Admiral: Navy Actively Experimenting With Cargo UAS Between Ships

Rear Adm. Brian Corey, program executive officer for unmanned and weapons, discusses Navy UAS. *SOLARES PHOTOGRAPHY*

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. – The Navy has been conducting flights between ships as part of an effort to experiment with a cargo unmanned aerial system for maritime use.

Recently, the Navy used an aerial vehicle to transport a part 200 miles between ships, said Rear Adm. Brian Corey, program executive officer for unmanned and weapons (PEO-U&W) at Naval Air Systems Command, during an address at the Navy League's Sea-Air-Space symposium.

"That's going to continue," Corey said of the experiments, while noting that the question of when it could be fielded was

up to Navy leadership. “It’s not a technology question, but there are some engineering choices and some work left to be done.”

The program has partnered with both the Navy and Military Sealift Command on the effort to demonstrate the capability to transport small parts ship to ship.

“We believe we could deliver those 200 miles with a relatively small, very inexpensive vehicle,” Corey said. “So that’s what we’re trying to do to enable that is to get the networks and interoperability down and get a small family of ground systems or maybe a single one – that’s unknown at this stage. And then how can we get the autonomous takeoff and landing?”

In a separate effort, the program is experimenting with a cargo UAS for the Marine Corps.

“It’s not yet come to a spot where we have decided to go forward with a program and field it,” Corey said of the Tactical Resupply Unmanned Aircraft System. “The decision will be coming before long depending on how well it works in the field.”

There are some clear advantages to such a system, he said.

“I think that’s some of the most innovative thinking we have going on right now,” he said. “Why drive down a road and potentially get an IED [improvised explosive device] … when you can fly?”