

Blackjack UAS Fielding Complete for Navy, Marine Corps



Marines lift an RQ-21A Blackjack UAS onto a launcher before flight operations aboard the amphibious transport dock ship USS John P. Murtha. The fielding of the UAS achieved full operational capability last year. U.S. Marine Corps/Cpl. Adam Dublinske

ARLINGTON,

Va. – The fielding of the RQ-21A Blackjack unmanned aerial system achieved full

operational capability in 2019, Navy's program manager said.

Col. John

Neville, the Blackjack's program manager for the Program Executive Office-Unmanned

and Strike Weapons, told *Seapower* at the Surface Navy Association gathering

here that all 21 systems for the Marine Corps and 10 for the Navy have been delivered

to fleet and training units.

The

Blackjack, built by Boeing's Insitu, is a twin-boom, single-engine, small

tactical unmanned aerial vehicle that carries modular payloads mostly for

surveillance. It is pneumatically launched and is recovered using a skyhook

arrestment system. A single Blackjack system includes five UAVs, two ground

control stations, various payloads and a set of launch and recovery systems.

The Blackjack now equips four Marine UAV squadrons plus a fleet replacement detachment. The Marine Corps deploys the Blackjack with its Marine expeditionary units onboard amphibious warfare ships. The 10 systems for the Navy have been delivered to Navy Special Warfare Command and made two deployments in 2019.

Neville said the Blackjack has demonstrated "great reliability."

He said that with fielding complete, his office is concentrating on sustainment of the Blackjack and also on Foreign Military Sales. Two nations, Canada and Poland, have procured the Blackjack and Neville said there are more possible sales "on the horizon."

Foreign sales will help to bring down the cost of the Blackjack, he said.