

Airbus U.S. Demonstrates Distributed Ground Control Capabilities During Latest Autonomous Flight Test



WASHINGTON – Airbus U.S. Space & Defense, in partnership with Shield AI, L3Harris Technologies, and Parry Labs, has successfully completed their seventh flight test event for its unmanned UH-72 Logistics Connector, demonstrating the ability to control the aircraft from geographically separated locations while advancing autonomous flight and beyond-line-of-sight (BLOS) communications capabilities. Building on previous flight tests, the team focused on improvements to the aircraft's ground control station, including the integration of a Man-Packable Control System tablet that allows geographically separated operators to assume control of the aircraft.

During testing last month in Grand Prairie, Texas, personnel located more than 20 kilometers from the primary flight test

team assumed control of the aircraft, commanded it through a series of autonomous behaviors and successfully transferred control back to the primary ground control station. The demonstration validated the system's ability to support aircraft operations from geographically dispersed locations, an important capability for future distributed logistics operations.

"The latest flight test marks an important step toward delivering an autonomous logistics capability that gives Marines the flexibility to move critical supplies where they are needed most," said Alex Veneziano, CEO of Airbus U.S. Space & Defense. "By demonstrating the ability to transfer control between geographically separated teams, we are showing how this technology can support Marines in challenging operational environments."

The team also demonstrated improvements in autonomous takeoff and landing precision, improved connectivity BLOS, and validated thermal-management modifications designed to prepare the aircraft for high-temperature environments.

Airbus U.S. is currently in the third year of the Aerial Logistics Connector Middle Tier of Acquisition (MTA) Rapid Prototyping Program, which aims to provide the Marine Corps with aircraft prototypes to demonstrate capabilities to the warfighter through a series of operational demonstrations and experiments.

In April 2024, Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR) awarded Airbus U.S. Space & Defense a Phase I Other Transaction Authority (OTA) through the Naval Aviation Systems Consortium, based on its unmanned Logistics Connector concept, a variant of the proven UH-72 Lakota platform.

The Aerial Logistics Connector effort is one of several initiatives across the Department of Defense aimed at delivering logistical support in distributed environments

during peer or near-peer conflicts.

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