

MQ-25 IOC 'As Soon as Possible,' Navy's Unmanned Aviation Chief Says



Rear Adm. Brian Corey, head of Navy unmanned aviation, speaks at the Naval Air Systems Command booth at Sea-Air-Space on May 6. Lisa Nipp

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HARBOR, Md. — The Navy's admiral in charge of unmanned aviation said that the Initial Operational Capability (IOC) of the MQ-25A aerial tanking unmanned aerial vehicle is "as soon as possible."

Speaking May

6 to an audience at the Navy League's Sea-Air-Space exposition here, Rear Adm.

Brian Corey, program executive officer for unmanned aviation and strike

weapons, said that the MQ-25A program does not have a set IOC date but that it was to be before 2026 "if we can."

The

Boeing-owned MQ-25 prototype was trucked earlier this week from the factory in

St. Louis to Mid-America airport in Illinois for more ground testing and, eventually, flight testing.

Corey said

the first flight of the prototype would take place later this year.

He also said that four

aircraft carriers initially will be equipped to operate the MQ-25A, but he declined to speculate which carrier, citing the flexibility of schedules.