

Moton: Unmanned Vessels May Require Different Approaches to Maintenance



A Sailor and civilian technicians monitor an unmanned surface vehicle (USV), after it was launched from Military Sealift Command's expeditionary sea base, USNS Hershel "Woody" Williams (T-ESB 4), into the Chesapeake Bay, Sept. 14. U.S. Navy / Bill Mesta

ARLINGTON, Va. – The admiral in charge of developing the U.S. Navy's unmanned surface vessels (USVs) and unmanned underwater vessels (UUVs) said the maintenance strategy for the vessels may require different approaches to maintenance, particularly at the operational level (O-level).

Speaking Sept. 17 at a webinar panel of the Virtual Fleet Maintenance & Modernization Symposium of the American Society of Naval Engineers. Rear Adm. Casey Moton, program executive officer for Unmanned and Small Combatants, said that "for USVs, [that] probably puts a whole different take on O-level maintenance."

Moton said that "We are just in our initial prototype stage, so we haven't actually picked what the maintenance strategy is going to be but looking at the maintenance strategy is part of our prototyping effort. So [Surface Development Squadron One] in San Diego is including looking at maintenance and helping us look at all that. The same is happening on the UUV side with [UUV Squadron One] up in Keyport [Washington]."

For small USVs and UUVs, Moton said that a likely outcome for O-level maintenance would be like that performed by an aircraft squadron."

As for the Intermediate- and Depot-levels, "We still have to

sort that out," he said. "My personal thoughts are that it goes from a range of making sure that a LUSV, MUSV in particular, are maybe not much different from other surface ship classes in terms of the [Regional Maintenance Centers] doing their role."

Moton pointed out that the Navy also has "craft-level [UUVs and USVs] that are treated like a craft and [the question] is, "how are we going to maintain and modernize those?"

The admiral noted that "the prototypes are going to make that really interesting and we will figure that out in the next couple of years. ... We'll try to make sure unmanned is not singled out as an aberration. I also don't want to close the door to innovation. It's more of a range of solutions."

He also said that lots of companies that are working the USV efforts, and that many "smaller and mid-sized yards able to participate. I'm really excited about that."