

SD Chapter Joins MIT Alumni Club for Predator Facility Tour

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The San Diego Chapter ended the month of June with a 4-hour presentation and tour of the General Atomics Aeronautical Systems, Inc. (GA-ASI) facility in Poway, CA. This is where the Predator, Reaper, and other UAV (unmanned air vehicle) drones are designed and built. These are robotic planes that can thread the rugged mountains of Pakistan, capture video images of terrorist hideouts and launch 500-pound Hellfire missiles to blast them apart. The company's 1.9 million-square-foot facility is a showcase for Southern California's drone industry, which employs an estimated 10,000 people

In a joint meeting with the San Diego MIT Club, SAVE members participated in a limited group of 48 participants who were briefed on the company background, various UAV configurations, roles, and respective capabilities. The subsequent tour covered the composite materials test and fabrication areas, and a 6-mile trip to the aircraft integration and assembly facility. Those attending were divided into four groups of 12, so there was ample time for discussion of the many work stations, and even some 'hands-on' inspection of components in various stages of 'clean room' fabrication.

The final assembly area had a number of UAV configurations "in process," so we had a great opportunity to compare the various features related to engine types and fuels, radars and cameras, and other "sensing" platforms for various missions. We additionally were able to walk through several of the modular "control stations" that were configured for "front



line" operation and maintenance, with capability to control multiple vehicles.

Due to extremely tight security, attendees were required to provide "proof of citizenship" at the tour site, meaning a passport or birth certificate, and another photo ID like a driver's license. A

detailed list that included name, company, home address, and other data was also submitted as part of the pre-tour security. No cameras, cell phones, or other "accessories" were allowed on the tour, so the only photos we have to show are those from other sources.

