

Marines Surpass 1,000 MQ-9A Flight Hours as Capabilities Expand



From General Atomics Aeronautical Systems Inc.

SAN DIEGO – 23 April 2025 – General Atomics Aeronautical Systems, Inc. is proud to announce that the U.S. Marine Corps has passed more than 1,000 flight hours with MQ-9A unmanned aircraft in support of service-level training exercises and weapons and tactics instructor courses. This accomplishment involved a combined aircrew of dedicated Marines and GA-ASI personnel, highlighting the seamless integration and operational effectiveness of the MQ-9A platform within the Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) and the MAGTF Unmanned Expeditionary (MUX) Program.

These demanding exercises showcased the advanced capabilities of the MQ-9A by integrating cutting-edge technologies such as the SkyTower networking support pod, Automatic Identification System, latest-generation Lynx® multi-mode radar and various

other tactical networks and capabilities. The joint teams successfully conducted satellite launch and recovery activities operating out of a strategic expeditionary landing field near Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, Calif., further demonstrating the platform's precision targeting and reconnaissance abilities in realistic training scenarios.

Previously, an uncrewed aircraft required a crew positioned at the airfield where it was operating to fly it for takeoff via direct line-of-site radio link. Then a mission crew could take over the aircraft from anywhere via satellite. Today, satellite launch and recovery means the main Marine mission crew, which can be sited anywhere, flies the aircraft from takeoff via the satellite link. This capability, validated in the Marine Corps operations, enables huge flexibility and expands the locations from which units can operate.

A key element of these exercises also included not only live-fire training but also comprehensive mission planning, networked communications, and multi-domain coordination. These events provided invaluable experience in integrating the MQ-9A into complex, distributed combat scenarios across the full range of Marine Air-Ground Task Force operations. From supporting maneuver elements with real-time intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance to validating command and control networks, the MQ-9A consistently demonstrated its adaptability and operational value. This milestone underscores the platform's critical role in enhancing situational awareness, mission execution, and overall effectiveness across the battlespace.

"Reaching 1,000 flight hours for these rigorous training exercises alongside our Marine Corps and Air Force partners is a testament to the reliability and adaptability of the MQ-9A platform," said GA-ASI President David R. Alexander. "This achievement highlights the power of collaboration and the critical role the MQ-9A can play in supporting the MAGTF's

mission readiness.”

The successful integration of the MQ-9A platform across recent operations represents a major milestone in aligning capability with the MAGTF construct. These events showcased the MQ-9A’s ability to support distributed operations, extend sensor coverage, and provide persistent intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance in support of dynamic mission sets. The coordinated efforts of Marines and GA-ASI personnel underscored the platform’s high degree of interoperability and its growing role in enabling expeditionary operations in contested environments.

To date, GA-ASI has delivered 17 MQ-9A UAS to USMC. The USMC awaits delivery of three additional aircraft by the end of this year.