Kratos Defense, Minn-Dak Farmers Cooperative Partner to Deploy Self-Driving Trucks to Address Workforce Challenges and Improve the Supply Chain

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SAN DIEGO, May 19, 2022 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- Kratos Defense & Security Solutions, Inc. (Nasdaq: KTOS), a leading National Security Solutions provider, announced today that it has teamed with the Minn-Dak Farmers Cooperative (MDFC) to launch self-driving trucks, easing the truck driver shortage burden using Kratos Autonomous Systems to ensure integrity of the agriculture supply chain as a critical national security concern.

Kratos Unmanned Systems' core competency is affordable, disruptive, unmanned systems-related technology and products for aerial drones, surface vessels, ground-based vehicles, and related command, control, autonomy, and artificial intelligence.

The collaboration between Kratos and MDFC, one of America's largest sugarbeet shareholder/grower cooperatives, was fostered by Grand Farm, a non-profit group focused on facilitating agriculture technology innovation headquartered in North Dakota and combines Kratos' innovative unmanned system technologies, with Minn-Dak's agriculture and transportation expertise. The retrofitted solution adapts "Leader/Follower" truck platooning for hauling harvested sugarbeets between piling stations and the granulated sugar processing plant in Wahpeton, North Dakota.

A photo accompanying this announcement is available at https://www.globenewswire.com/NewsRoom/AttachmentNg/61a93c9f-9c56-41bc-a8b1-96df7f26c5c2

Maynard Factor, VP of Business Development for the Kratos Unmanned Systems Division, said, "We are excited to collaborate with Minn-Dak to deploy driverless trucks within their sugarbeet harvest operations. Kratos develops and fields transformative, affordable systems, platforms, and products for national security, and ensuring the agriculture supply chain using driverless technology directly aligns with our core company objectives. Our focus here is on the niche, short-haul trucking routes where Kratos' technology is available today that can solve driver shortage issues impacting agriculture hauling capacity and, therefore, the supply chain. Sugarbeet growers have been early adopters of emerging agriculture technologies, implementing now-commonplace innovations such as transitioning from rail to trucks and using GPS-guided farm equipment. We see driverless technology as a similar innovation for enhancing critical farm-related operations. Additionally, as the world advances and unmanned vehicle systems continue to solve a multitude of workforce, cost, and safety challenges, we are committed to being a significant solution provider across the spectrum of this large and growing market area."

Self-driving truck deployments can augment the existing workforce as a tool for either increasing haul capacity to keep up with growing demand or maintaining existing haul capacity when qualified drivers are unavailable. Significant effort, cost, and planning is required to ensure haul capacity meets national harvest quotas. Over 50,000 trucks a day can be deployed during peak sugarbeet harvesting season, and the Kratos Leader/Follower platoon is an enabling technology that the agriculture industry can now use for optimizing allocation of available labor to bolster the supply chain.

Mike Metzger, Minn-Dak Farmers Co-Op VP of Agriculture, said, "Minn-Dak is beyond excited to be partnering with Kratos Defense as we both take the next step towards implementing Kratos' Leader/Follower technology. Our Cooperative's goal is to take this technology to the next level by incorporating it into our commercial truck fleet that brings the sugarbeets from receiving stations to our factory for processing. It's no secret that there is a gross shortage of commercially licensed truck drivers, especially in rural areas like ours. The deployment of driverless vehicle technology will undoubtedly help alleviate these labor shortages and improve the overall safety and efficiency of our fleet."

Retrofitting driverless technology is an ideal solution for organizations like Minn-Dak that already have an existing fleet and logistics operations. It enables them to use their harvest trucks without having to invest in brand new "purpose-built" robotic vehicles. Additionally, the Kratos Leader/Follower platoon offers several advantages to logistics managers who can now pair available truck drivers with driverless trucks to enhance hauling productivity. The paired trucks offer greater efficiency and fuel savings while reducing recruitment costs and overall stress on the drivers, recruiters, and farmers by solving the driver shortage challenge. Additionally, the integration of the technology into the agriculture supply chain offers strategic workforce development opportunities.

About Kratos Defense & Security Solutions
Kratos Defense & Security Solutions, Inc. (NASDAQ:KTOS) develops and fields transformative, affordable technology, platforms and systems for United States National Security related customers, allies and commercial enterprises. Kratos is changing the way breakthrough technology for these industries are rapidly brought to market through proven commercial and venture capital backed approaches, including proactive research and streamlined development processes. At Kratos, affordability is a technology, and we specialize in unmanned systems, satellite communications, cyber security/warfare, microwave electronics, missile defense, hypersonic systems, training, combat systems and next generation turbo jet and turbo fan engine development. For more information, please visit www.KratosDefense.com.

About Minn-Dak Farmers Cooperative
Minn-Dak Farmers Cooperative (MDFC or Minn-Dak) was the nation's first farmer-owned sugarbeet cooperative and is headquartered in Wahpeton, a city in the southeast corner of North Dakota, in the heart of the Red River Valley. The Cooperative is owned by approximately 500 Shareholders/Growers who collectively grow just over 100,000 acres of sugarbeets and is part of the domestic sweetener industry. Minn-Dak has proudly been in business since 1972 and processes its sugarbeets into sugar as well as products the likes of molasses and beet pulp pellets (used in animal feed). Minn-Dak's products are then marketed through agents worldwide. Major customers include industrial users, including confectioners, breakfast-cereal manufacturers, and bakeries. For more information, please visit www.mdf.coop.

Notice Regarding Forward-Looking Statements
Certain statements in this press release may constitute "forward-looking statements" within the meaning of the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995. These forward-looking statements are made on the basis of the current beliefs, expectations and assumptions of the management of Kratos and are subject to significant risks and uncertainty. Investors are cautioned not to place undue reliance on any such forward-looking statements. All such forward-looking statements speak only as of the date they are made, and Kratos undertakes no obligation to update or revise these statements, whether as a result of new information, future events or otherwise. Although Kratos believes that the expectations reflected in these forward-looking statements are reasonable, these statements involve many risks and uncertainties that may cause actual results to differ materially from what may be expressed or implied in these forward-looking statements. For a further discussion of risks and uncertainties that could cause actual results to differ from those expressed in these forward-looking statements, as well as risks relating to the business of Kratos in general, see the risk disclosures in the Annual Report on Form 10-K of Kratos for the year ended December 26, 2021, and in subsequent reports on Forms 10-Q and 8-K and other filings made with the SEC by Kratos.

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Sugarbeet trucks in leader / follower scenario



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