RECONROBOTICS: AN INTERVIEW WITH ROBOTICS ENGINEER ANDREW DRENNER

Dogs scamper about the office as former UNI graduate, Andrew Drenner, creates a new generation of crime-fighting robots. Drenner and his colleagues formed this unique working environment when they co-founded ReconRobotics, a company that develops life-saving robotic technology. ReconRobotics is the world leader in tactical, micro-robot systems. They're used by U.S. military and international friendly forces, federal, state and local law enforcement agencies, bomb squads and fire/rescue teams. These devices are used to protect their personnel, minimize collateral damage, and gain immediate reconnaissance within dangerous and hostile environments. When asked how he felt being a part of developing such useful technology. There is no better feeling than knowing the work that you are doing is actively saving lives. Thousands of our micro-robots are in everyday use with law enforcement and military operators all over the world, and have been used for everything from stopping terrorists to resolving hostage situations.

After graduating from UNI with his BS in Computer Science in 2001, Drenner moved to Minneapolis where he received both an MS and a PhD in computer science from the University of Minnesota. While there, he made the connections that have led up to his current work.

I, along with several other students in the Center for Distributed Robotics and our PhD advisor, co-founded ReconRobotics to bring the technology we were developing in the laboratory to real-world situations that could save lives.

These developments in robotics have received numerous forms of recognition, including Popular Science's "Best of What's New 2011" and the 2008 Innovation Award from Cygnus Law Enforcement Group (Tactical Category).

We have also been covered extensively by CNN, The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, USA Today, The Economist, and many police and military publications.

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>>> THE THROWBOT XT

In addition to being recognized for his work with ReconRobotics, Drenner has also been recognitized for a number of personal accomplishments, having received Incoming Graduate Student Fellowship at the University of Minnesota, the Merchant Award from UNI, the National Science Foundation's Graduate Research Fellowship, and the Graduate Dissertation Fellowship from the University of Minnesota. He has also been a co-inventor on two issued patents and has several other patents pending.

While Drenner has accomplished a great deal professionally and personally, he still maintains a people-centered focus in the workplace and at home.

We strive to create a culture where everyone has fun, family comes first, we have a dog-friendly office (on any given day there are likely to be a half-dozen dogs in the office,) and we're incredibly flexible with time. When I'm not in the office I enjoy hitting the gym, travelling and spending time with my family.

Drenner feels his experience at UNI has helped him in a number of ways. The curriculum of the Computer Science program was helpful in enriching my abilities as a computer scientist. When I entered graduate school, I felt very prepared for the work that I faced. At UNI, I developed a strong network with my classmates, my cohorts of Presidential Scholars, my coworkers, and faculty members in multiple disciplines. This network has helped me in countless situations throughout graduate school, as well as in my entrepreneurial endeavors.

These endeavors promise to remain a concentration in his future. For now, I'm looking ahead to the continued growth of ReconRobotics and finding new ways to use miniature robots. Those who are interested can see some of our products at www.reconrobotics.com.

>>>SOLDIERS USING THE THROWBOT XT