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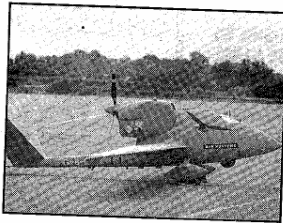
## University called in to help robot plane plans

by **Matthew Squires**  
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A LANCASHIRE university has been given a £225,000 grant as part of a national programme to allow next generation unmanned airplanes to be flown in civil airspace.

Lancaster University will use the cash to research technology to enable uninhabited air vehicles (UAVs) to fly safely in normal airspace alongside manned planes.

The work will form part of the ASTRAEA programme – a £32m collaboration which could see UAV technology



**TEST: A BAE Systems HERTI UAV**

put to work for the police, fire service, coastguard, utilities and others.

The latest completely pilotless planes could revolutionise duties such as border control. They are capable of taking super high resolution images which can

detect the slightest changes on the ground.

The Evening Post gave readers an exclusive look at some of the UAVs being developed at BAE Systems in Warton earlier this week.

BAE experts said they have already had enquiries from customers wanting to use the planes for jobs such as policing the UK's waters and guarding against illegal deforestation abroad.

Dr Plamen Angelov, of the Department of Communications Systems at Infolab, is the principal investigator for Lancaster University on two ASTRAEA projects which focus on adaptive routing and collision avoidance systems.

Dr Angelov said: "The unmanned aircraft can be seen as autonomous system which takes off, lands and manoeuvres successfully without direct human inter-

ference unless it is needed. To make this possible, one needs to address different problems.

"For example, the unmanned aircraft needs to avoid obstacles autonomously and safely. Another issue is to fly an optimal route in terms of fuel consumption, time and other factors, such as storms or mountainous terrain."

The ASTRAEA partners also include the universities of Leicester, Bath, Cranfield, Loughborough, Aberystwyth, Sheffield and the West of England and companies such as BAE Systems, Thales UK, Rolls-Royce, EADS, Flight Refuelling and QinetiQ.

Secretary of State for Trade and Industry Alastair Darling described ASTRAEA as a "significant programme for the UK in establishing our credentials in the growing field of UAV development."