



## A Report on Participation at SmallSat Conference 2022

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### Overview

From August 6 to 11, 2022, Utah State University hosted the 36th SmallSat Conference in Logan, Utah, U.S., at which about 3,500 people attended. From Japan, more than 100 people participated.

The conference consisted of 240 corporate exhibits and 25 exhibits from institutions of higher learning. From Japan, JETRO set up a joint exhibition space for Japanese companies called "JAPAN BOOTH," through which 12 companies exhibited jointly, while about three companies exhibited independently. Unfortunately, this time there were no exhibition booths from Japanese universities.

Considering the number of people and exhibiting companies, I got the feeling that the world of smallsats has returned to the levels seen before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic—and that it even could have grown even more since then.

### Overall impression and analysis

This year's theme was "OUT OF THIS WORLD!" but to be

honest, this year, this feels like a concept that is hard to put your finger on. Anyways, in 2014, when I participated in the conference for the first time, I concluded that smallsats were halfway to full commercialization, and in seeing the conference this time, it does look like smallsats and their various uses, including those for military and commercial, have matured. However, due to the nature of this conference, satellites and equipment are central themes, and there was no talk of satellite usage or users, which is key when aiming to monetize smallsats.

One thing that I felt as a big difference between pre-COVID and now was that, this time, the U.S. military entities and the private companies that had already taken the lead in commercialization have disappeared. For example, before COVID, the head of the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) and the head of the U.S. Space Command took the stage during the keynote speeches and clearly laid out the assertions by the U.S. military that smallsat operations will be deployed. And in the past, smallsat operators such as Planet and Spire also carefully detailed their respective company directions during exhibitions

and lectures. This time, however, there were almost no announcements about the policies and plans of the U.S. military and the companies that are already gotten ahead in smallsat operations. This does not mean that they stopped smallsat operations but rather that smallsats are now commonplace and that therefore it is redundant to talk about them like they are special.

This time, at first glance, it seemed that there were more presentations from universities and research institutes, but, although no formal announcements were made, it was apparent that a good number of members of the military and the previously mentioned companies that advanced into this field early were also visiting and exchanging information. This conference seems to be recognized as a place for key players to participate and network, and various people from different companies could be seen engaged in many one-on-one meetings. The really important players didn't partake in lectures or exhibitions—they made appointments in advance and focused on key one-on-one meetings. In other words, this conference is also being used as a venue where multiple meetings can be held all at one location, and therefore, if one doesn't make an appointment in advance, you wouldn't be able to exchange information effectively, such as if you suddenly just showed up at the conference.

### Main presentations and discussions

In looking at the lectures and exhibitions, simply transmitting the message that you're building a smallsat doesn't seem to mean anything. Smallsats are already commonplace now in the world of general-purpose equipment and commercial "off-the-shelf" (COTS) operations. Conversely, the competition lies in how much you can lay claim to new technologies and ideas. The following is a summary of the new trends that caught my attention at various side meetings and appointments this time around.



#### (1) Software development flow

< omitted below >

#### (2) Onboard computers

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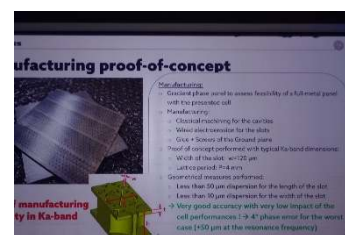
#### (3) Relations between the military and the private sector

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#### (4) Low pricing

< omitted below >



### Other miscellaneous comments

Logan is a rural town located about two hours by bus from Salt Lake City (SLC), the capital of Utah. And with 1,000s of people flocking to a city of 48,000 for the conference, hotel prices skyrocketed. So, I was left with an old motel with no facilities, as there was nowhere else to stay, so I booked it for about 60,000 yen (about USD450) per night!

Many restaurants were located nearby, and SLC is the home of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (i.e., the Mormon faith). Logan is thus home to a splendid Mormon temple. Because of that, in Logan, it's actually quite difficult to find a place where you can drink alcoholic beverages at a restaurant. Anyways, here you can find the relatively rare dish of beef liver steak. You can ask for gravy sauce on top, which is quite good. I really enjoyed it, but... there was no beer available and of course no red wine. Eating a beef dinner with iced tea felt pretty sad!



So after dinner, I went back to the hotel and drank some whiskey I bought at a liquor store, after a strict ID check of course!

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