

GA-ASI Develops Long-Range Weapons Capability for MQ-9B



Industry Leading UAS Expands Mission Roles To Include Naval Strike

From General Atomics Aeronautical Systems, Inc.

SAN DIEGO – 23 February 2026 – General Atomics Aeronautical Systems, Inc. (GA-ASI) is developing the addition of long-range standoff weapons to its top-of-the-line MQ-9B SkyGuardian® and SeaGuardian®.

Demand continues from naval and air warfighters for platforms that can hold targets at risk from great ranges, especially over the expanses of air and water in the Western Pacific. That's why GA-ASI engineers have begun the work of adapting MQ-9B's payload, stability, range and other features to accommodate the new generation of extended-range precision weapons.

"MQ-9B continues to impress in the field and we keep adding to our global customer list," said GA-ASI President David R.

Alexander. “We want to continue to build value in the aircraft by expanding into more missions. MQ-9B features extraordinary payload capacity, so it only makes sense to add to our mission sets with the ability to carry long-range weapons.”

So far, GA-ASI has performed all the performance analytics and is confident in MQ-9B’s ability to carry long-range weapons over long distances, while providing a measure of persistence and endurance. Company engineers and others continue to refine the technical aspects of this integration and potential concepts of operation, eyeing weapons such as the Lockheed Martin Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile and Long-Range Anti-Ship Missile, as well as the Kongsberg/Raytheon Joint Strike Missile.

GA-ASI plans to fly at least one of these new weapons as early as 2026.

Hypothetically, a mission profile might look like this: MQ-9Bs could launch from a number of friendly bases in the Western or Southern Pacific, fly to a hold point and loiter there outside a hostile power’s weapons engagement zone. If the order came to release the weapons, the aircraft could launch them in coordination with other U.S. or allied operations.

In addition to the SkyGuardian and SeaGuardian models, MQ-9B also includes the Protector RG Mk1 that is currently being delivered to the United Kingdom’s Royal Air Force (RAF). GA-ASI also has MQ-9B procurement contracts with Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, India, Japan, Poland, Taiwan and the U.S. Air Force in support of the Special Operations Command. MQ-9B has also been featured in various U.S. Navy exercises, including [Northern Edge](#), [Integrated Battle Problem](#), [RIMPAC](#), and [Group Sail](#).