from a safety perspective. We wanted to validate that our operations met IS-BAO standards and include any additional procedures that we may have missed. Our operation has been structured from day one with safety and risk management as a priority. With no UAS standards and very few regulations that addressed commercial UAS operations when we started the company, we had to embed the safety culture from the ground up," added Will.

"Initially, we had to conduct a gap analysis on our standard operating procedures (SOPs) and manuals to ensure they were meeting IS-BAO protocols. We had already completed multiple SMS and operational audits for other non-IS-BAO third-party organizations. While most requirements were being met, we did uncover a few areas in which we had room for improvement."

Will mentioned the one thing that was "unexpected" was that many of the protocols for traditional manned

aircraft and helicopters were applicable to RPAS, with some modifications.

The auditor for the first RPAS registration was seasoned IBAC auditor Rob Little with Air Safety Dynamics. He and the PAU team worked well together, and Rob played a part in the RPAS beta development team too.

Rob said, "It was a pleasure working with Will and the PAU group. My role on the beta team was more as an observer by passing along RPAS best practices, with PAU's input, that were not initially in the IS-BAO protocols. Then they would collaborate and develop the IS-BAO protocols for future RPAS audits. Basically, I took suggestions back to the IS-BAO team for tweaks to the new RPAS standard. It all moved along rather quickly and my kudos to the development team. They did a great job and were true professionals throughout the entire process."

"We were so fortunate to work with this operator. The team of professionals at Phoenix Air Unmanned developed their business with SMS in mind. Safety is at the core of their operation, so they had a firm grip on safety processes, and they are very passionate about continuous improvement. It has been a true

pleasure working with Will and his team," Rob added.

Will mentioned that Rob went above and beyond in many areas during this process and recommended an excellent training course that PAU might consider. Consequently, PAU's Safety Program Manager, Ben Mullinix (CAPT, US Navy Reserve), and Quality Assurance Lead, Megan Hundley, recently completed the DOT Aviation Safety Program Management course and highly recommend it.

"As a result of the audit, the feedback received, and the team effort from all involved, we are excited to be a part of the IS-BAO-registered community," Will stated. "We set out to demonstrate to regulators, the FAA, clients, and prospective clients that we have met the highest voluntary international standards available for commercial UAS operations! And now we can proudly display our IS-BAO certificate in our lobby."

Andrew Karas is the IS-BAO Programme Director and pilots drones as well as manned business jets. To get started with your UAS operation gap-analysis contact Andrew Karas at akaras@ibac.org or to learn more about IS-BAO RPAS and other programmes, go to IBAC.org.



PICTURED L-R: Megan Hundley, Quality Assurance Lead, Will Lovett, PAU Managing Director, Ben Mullinix, Safety Programme Manager



PHOTO CREDIT ERAU MAGAZINE

Pictured L-R: Josef Baertsch, Swiss drone instructor; Will Wheeler, PAU director of operations; Will Lovett, PAU managing director; Chris Carta, PAU standardization pilot; and Davy Dilant, Swiss drone instructor.

BACKGROUND

The RPAS IS-BAO standard option advanced into the open beta testing phase in 2021 after a thorough working group analysis that included industry representatives and IS-BAO Standards Board members. This working group addressed the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) RPAS Concept of Operations (CONOPS) that is being drafted for inclusion into ICAO Annex 6. The group continues to gather information from beta operators, which may need to be incorporated. The RPAS component may be added by IS-BAO operators who have RPAS in their departments or by any stand-alone RPAS operators seeking IS-BAO registration.



As a non-profit, international trade association, IBAC proudly represents the interests of business aviation – for the industry, by the industry – through its global advocacy, permanent observer status at the ICAO, and by raising the standard for safety with IS-BAO® and IS-BAH® Programmes.