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## The Northern Connection

### *U.S. Commercial Service Backs Nordic - North Dakota UAS Connections*

Many North Dakotans will jump at the chance to travel to the Nordic region, since so many North Dakotans have ancestors and relatives from that

region. So a North Dakota Trade Mission to the Nordic region in October 2015 found instant enthusiasm in both North Dakota and the Nordic countries, especially in the Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) sector, since it is a fast-developing field in both North Dakota and in the Nordic region.

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The Global Leader in UAV Based Automated Inspection



The U.S. Commercial service in North Dakota, Helsinki, Oslo and Stockholm combined forces to assist the North Dakota Department of Commerce and Grand Forks Region Economic Development Corporation to find Nordic companies with an interest in locating UAS facilities in North Dakota. Through its Gold Key Service, over a dozen appointments were set up for the North Dakota delegation in Finland, Sweden and Norway.

One company that had initiated contact with the Grand Forks EDC prior to the trip was Sharper Shape, based in Finland. During the mission, GFEDC's Terry Sando, the UAS Sector Senior Manager for the FAA approved UAS test site, had the opportunity to meet personally with Sharper Shape and discuss future visits to Grand Forks, North Dakota. The CS Finland office provided additional due diligence after the meeting, which helped solidify the connection. Sharper Shape decided to open its North American Technical and Operations Center in Grand Forks facility, which opened in December 2015. The company will work in the infrastructure industry using their technology for inspection purposes. There are now around two dozen UAS companies in Grand Forks with Sharper Shape the newest addition to the group. The CEO of Sharper Shape, Tero Heinonen, said, "the strong entrepreneur ecosystem and a world-leading cluster of drone companies in Grand Forks helped with our selection." The UND Center for Innovation is supplying support staff and flexible leases that help new start-ups and new to U.S. companies get established and flourish.

Through its ability to assist companies and trade promotion groups both in the US and overseas, the U.S. Commercial Service provided a helpful facilitative role in the North Dakota trade mission and connections with Sharper Shape. Promotion of foreign direct investment is one of the newest ways the U.S. Commercial Service is helping grow the U.S. economy, and this trade mission, which was organized with the support of the ND Department of Commerce and the ND Trade Office, is an example of how CS's help can be beneficial to parties on both sides of a complex transaction.

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