

GA-ASI and USMC Complete MQ-9A WTI Training with SkyTower I Pod



SAN DIEGO – 16 May 2024 – General Atomics Aeronautical Systems, Inc. (GA-ASI) and the U.S. Marine Corps (USMC) teamed up to conduct flight training on the operation of the MQ-9A Block 5 Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) for the Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron One (MAWTS-1) at Marine Corps Air Station in Yuma, Arizona. The students participated in Weapons and Tactics Instructor (WTI) Course 2-24, which is a comprehensive course designed for select pilots and enlisted aircrew that incorporates Marine Corps planning along with implementation of advanced air and ground tactics.

The seven-week course, which was completed on April 20, 2024, for the first time included the employment of GA-ASI's SkyTower I pod, which is a USMC-specific payload for MQ-9A that provides airborne communication extension capabilities in various waveforms. SkyTower I provides an Airborne Network Extension to the Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) that is

a commercial-quality WiFi network, as well as a relay/repeater function connecting geographically disconnected teams.

“Congratulations to the newest graduates of WTI,” said GA-ASI Vice President of DoD Strategic Development Patrick Shortsleeve. “GA-ASI is proud to support the training of the MAWTS-1 aircrews in the use and utility of the MQ-9A platform, especially now with our SkyTower capabilities.”

The WTI course is renowned for its advanced graduate-level training, particularly in refining tactical skills and strategies for aviation operations. It is an integral part of developing and implementing cutting-edge aviation weapons and tactics, both in terrestrial and maritime settings.

In recent training scenarios, the Marines had the opportunity to hone their skills using a GA-ASI-supplied MQ-9A. The platform provides valuable hands-on experience in operating advanced UAS, enhancing their proficiency in utilizing MQ-9A effectively for various missions.

Graduates of the WTI program are poised to become go-to experts within their squadrons for the employment of MQ-9A Block 5, leveraging their comprehensive training and specialized knowledge. The program ensures that graduates are well-prepared to lead and execute missions utilizing this sophisticated platform with precision and efficiency.

This training is a critical part of the MAGTF Unmanned Expeditionary (MUX) Medium-Altitude, Long-Endurance (MALE) program meeting Full Operational Capability (FOC). GA-ASI is a committed partner in helping the USMC meet this critical program milestone.

GA-ASI has delivered 13 MQ-9A UAS to the USMC so far. The USMC awaits delivery of seven additional aircraft, which will fulfill their goal of three squadrons by 2025.