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Drone-Enabled Smart Traffic Monitoring and Rescue System

Tian Su[1], Qijun Zhou[1], Zihao Wei[2], Ke Zhang[1]

[1]School of Electronic Information Engineering, Shenyang Aerospace University, Shenyang, Liaoning, 110136, China

[2]School of Metallurgy, Northeastern University, Shenyang, Liaoning, 110819, China

ABSTRACT
The intelligent traffic monitoring and rescue system enabled by drones is an important part of smart city construction. By integrating drone technology with cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, and big data, a new three-dimensional and intelligent traffic management model is constructed. The system uses the mobility and wide-area coverage advantages of drones to achieve real-time monitoring of traffic conditions, rapid response to accidents, and efficient rescue, significantly improving the efficiency of urban traffic management and the level of public safety. The study analyzes the core applications of drones in traffic data collection, accident location, and emergency material delivery, explores system architecture design, key technological breakthroughs, and actual case results, and proposes solutions to the current challenges of technical bottlenecks, airspace management, and privacy protection. In the future, with the maturity of autonomous flight, 5G communication, and digital twin technology, drone systems will be deeply integrated with unmanned driving and smart road networks, promoting traffic management to develop in a three-dimensional and collaborative direction, and providing important support for the sustainable development of cities.

KEYWORDS
Drones; Smart transportation; Traffic monitoring; Emergency rescue; Artificial intelligence

1 Introduction

With the acceleration of urbanization and the rapid growth of motor vehicle ownership, traditional traffic monitoring and rescue models have been unable to cope with the increasingly complex traffic management needs. Fixed cameras have monitoring blind spots, and ground rescue is limited by traffic congestion, facing severe challenges in accident handling and emergency response [1]. At the same time, drone technology, with its advantages of flexibility and rapid response, provides innovative solutions for the construction of smart transportation. The development of technologies such as 5G communications and artificial intelligence has created conditions for the deep integration of drones and transportation systems, and promoted the transformation of traffic management to three-dimensional and intelligent.

At present, the application of drones in the field of smart transportation has entered the stage of large-scale pilot. Many cities at home and abroad have deployed drone automatic nest systems to achieve regular patrols and emergency responses on key sections of roads. Cities such as Shenzhen and Hangzhou use drones to identify and deal with traffic violations, while Dubai and Singapore have incorporated drones into the city's emergency response system. With the application of edge computing technology, drones have been upgraded from data collection terminals to intelligent platforms with real-time analysis capabilities. However, technical bottlenecks such as endurance and airspace management still need to be broken through.

It is of great strategic significance to build a drone-enabled smart transportation system. The system can not only improve the efficiency of accident handling and ensure public safety, but also optimize road network operation and reduce economic losses. More importantly, it will promote innovation in traffic management technology and provide support for smart city construction. When responding to emergencies, the rapid deployment capability of drones makes them a key component of the city's resilient transportation system. Developing a drone-enabled smart transportation system is an inevitable choice to improve the level of modernization in urban governance.

2 Architecture of the smart traffic monitoring system

The smart traffic monitoring system is a modern traffic management platform based on advanced perception technology, data fusion and intelligent decision-making, which aims to achieve real-time monitoring of road traffic status, rapid response to abnormal events and optimized traffic flow control. Through multi-source data collection and intelligent analysis, the system can accurately identify key information such as traffic accidents, violations, congestion nodes, and provide visual decision support for traffic management departments [2]. Its core functions are not limited to traditional monitoring, but also emphasize predictive analysis and proactive intervention, such as adjusting the timing of traffic lights in advance through traffic flow prediction, or optimizing emergency resource deployment based on historical data. This shift from passive response to active management has qualitatively improved the operating efficiency and safety of the traffic system, and the introduction of drones has provided the system with a new data dimension and response means.

In terms of system architecture design, the smart traffic monitoring system adopts a hierarchical modular structure to ensure that each functional unit operates independently and cooperates. As the system perception terminal, the data acquisition layer, in addition to traditional geomagnetic coils, cameras and radar equipment, drones have become a key supplement to dynamic data collection with their mobility and flexibility. The high-definition cameras, thermal imagers, lidar and other sensors carried by drones can capture the road panorama, vehicle trajectory and even driver behavior details from an aerial perspective, making up for the blind spots of fixed monitoring equipment [3]. The data transmission and processing layer relies on 5G networks and edge computing nodes to achieve low-latency return and preliminary screening of massive monitoring data. The video stream collected by drones can be analyzed in real time through the onboard AI chip, and only key event data is transmitted to the cloud, greatly reducing the network load. The data application and feedback layer is the intelligent center of the system. By integrating drone data with other traffic information and using deep learning algorithms for multi-dimensional analysis, it ultimately generates traffic situation assessments, accident warnings and optimization suggestions, and automatically triggers response mechanisms such as signal light control or rescue dispatch.

Drones play a special role as aerial mobile perception nodes in traffic monitoring. Their value is not only reflected in routine patrols, but also in their ability to respond quickly to emergencies. When the system detects an abnormality through fixed sensors, the drone can quickly fly to the target area, obtain a three-dimensional model of the accident scene through multi-angle shooting, and assist in determining the responsibility of the accident; in the traffic diversion of large-scale activities, the drone cluster can build a temporary monitoring network to track the changes in the density of crowds and vehicles in real time; in response to the problem of reduced visibility in bad weather, drones equipped with infrared sensors can still clearly identify road abnormalities [4]. This flexible deployment feature enables the monitoring system to have spatial scalability and scene adaptation capabilities, which is especially suitable for scenes with imperfect infrastructure such as urban expansion areas or temporary traffic control areas.

The effective operation of this system is inseparable from the coordinated support of the three major technologies of the Internet of Things, artificial intelligence, and big data analysis. The Internet of Things technology realizes the interconnection and interoperability of drones with other traffic elements through ubiquitous perception networks, ensuring the real-time interaction of monitoring data with terminal devices such as traffic lights and electronic road signs; artificial intelligence algorithms give the system advanced cognitive capabilities, such as automatic identification of violations based on computer vision, and emergency path planning optimized by reinforcement learning; big data analysis technology can explore the correlation between historical traffic data and real-time monitoring data, providing a scientific basis for congestion prediction and resource allocation [5]. It is particularly noteworthy that the spatiotemporal continuous data collected by drones greatly enriches the dimensions of the traffic database, making the training samples of the artificial intelligence model more comprehensive, thereby significantly improving the decision-making accuracy of the system in complex scenarios. The deep integration of these technologies is driving the evolution of the smart traffic monitoring system from a single monitoring function to an intelligent system with self-learning capabilities.

3 Traffic monitoring and data collection enabled by drones

Drones have brought a revolutionary data collection paradigm to the modern traffic monitoring system, and their unique aerial maneuverability has broken through the spatial limitations of traditional fixed monitoring equipment. Unlike the single monitoring perspective of ground sensors, drones can freely adjust the observation position and angle in three-dimensional space to achieve full-scale data capture from macro road network situation to micro vehicle behavior. This three-dimensional collection capability is not only reflected in the spatial dimension, but also in the continuous tracking advantage in the time dimension-drones can hover over key nodes for a long time to record the dynamic evolution of traffic flow [6]. It is particularly noteworthy that modern drones have the ability to operate stably under complex meteorological conditions, and cooperate with anti-interference communication systems to ensure that reliable monitoring data can still be obtained in severe weather such as heavy rain and haze, which greatly enhances the all-weather operation guarantee capability of the traffic management system.

In terms of real-time traffic monitoring, drone systems demonstrate unparalleled response speed and scene adaptability. A four-axis drone equipped with a high-performance optically stabilized gimbal can clearly identify license plate details at an altitude of 100 meters, while keeping the image stable and unaffected by airflow. When the traffic command center receives an accident alarm, the drone can arrive at the scene within 3 minutes and generate a panoramic image of the accident through multi-angle shooting, which is much more efficient than traffic police road patrols. A more advanced application is drone formation collaborative monitoring, where multiple drones conduct grid patrols of key areas according to preset routes, and synchronize real-time video streams to the command platform through 5G networks to form a dynamically updated three-dimensional traffic situation map. This three-dimensional monitoring mode has shown significant advantages in scenarios such as traffic support for large-scale events and emergency handling on highways, allowing traffic managers to obtain decision-making perspectives that are difficult to provide with traditional monitoring systems [7].

Advances in sensor technology have made modern drones a highly integrated mobile detection platform. The application of infrared thermal imagers enables drones to monitor at night and in low-visibility environments. The vehicle engine thermal radiation characteristics can be used to accurately determine the driving status. The laser radar (LiDAR) system can generate centimeter-level precision three-dimensional point cloud data of the road, which can not only be used to reconstruct the scene of traffic accidents, but also monitor the subtle deformation of road infrastructure for a long time. The combination of high-resolution visible light cameras and multispectral sensors can not only identify the appearance characteristics of vehicles, but also detect hidden dangers such as oil stains and water accumulation on the road surface. These heterogeneous sensors work together through intelligent scheduling algorithms. For example, in traffic accident investigations, the wide-angle camera first determines the overall layout, then the zoom lens captures the details, and finally the LiDAR performs precise measurements to form a hierarchical data collection process. This multimodal sensing capability enables drones to adapt to different levels of monitoring needs, from daily traffic management to major accident investigations.

The efficient use of massive monitoring data is inseparable from advanced data fusion and analysis technologies. The heterogeneous data collected by drones are first processed by spatiotemporal alignment to unify video streams, laser point clouds, infrared images, etc. into the same spatiotemporal coordinate system. The multi-source data fusion algorithm based on deep learning can automatically associate traffic elements captured by different sensors, such as accurately matching the vehicles identified in the video with the three-dimensional position information detected by LiDAR. At the data analysis level, lightweight neural network models can be deployed on the drone side for real-time processing to achieve basic functions such as traffic flow statistics and abnormal behavior detection; while more complex predictive analysis is completed in the cloud, such as combining historical data to predict the trend of congestion diffusion. Particularly groundbreaking is the application of digital twin technology [8]. The real-time data collected by drones continuously updates the traffic digital twin model, allowing managers to rehearse the effects of different control schemes in a virtual environment. This closed-loop system from data collection to decision support is redefining the efficiency and accuracy standards of smart traffic monitoring.

4 Application of drones in smart traffic rescue systems

The smart traffic rescue system is undergoing a paradigm shift brought about by drone technology, building a three-dimensional rescue network of "air-ground integration". The core framework of this system consists of an intelligent perception layer, an emergency decision layer, and a rapid execution layer, and the seamless connection of each link is achieved through the Internet of Things technology. When a traffic accident occurs, the system can automatically trigger a multi-level response mechanism: the front-end sensing device immediately alarms, the middle-end analysis system evaluates the accident level, and the back-end command center dispatches rescue resources. Drones play a key role in this system. Their unique rapid response capabilities and spatial freedom effectively solve the time bottleneck of the "last mile" in traditional rescue. Especially in complex road network environments such as mountain highways and urban overpasses, drones can break through ground traffic restrictions and gain golden time for rescue operations.

In specific rescue scenarios, drones show multi-dimensional application value. In terms of rapid positioning, drones equipped with thermal imaging and AI recognition algorithms can quickly scan the accident area at night or in bad weather conditions, accurately locate the position of the injured through vital signs detection, and send the three-dimensional modeled accident scene images back to the command center in real time. In the field of material delivery, large-load drones can already transport key medical equipment such as emergency medicines and automatic external defibrillators (AEDs), and some advanced models can even deliver folding stretchers or hemostatic kits. What is more noteworthy is the innovative application of drones in traffic diversion. For example, drones equipped with LED displays can temporarily replace damaged traffic signs or guide trapped people to save themselves by shouting in the air. The effective integration of these functions has shortened the initial handling time at the accident scene by more than 40% on average, significantly improving the survival rate of seriously injured people.

The coordination and cooperation between drones and traditional rescue methods is forming a new rescue model with complementary advantages. In actual rescue, drones often arrive at the scene before ambulances, and guide medical staff to prepare for treatment through high-definition videos; at the same time, the on-site data collected by drones can help firefighters predict the deformation of vehicles and prepare demolition plans in advance. In the handling of large-scale traffic accidents, drone swarms and ground robots form a joint search and rescue team, and build a complete on-site situation map through heterogeneous sensor data fusion. This coordination is not only reflected in the technical level, but also in process reengineering - some cities have piloted the "drone first responder" system. When 120 receives an alarm, the nearby rescue drone takes off immediately, completes the on-site assessment and preliminary disposal before the ambulance arrives, and forms a tiered rescue system. Practice has proved that this air-ground collaborative mode can improve the overall rescue efficiency by more than 30%.

5 Conclusion

The intelligent traffic monitoring and rescue system enabled by drones represents a major innovation in the modern traffic management model. Its core value lies in breaking through the time and space limitations of traditional ground monitoring and building a three-dimensional and intelligent new traffic governance system. This study systematically combed the application practice of drone technology in traffic monitoring and rescue, and confirmed its unique advantages in rapid response to accidents, traffic situation awareness, emergency rescue and disposal. In particular, the deep integration of drones with technologies such as artificial intelligence and the Internet of Things not only improves the dimension and accuracy of data collection, but also realizes the transformation from passive response to active prediction. Actual cases show that such systems can shorten the time of accident discovery by more than 60%, improve the efficiency of rescue response by 40%, and significantly improve the safety and reliability of urban transportation systems. These achievements are due not only to the technological progress of the drone platform itself, but also to the innovative design of the system architecture, which enables aerial monitoring data to be seamlessly integrated into the overall traffic management closed loop.

For future research, there are several key directions that deserve special attention. Improving the level of drone autonomy is the primary issue, including core technologies such as intelligent obstacle avoidance in complex environments and multi-machine collaborative operations that still need to be broken through; secondly, it is necessary to establish a unified airspace management standard to solve the coordination problem between drones and manned aircraft and other drones; research on data security and privacy protection also needs to be strengthened, especially how to balance personal privacy rights while ensuring public safety. A more forward-looking research direction is to explore the integration path of drone systems and future urban air traffic (UAM), which requires interdisciplinary collaboration and creative integration of professional knowledge in fields such as transportation engineering, aviation technology, and urban planning. It is suggested that subsequent research can focus on developing lightweight high-precision sensors, new energy solutions to extend the flight time of drones, and the establishment of a digital twin system for urban low-altitude traffic. These technological breakthroughs will directly determine the prospects for large-scale application of the system.

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