

Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 22 gets first MQ-8C Fire Scout UAS



An MQ-8C Fire Scout on the flight deck of the Independence variant littoral combat ship USS Coronado (LCS 4) in 2018. U.S. Navy / Ens. Jalen Robinson

NORFOLK, Va. – Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 22 received its first MQ-8C Fire Scout unmanned helicopter on Sept. 15 aboard Naval Station Norfolk, the squadron announced.

HSC-22 marks the first East Coast squadron to operate the MH-60S Knighthawk, MQ-8B Fire Scout and MQ-8C Fire Scout. The new added capability of the MQ-8C combines the capabilities of the MQ-8B with the MH-60S Knighthawk to improve the Navy's ability to investigate and target hostile surface contacts, the squadron said. Both Fire Scouts are built by Northrop Grumman.

"Incorporating the MQ-8C will represent a significant improvement in our unmanned air vehicle mission capability," said Cmdr. Matthew Wright, HSC-22's commanding officer. "The 'Charlie' is bigger, faster, can carry more mission equipment, and remain airborne over twice as long as our already-proven MQ-8Bs."

MQ-8B and C Fire Scout variants can be operated from ships or land, extending the ability to support distributed maritime operations. Most of the software is similar across both systems, but the crew must adapt to the C's new capabilities and obtain additional qualifications to operate it.

"The MQ-8C Firescout is the latest step toward increasing the duration that UAS has on the battlefield as well as the impact," said Lt. Ryan Jaenke, an MH-60s and MQ-8B/C pilot.

“It advances the reliability of UAS as well as leaves a larger impact on the battlefield in missions that are not new to today’s warfighter.”

HSC-22’s mission is to provide manned and unmanned maritime attack and combat support capabilities to the fleet. HSC-22’s inherent versatility provides full-spectrum warfighting support across multiple mission sets and diverse and distributed platforms.