

Mustin: KC-130J Transport is Navy Reserve's Top Equipment Priority



Sailors assigned to the "Minutemen" of Fleet Logistics Support Squadron (VR) 55 prepare to load cargo onto a C-130T Hercules at Naval Air Facility (NAF) Misawa, Japan. Vice. Adm. John Mustin, chief of Navy Reserve, says his top acquisition priority is the KC-130J Super Hercules to replace the C/KC-130Ts. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Benjamin Ringers*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The admiral in charge of the Navy Reserve said his top acquisition priority is the KC-130J Super Hercules transport/tanker aircraft, needed to replace the service's C/KC-130T Hercules transports.

"Procurement of the KC-130J to replace the legacy C/KC-130T is the Navy Reserve's top equipment priority," wrote Vice Adm. John Mustin, chief of Navy Reserve, in a statement submitted to the defense subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee for its May 4 hearing. "Transitioning from legacy airframes to the modern KC-130J aircraft is necessary to fill critical capability and capacity gaps and ensure interoperability with our active and reserve component Marine Corps and Air Force partners, who have already transitioned to the KC-130J."

The Navy's Unique Fleet Essential Airlift forces are operated entirely by the Navy Reserve. The fleet consists of 30 C/KC-130T and 17 C-40A aircraft that provide the organic intra-theater air logistics, including transporting oversized cargo (F-35 engines, AMRAAM and Harpoon missiles, submarine masts, etc.) to forward-deployed and expeditionary naval Forces, "a critical link in the warfighting supply chain," Mustin wrote.

The admiral submitted a summary of the legacy Hercules fleet's performance in fiscal 2020:

"Last year, fleet logistics [VR] squadrons flew 22,707 flight hours and transported 111,625 passengers and 22.2 million pounds of cargo for the Navy and the Department of Defense," he wrote. "Executing these missions generated a cost avoidance of nearly \$1.0 billion per year relative to alternative means of transportation. At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Navy Reserve VR squadrons ensured the continuity of Navy training pipelines, safely flying Sailors between training sites when commercial options were reduced or unavailable. Supporting global operations, VR squadrons also transported personnel between U.S. overseas bases around the world. Specifically, C-130 missions increased 7.5% [from 817 missions to 878], while flight hours increased 16.6% [from 7,922 to 9,235 hours]. Even with the increased execution of flight hours and missions, demand continues to increase for C-130 lift, with unmet lift requests reflecting a gap between demand and capacity. To date, [fiscal] '21 indicates an even greater demand for cargo this year than in [fiscal] '19 and [fiscal] '20.

Mustin cited the low readiness of the C/KC-130T fleet and the need to recapitalize it.

"Every mission capable aircraft generates an average of \$48.6 million in cost avoidance for the transport of equipment," he wrote. "The current Mission Capable rates of the C/KC-130T average 25% of Total Aircraft Inventory and required modifications of that legacy airframe will limit aircraft availability to a maximum of 33% until 2030. Comparatively, we expect to realize a 70% mission capable rate for the KC-130J which will provide an additional \$200 million per year in transportation and cost savings to the Navy. The current C/KC-130T fleet struggles to meet current fleet demand and lacks the required capability and capacity to meet wartime intra-theater logistics requirements, a situation best

remedied through recapitalization.”

Textron Submits Concept for Marine Corps Advanced Recon Vehicle



Textron Systems' Cottonmouth concept for the Marine Corps' Advanced Reconnaissance Vehicle. *TEXTRON SYSTEMS*

ARLINGTON, Va. – Textron Systems has submitted to the Marine Corps its proposal for the competition to build the Advanced Reconnaissance Vehicle (ARV), a Corps requirement for an amphibious scout vehicle that will serve as a sensor node in the Corp's planned modernization to meet the challenges of great power competition with expeditionary advanced base operations in the Indo-Pacific region.

The ARV proposal, called Cottonmouth by Textron, is designed to be a “next -generation Naval Sensor Node,” fitted with “cutting edge sensor technology,” the company said in a May 4 release. “Cottonmouth delivers advanced maneuverability and a synergized sensor system to enhance reconnaissance operations.”

The Cottonmouth has a 6×6 compact build that will allow four ARVs to fit on an LVAC 100-class ship-to-shore connector, also built by Textron. The Cottonmouth would be “equipped with multi-spectrum sensors, providing seamless communication between the Navy and Marine Corps to employ unmanned systems and joint-warfighting weapons systems. This provides the next-generation decision dominance needed to defeat threats beyond line of sight.”

The Cottonmouth's sensors would include Elbit Systems of America's IronVision, "which uses "see-through" technology to provide the vehicle with advanced visibility and 360-degree situational awareness," the release said.

The Cottonmouth is a six-wheeled vehicle designed to be operated by two personnel and to carry five additional mission personnel. It is designed for rugged land operations and water operations – using waterjets – in waves of 2 to 3 feet.

Dave Philips, Textron System's vice president for Land Systems, said the ARV would serve as a "quarterback" of a new platoon concept, which may include five other variants of the ARV. He said the company is focused on Cottonmouth as a naval sensor node, but the company expects to build an infantry fighting vehicle version of the vehicle equipped for direct and indirect fire in the future.

Marketing imagery of the vehicle shows a notional weapon system mounted atop the vehicle, in this case a remote-operated Kongsberg CROWS-J with a .50-caliber machine gun and an anti-tank missile system, said Luke Wright, Textron's ARV program manager.

For the prototype, the government is providing the competing contractors Lockheed Martin Stalker unmanned aerial vehicles to be integrated within their vehicles.

The Marine Corps plans to replace its fleet of approximately 600 LAV-25 Light Armored Vehicles with 500 ARVs.

The Cottonmouth Alpha purpose-built, open-architecture prototype was developed using more than \$6 million so far, Philips said, and is a vehicle not required by the initial phase of the program, which is being put through requirements validation testing at the National Automotive Test Center in February 2021. Amphibious capabilities are being evaluated during the current quarter. As of May 3, the vehicle had

logged 748 hours of operation in testing.

Philips said the Marine Corps will select up to three competitors for the prototype phase of the ARV program. Up to two contractors will be chosen for the engineering and manufacturing development (EMD) phase. He estimates the EMD phase will be conducted in 2024.

Berger Touts Vehicle-Mounted Naval Strike Missile for Marine Corps



A Naval Strike Missile being fired from a modified, unmanned Joint Light Tactical Vehicle. *U.S. NAVY*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The vehicle-mounted Naval Strike Missile was

highlighted by the Marine Corps' commandant as an example of rapid development to meet the challenges of great power competition and enable the Corps to hold enemy naval units at risk from expeditionary bases.

While testifying April 29 before the defense subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee, Gen. David H. Berger, commandant of the Marine Corps, held up a recently released photo of a Naval Strike Missile (NSM) being fired from a modified unmanned Joint Light Tactical Vehicle (JLTV) known as ROGUE.

The Navy Marine Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System, or NMESIS, successfully fired a Naval Strike Missile off the California coast, the system's builder, Raytheon Missiles & Defense, a Raytheon Technologies business, said in an April 28 release. "The inaugural test proved the system's ability to fire a Naval Strike Missile, or NSM, from a U.S. Marine Corps ground launcher and score a direct hit against a surface target at sea. The Marines will use NMESIS to support the U.S. Navy from the shore against enemy ships. NMESIS is comprised of the Raytheon Missiles & Defense-made NSM and a Remotely Operated Ground Unit for Expeditionary (ROGUE) Fires vehicle, produced by Oshkosh Defense."

"Our Naval Strike Missile is a vital weapon for denying enemies the use of key maritime terrain," said Kim Ernzen, vice president of Naval Power at Raytheon Missiles & Defense. "This test further demonstrates our partnership for advancing the Marine Corps' modernization priorities of enabling sea control and denial operations."

"Our role in contributing to [freedom of the seas] is, where [sea] denial, where [sea] control has to happen from a tactical to operational perspective, we can do that by moving the capability around that hold an adversary's navy at risk from sip and from shore," Berger said.

“This is the speed at which we have to develop a capability like that,” he said. “This is the brilliance of a couple of young officers and Oshkosh [Defense], and a few other people creating other capabilities long before they’re even thought all the way through. This Joint Light Tactical Vehicle is unmanned. The people at Oshkosh and these two [Marine Corps] majors thought, ‘We can do this.’ They took the cab off the back and they put [the NSM] on the back and a fire control system. Now we can move this around on vessels, put it ashore, and hold an adversary’s navy at risk in order to ensure that the lines of the sea are kept open.

“Our job is to support the fleet commander,” Berger said. “The fleet’s job is to support the joint force commander.”

Berger also said a benefit of the NSM is that it is common to the Navy and Marine Corps and can be shifted to where it is needed most.

CNO: Hypersonic Missiles First on Zumwalt DDGs Before Block 5 Virginia SSNs



The Zumwalt-class guided-missile destroyer USS Michael Monsoor (DDG 1001) leads a formation including the Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyers USS Fitzgerald (DDG 62), USS Spruance (DDG 111), USS Pinckney (91), and USS Kidd (DDG 100), and the Independence-variant littoral combat ship USS Coronado (LCS 4) during U.S. Pacific Fleet's Unmanned Systems Integrated Battle Problem (UxS IBP) 21, April 21. *U.S. NAVY / Chief Mass Communication Specialist Shannon Renfro*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy's top officer said Zumwalt-class guided-missile destroyers will be the first U.S. Navy ships to be armed with hypersonic missiles.

"With respect to our research and development budget, hypersonics is our top priority, so we are working closely with the Marine Corps, with the Army, and with the Air Force to reach a capability that we can deliver to the fleet in 2025," said Adm. Michael Gilday, chief of naval operations, testifying April 29 before the defense subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee.

"We intend to do that on the latest and greatest destroyers we have, the Zumwalt-class destroyer," Gilday said. "Our intent

is to first put the weapon on those destroyers and then on our Virginia-class Block 5 submarines. Right now, our projection is that capability will be on our submarines by 2028.”

As recently as November, Vice Adm. Johnny Wolfe, director of Strategic Systems Programs, said the plan was to deploy the Conventional Prompt Strike (CSP) capability hypersonic missiles first on the four Ohio-class guided-missile submarines (SSGNs)

The CSP will be deployed by the U.S. Army first in 2023. Wolfe said the Initial Unit Training of Army units without the All-Up Round will begin in 2021. A canister hot-launch operational demonstration is planned for 2022. Delivery of the Army’s prototype truck-hauled delivery system is scheduled for 2023. The delivery of the All-Up Round – including the hypersonic glide body – is planned for 2024.

Gilday said a hypersonic weapon was successfully tested last year with the Army, being fired thousands of miles at very high speed and with very high precision.

“We’re very excited about the path we are on right now in hypersonics,” he said. “We’re very confident of the delivery timeline.”

Navy’s Unmanned Systems Battle Problem Features All- Domain Sensing



A Vanilla ultra endurance land-launched unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) undergoes operational pre-flight checks during U.S. Pacific Fleet's Unmanned Integrated Battle Problem (UxS IBP) 21 at Naval Base Ventura County, Point Mugu. UxS IBP 21 integrates manned and unmanned capabilities into challenging operational scenarios to generate warfighting advantages. *U.S. NAVY / Construction Mechanic 2nd Class Michael Schutt*

ARLINGTON, Va.— The Unmanned Systems Integrated Battle Problem (UxS IBP) conducted off the coast of California over the last week featured sensor data exchange and remote sensing in all domains from seabed to space, and involved a variety of scenarios, including swarm attacks by drones and launch and recovery of an unmanned underwater vehicle by a submarine.

Rear Adm. Robert Gaucher, director of the Maritime Headquarters for the U.S. Pacific Fleet, and Rear Adm. James Aiken, commander, Carrier Strike Group Three, and commander of the IBP, spoke about the exercise to reporters during an April 26 teleconference.

“Just yesterday, we successfully teamed air and surface manned

and unmanned capability to put [an SM-6 missile] well past over the horizon from [the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS] John Finn on a target and it struck the target very, very successfully," Aiken said.

The manned/unmanned chain of events for the missile shoot was totally passive, [without] any active sensor. The target was detected by a combination of manned and unmanned platforms and a space system to locate and identify the target, track it with electronic support measures (ESM) bearings and pass the information to the John Finn, which was able to shoot the SM-6 at range, well beyond line of sight.

The admiral said the vignettes exercised during the IBP included focused warfighter vignettes, an anti-submarine warfare and surface ISR [intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance] vignette, and an over-the-horizon strike vignette, the latter being the SM-6 event mentioned above.

Unmanned surface and air systems were used to prosecute a submarine-like target. This event included an MQ-9 SeaGuardian UAV dropping sonobuoys and up-linking data after a P-8 maritime patrol aircraft departed station.

In one scenario, a USV obtained an ESM electronic support measures bearing on a surface target, passed the locating data to the information warfare commander, who passed it to the surface warfare commander, who used a swarm drone attack against the target, a surface vessel.

During one event, a submarine was able to launch and recover an IVER-4 UUV using a torpedo tube.

"Being able to do that without divers [is] reducing a ton of risk for our divers to have to go recover ... was a big win," Gaucher said.

He also said the IVER-4 was able to conduct its own surveillance and reconnaissance and intelligence preparation

of the battlespace.

“We were also able to deliver some kinetic effects in support of undersea and seabed warfare,” he said.

Control of unmanned systems during the IBP was conducted variously from a shore site, from ships at sea, or autonomously.

“I know that unmanned can provide me video from overhead,” Gaucher said. “I know I can put a towed array sensor on a medium-sized unmanned surface vessel, and I can control it from the shore for theater ASW. ... I know that I can operate a system in and out of the torpedo tube of a submarine to support seabed warfare.”

“From a [Pacific Fleet] perspective, we were very pleased about how the Integrated Battle Problem came out, in particular with our ability to integrate unmanned [systems] into that battle problem in a contested environment,” Gaucher said, noting that 29 different unmanned technologies were part of the IBP, with about 50% surface, 30% subsurface, and 20% above the surface.

Gaucher stressed that goals for the IPB included using unmanned systems to avoid putting personnel in harm's way and to improve targeting “so we get a better solution when we launch.”

STATCOM Chief Defends Low-Yield Warhead on Submarine-

Launched Ballistic Missiles



The Ohio-class ballistic-missile submarine USS Tennessee (SSBN 734) (Blue) arrives at the Trident Refit Facility (TRF) dry dock berthing at Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay, Ga., for a planned maintenance period, August 13. Tennessee is one of five ballistic-missile submarines stationed at the base and is capable of carrying up to 20 submarine-launched ballistic missiles with multiple warheads. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Ashley Berumen*
ARLINGTON, Va. – The commander of the nation's strategic deterrent forces again defended the low-yield nuclear warhead that the Navy has deployed at sea on Trident submarine-launched ballistic missiles on board ballistic-missile submarines (SSBNs). This time he cited analysis to support the deployment.

Adm. Charles A. Richard, commander, U.S. Strategic Command (STRATCOM), testified April 22 before the Strategic Forces subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) on the status of the nation's strategic forces.

“Within the last year, STRATCOM started formally measuring risk of strategic deterrence failure,” Richard said. “This is a formal risk assessment designed to make sure that we are analytically rigorous in all the things that we do, acknowledging that this is fundamentally trying to measure a subjective process, the decision making of another country. Our assessment is that the deployment of a low-yield [warhead] improved the risk of strategic deterrence, i.e., it lowered it because of the deterrent effect it achieved.”

The submarine-launched low-yield warhead became a requirement noted in the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review. The result was the W76-2 warhead, which was deployed in 2019 on the tips of some Trident submarine-launched ballistic missiles carried by Ohio-class SSBNs.

With the change in presidential administrations and the leadership of the Congress, critics, including HASC Chairman Adam Smith, D-Washington, have been bolder in expressing long-held opposition to the W76-2 low yield warhead as destabilizing to the nuclear balance.

In hearings this week before subcommittees of the Senate and House armed forces committees and in a Pentagon news conference, Richard noted that this era was the first in which the United States was faced with deterring two peer competitors – Russia and China. He termed China as the greatest strategic threat to the United States, but that Russia was the greatest nuclear threat to the United States.

He said the United States requires the total capacity of the nuclear triad – intercontinental ballistic missiles, bombers and submarine-launched ballistic missiles – to maintain strategic deterrence.

Navy Orders LRASM Integration into P-8 Aircraft



An LRASM being dropped from a B-1B Lancer bomber. *LOCKHEED MARTIN*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy has awarded a contract to Boeing to integrate the AGM-158C Long-Range Anti-Ship Missile (LRASM) into the P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol reconnaissance aircraft.

The Naval Air Systems Command awarded Boeing a \$74 million cost-plus-fixed-fee order for “the design, development, and test of software and ancillary hardware necessary for the integration of the Long-Range Anti-Ship Missile onto the P-8A aircraft for the Navy,” an April 21 Defense Department contract announcement said.

The LRASM, a derivative of the Air Force’s AGM-158B Joint Air-to-Surface Strike Missile-Extended Range cruise missile, fills an air-launch capability gap and provides flexible, long-range, advanced anti-surface capability against high-threat

maritime targets. The weapon reduces dependency on intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance platforms, network links and GPS navigation in electronic warfare environments. Semi-autonomous guidance algorithms will allow it to use less-precise target cueing data to pinpoint specific targets in the contested domain.

The P-8A currently can be armed with AGM-84 Harpoon cruise missiles and Mk54 antisubmarine torpedoes. The addition of the LRASM will expand its anti-surface capability in terms of range and ability to operate in a GPS-denied environment.

Work on the order is expected to be completed in October 2024.

Navy's Unmanned Integrated Battle Problem 21 to Culminate in Missile Shoot



Chief of Naval Research, Rear Adm. Lorin Selby, observes a Vanilla Ultra Endurance unmanned aerial vehicle on Pier 12 during Integrated Battle Problem 21 (UxS IBP 21) Distinguished Visitors Day at Naval Base San Diego, April 16. U.S. Pacific Fleet's UxS IBP 21, April 19-26, integrates manned and unmanned capabilities into the most challenging operational scenarios to generate war fighting advantages. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Natalie M. Byers*

ARLINGTON, VA. – The U.S. Navy's first large-scale unmanned systems (UxS) integrated battle problem (IBP) will involve manned/unmanned teaming and has a goal of developing a targeting solution for a planned missile shoot, the IBP executive agent said.

The battle problem, led by the U.S. Pacific Fleet and executed by U.S. 3rd Fleet, began April 19 and is being conducted under the command of Rear Adm. James Aiken, commander, Carrier Strike Group Three.

"This integrated battle problem provides an operational approach to integrating and adapting unmanned technology with our manned fleet," Aiken said, speaking April 20 in a

teleconference with reporters. "Various manned systems, including littoral combat ships, two classes of destroyers, an amphibious transport dock ship, and fixed and rotary-wing aircraft will test their enhanced capabilities alongside unmanned systems through operationally challenging scenarios and vignettes during this exercise.

"This exercise generates warfighting advantages for our fleet by providing the operational environment to work through tactics, techniques, procedures, command and control, to integrate the fleet and we are ready to execute," he said. "Our operational integration of these unmanned systems is here in our fleet today above the sea, on the sea and below the sea.

"We want to move to a capability, to start applying operational concepts," he said. "Foundationally, when actually planning this exercise, Sailors were part of the planning.

"Our goal for this exercise is to evaluate these unmanned systems and how they can actually team with manned systems," he said. "As we team all those together, we will be able to evaluate what we can do and what we can't do in trying to create a warfighting advantage ... then we're going to make sure we get it into the hands of the Sailors. We need to move things from the technical community to the tactical community."

Aiken said one of the vignettes of most interest is the most challenging: using "a combination of manned and unmanned assets in order to get after a target and provide a targeting solution. At range we're going to put a missile on the target."

The admiral was not at liberty to name the type of missile to be used.

Unmanned systems participating in the IBP include two medium-

displacement unmanned surface vessels, Sea Hunter and its new sister ship, Seahawk; MQ-8B Fire Scout UAV; MQ-9 Sea Guardian UAV; Vanilla ultra-long-endurance UAV; Office of Naval Research's Super Swarm Project; and the Ocean Aero Triton-Class Dual-Modality Underwater and Surface Autonomous Vehicle.

Manned ships participating in the IBP include the Zumwalt-class guided-missile destroyer (DDG) USS Michael Monsoor; the Arleigh Burke-class DDGs USS Spruance, USS John Finn, USS Stockdale and USS Fitzgerald; Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Princeton; Freedom-class littoral combat ship (LCS) USS Fort Worth; Independence-class LCS USS Coronado; San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock ship USS Anchorage; and Los Angeles-class attack submarine USS Hampton.

Manned aircraft participating include the P-8A Poseidon, E-2C Hawkeye, EA-18G Growler, MH-60R Seahawk and MH-60S Seahawk.

Aircraft Carrier Industrial Base Coalition Confident of Another Dual-CV Buy



The Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75), due to be retired, a move opposed by the Aircraft Carrier Industrial Base Coalition. *U.S. NAVY*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The chairman of the industrial coalition of suppliers for the Navy's aircraft carriers said the coalition supports continuing to build large aircraft carriers instead of light ones and predicts there will be another dual-carrier procurement in the future.

"We're strong supporters of the large platform," said Rick Giannini, chairman of the Aircraft Carrier Industrial Base Coalition (ACIBC), who also is president and chief executive officer of Milwaukee Valve Co. in New Berlin, Wisconsin, in an interview with *Seapower*.

Giannini said the size of the Navy's carrier aircraft demand a large flight deck to sustain a high sortie rate and that a

large aircraft carrier is the most survivable airfield.

The Navy will be conducting an analysis of the concept of light aircraft carriers.

"I believe the L-class ships [amphibious assault ships] operating with the F-35B would fit that bill," said Rear Adm. Gregory Harris, the Navy's director for Air Warfare, speaking last month at a Navy League Special Topic Breakfast webinar, sponsored by General Dynamics. "Others would disagree."

Harris said he is "confident that over the long run we'll find that there's not a compelling return on investment to make a smaller carrier just [because of] speed, station-keeping, the air wing that you would put on top of that carrier, and the ability to have the fuel for the air wing and for the carrier to have for the surface combatants."

The ACIBC members meet on Capitol Hill every year to lobby Congress. This year's virtual session included more than 260 companies holding more than 123 scheduled meetings with members of Congress to impress upon them the importance of aircraft carriers to the national defense.

"We're doing everything we can to get that message out," Gianni said.

The ACIBC represents the more than 2,000 supplier companies in 46 states, supporting 92,000-plus jobs. These companies inject over \$8.8 billion into our nation's economy.

He was critical of proposed initiatives to retire the USS Harry S. Truman instead of refueling it for another quarter century of service, noting the Navy risks falling below the legally mandated number of 11 aircraft carriers.

That leads right back to the industrial base, because for us it's all about stability and predictability of where those funds are coming from," Giannini said, noting that the Navy's

two-ship buy of CVN 80 and 81 brought a lot of stability to the suppliers.

“We’re always concerned when a new administration comes in every time these things are starting over for the next ship in the class,” he said. “We’re fortunate right now; we have two [CVNs] in the pipeline – orders in [fiscal 2019] for eight years of work. We’re still confident that the reasons carriers have been required for the last 50 years aren’t going to be any different than the requirements for the next 50 to 100 years.

“We remain confident there will be another block buy for [CVNs] 82 and 83, because it is the best way to spend the nation’s money, which is to ensure that the supply base has this steady and predictable stream of work, so we can lower the cost,” he said.

Giannini pointed to the example of a class of valves supplied by his company that, because of the last dual-carrier buy, were produced at 20-25% lower cost. Not only is the cost being reduced because the orders for both ships come at once, but additional cost savings come by being able to order materials at today’s prices rather than at future prices.

Navy’s Triton UAV Performing Better than Expected, Admiral Says



An MQ-4C Triton taxis at Andersen Air Force Base. *U.S. AIR FORCE / Senior Airman Michael S. Murphy*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The admiral in charge of developing the Navy's unmanned aerial vehicles said the MQ-4C Triton UAV is doing well a more than a year into its first operational deployment to Guam, as the Navy looks to prove operations at other locations.

Unmanned Patrol Squadron 19, the Navy's first Triton squadron, deployed two MQ-4Cs to Guam in January 2020 to establish Early Operational Capability, providing surveillance for the U.S. 7th Fleet and also exercising the logistics train that will support future deployments.

"Triton is doing very, very well," said Rear Adm. Brian Corey, program executive officer for Unmanned and Strike Weapons, speaking April 14 at the Unmanned Systems-Defense webinar of the Association for Unmanned Vehicle Systems International. "In fact, it's doing better than we expected in Guam.

"We just finished a two-hour review with the Navy's Air Boss, Vice Adm. [Kenneth] Whitesell, on how Triton is doing," Corey said. "First off, anyone that has operated an air force knows that airplanes work and then they break. We have an air force of two [Tritons] and we put Triton out there [Guam] with Early Operational Capability, knowing that we didn't have a fully

fleshed-out set of depot-level maintenance and that sort of thing.

“So, we have had some amazing success here over these last several months,” he said. “We got over there, we were able to fly, we were able to interact in the airspace until we could fly in the entire Pacific region, until we got cooperation from our partners.

“We are delivering the products that Triton is intended to deliver to the 7th Fleet and to the [Pacific] Fleet commander, he said. “We’re able to do that in the number of missions a month that they are looking for.”

Corey said the next operational step for the Triton is “to prove that we can operate somewhere other than Guam and we’ll be working on that through the fall while we finish up IFC 4 [Integrated Functional Capability 4], the follow-on capability for Triton.”