

HII/MetalCraft Marine Autonomous ROMULUS USV with HII Autonomy Successfully Passed a Critical DoW Test



MCLEAN, Va. – HII announced that the U.S. Defense Innovation Unit (DIU) has officially recognized the successful completion of the company's Production-Ready, Inexpensive, Maritime Expeditionary (PRIME) prototype project, featuring the Watcher small Unmanned Surface Vessel (sUSV), which is based on HII's Romulus-25 Unmanned Surface Vessel and powered by HII's Odyssey Autonomous Control System (ACS).

The DIU recognition follows HII's delivery and successful sea testing of two autonomous Watcher Romulus-25 vessels in December 2025 under a DIU contract to develop smaller-form-factor autonomous surface vessels for the U.S. Marine Corps.

Developed in partnership with MetalCraft Marine, the Watcher sUSV successfully met the program's

technical objectives and is now positioned for a potential transition to production.

HII's Odyssey ACS modular open systems architecture (MOSA) enables intelligent navigation, mission planning, collaborative behaviors, and multi-domain autonomous operations while allowing operators to rapidly integrate autonomy across multiple vehicle types and increasingly complex missions in contested environments. Its service-based design enables seamless integration with other mission-enabling technologies, enhancing mission effectiveness through AI-enabled contact recognition, identification, and edge-based decision-making.

In a memorandum to HII, DIU stated: "The HII Watcher sUSV has successfully demonstrated its appropriateness to address the Department of the Navy's operational need for sUSV interceptors, capable of autonomously transiting hundreds of miles through contested waterspace, loitering in an assigned operating area while monitoring for maritime surface threats, and then sprinting to interdict a noncooperative, maneuvering vessel."

The memorandum further concluded that HII achieved the prototype's key technical goals and success metrics, supporting a potential transition to production under Other Transaction Authority (OTA) prototype agreements.

"This milestone is another example of HII's strategy to rapidly transition innovative technologies from concept to operational capability," said Duane Fotheringham, president of the Unmanned Systems group within HII's Mission Technologies division. "As demand for autonomous systems continues to grow, HII remains focused on delivering proven, mission-ready autonomous solutions that strengthen naval readiness and provide our customers with greater operational flexibility."

Mike Reed, General Manager of MetalCraft Marine, said, "This

milestone is a significant accomplishment for the entire MetalCraft team and a strong validation of what can be achieved when our experienced boatbuilders combine their expertise with HII autonomy capabilities. The Watcher was engineered and built to deliver the speed, seakeeping, strength and reliability demanded by this mission. Successfully completing the government-led autonomy, seakeeping, performance and degraded-environment assessments confirms the quality of the aluminum platform and the discipline behind its design and construction. MetalCraft has built its reputation on high-performance aluminum vessels that perform when needed most, and this milestone positions the Watcher for the next step, from successful prototype to production”

The two Romulus-25 autonomous vessels completed extensive at-sea testing, successfully demonstrating advanced autonomous mission behaviors across a range of operational scenarios, including contractor demonstrations, government-led autonomy assessments, seakeeping and performance evaluations, and degraded-environment testing.

The PRIME initiative challenged industry to deliver commercially available, production-ready autonomous surface vessels capable of supporting maritime expeditionary operations. Following a full and open competition that attracted 116 solution briefs, HII was selected to design, build, and demonstrate its solution.

The Romulus-25, part of HII’s expanding family of autonomous unmanned surface vessels, is a high-speed interceptor capable of carrying payloads of up to 1,000 pounds and operating at ranges of up to 1,000 nautical miles.

HII is the world’s leading producer of autonomous underwater vehicles through its REMUS family of unmanned underwater vehicles (UUVs), which are deployed by the U.S. Navy and allied partners worldwide for mine countermeasures, underwater

reconnaissance, intelligence collection, environmental assessment, and critical seabed operations.

Together, Watcher, Romulus USV, REMUS UUV, and Odyssey ACS form an integrated ecosystem of autonomous maritime capabilities that can operate independently or collaboratively to extend fleet reach, enhance maritime awareness, and increase mission effectiveness across the full spectrum of naval operations.

The successful completion of the PRIME prototype further reinforces HII's position as a leader in autonomous maritime systems and demonstrates the company's ability to deliver production-ready autonomous capabilities that meet the evolving needs of the U.S. Department of War and allied navies.