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TEAM CAJUNBOT GETS CLOSER TO URBAN CHALLENGE

UL Lafayette's team is one of 36 semifinalists announced today

Long hours in the lab and out on the course will continue for Team CajunBot. Department of Defense officials announced Thursday the team from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette is one of 36 semifinalists in the 2007 Urban Challenge.

The semifinalists will next compete in a Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) qualifying event Oct. 26 - 31. The top 20 finalists will move on to the final competition on Nov. 3 in Victorville, California.



The teams will compete for prizes worth \$2 million for first, \$1 million for second and \$500,000 for third.

"This just shows the type of talent Lafayette has," said Dr. Arun Lakhotia, team leader. This will be the third time Team CajunBot competes in a DARPA Grand Challenge. For the first time, though, Team CajunBot's autonomous vehicle will be a Jeep Wrangler. In prior contests, the team entered a six-wheeled, all terrain vehicle for a desert course.

Vehicles in the current challenge will have to obey traffic laws while performing maneuvers like merging into traffic, navigating traffic circles and avoiding moving obstacles. They will compete at an urban military training facility on the former George Air Force Base.

According to Urban Challenge officials, the site was chosen because of its network of urban roads which best simulate the type of terrain American forces operate in when deployed overseas.

The purpose of each challenge has been to improve autonomous vehicle technology for use during war operations.

"The robotic vehicles will conduct simulated military supply missions at the site," said Dr. Tony Tether, DARPA director. "This adds many of the elements these vehicles would face in operational environments."

Semifinalists were chosen following competitive site visits conducted by DARPA. "The depth and quality of this year's field of competitors is a



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testimony to how far the technology has advanced since the first Grand Challenge in 2004. DARPA thanks all the contestants for their hard work and dedication and congratulates the teams selected as semi-finalists," said Tether.

Team CajunBot and Team Gray of Metairie are the only two teams representing Louisiana. Both teams competed last year as well.

"If either of us wins, it is great for Louisiana," said Lakhotia. "We both represent the best of Louisiana."

For a complete list of semifinalists, visit www.darpa.mil/grandchallenge.



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