



Harnessing American Ingenuity

News Release

Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency

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ROBOTS STORM AHEAD IN DARPA GRAND CHALLENGE SEMIFINAL At Mid-point, Twenty-two Teams Complete Test Course at Least Once

Fontana, Calif. – The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) today announced that 22 robotic ground vehicles have successfully traversed an obstacle course designed to resemble conditions that they will encounter in the October 8 DARPA *Grand Challenge* event. The ongoing semifinal competition, known as the National Qualification Event (NQE), continues at the California Speedway in Fontana, Calif., through Wednesday, October 5.

“A year ago, I would have been happy to see a robot travel one mile at the NQE,” said DARPA Director Dr. Anthony Tether. “But we have seen a significant number of autonomous ground vehicles traverse a very tough 2.2-to-2.7 mile course more than once – and in some cases, three times!”

Grand Challenge Program Manager Ron Kurjanowicz added, “We’re going to surprise everybody on October 8, with a fiercely competitive field of worthy vehicles.”

Teams that have successfully completed runs are listed at the end of this release.

By October 6, DARPA will announce a field of 20 finalists to compete for a \$2 million cash prize in the *Grand Challenge* Event (GCE) itself. The selection of finalists will be based on the robots’ ability to operate autonomously, navigate the course accurately while detecting and avoiding obstacles, and moving at militarily relevant rates of speed.

The Mojave Desert course begins and ends at Primm, Nev., and covers approximately 150 miles of dusty, bumpy desert roads, dry lake beds, and narrow mountain passes. The event begins at sunrise on Saturday, October 8. The route will not be revealed to teams until two hours before the GCE begins.

DARPA selected 43 semifinalists to compete in the NQE after a year-long selection process that required teams to submit technical papers and videos, followed by site visits by DARPA technical experts to thoroughly evaluate the capability of each vehicle to autonomously navigate a narrow 200-meter course that contained turns and randomly placed obstacles.

(more)

“We established the *Grand Challenge* to help foster the development of autonomous vehicle technology that will some day help save the lives of Americans who are protecting our country on the battlefield,” said Tether. “The quality of the field that is emerging offers strong evidence that our program is succeeding.”

Further information on how to cover this event and regular updates on the competition are available by visiting the official *Grand Challenge* website, www.darpa.mil/grandchallenge, or the event website at www.grandchallenge.org.

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DARPA is the central research and development organization for the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD). The agency manages research and development projects for the DoD and pursues research in technology areas where the risk can be very high, but success provides dramatic capability advances for the DoD.

DARPA Grand Challenge
National Qualification Event

Course Completions at Mid-Point
October 3, 2005

TEAM	Number of Successful Course Runs
Mojavaton	2
Team CalTech	3
Stanford	3
DAD	1
Autonosys	0
Team Jefferson	1
Blue Team	0
CIMAR	1
Virginia Tech ROCKY	2
Desert Buckeyes	3
Team Overbot	0
Indiana Robot Racing Team	0
Team UCF	0
Insight Racing	1
Intelligent Safety Vehicle Safety	2
MonsterMoto	1
Oregon Wave	0
The Golem Group / UCLA	2
Red Team	3
SciAutonics / Auburn	2
Team TerraMax	3
Team AION	1
Axion Racing	3
Team Cajunbot	0
Red Team Too	3
Team Cornell	2
Team Banzai	1
Team ENSCO	1
BJB Engineering	0
Gray Team	0
Team Juggernaut	0
Autonomous Vehicle Systems	0
Team Tormenta	0
Indy Robot Racing	0
Terra Engineering	0
Palos Verdes High School	0
MITRE Meteorites	0
Virginia Tech GC Team	0
CyberRider	0
A.I. Motorvators	0
Princeton	2
Austin Robot Technology	0
Underdawg	0