Navy Concludes EOC Westpac Deployment of MQ-4C Triton UAV



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ARLINGTON, Va.– The U.S. Navy is concluding the first deployment of a detachment of MQ-4C Triton high-altitude, long-endurance maritime intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance and targeting (MISR&T) unmanned aerial vehicles, ending the Early Operational Capability deployment of the Triton, paving the way for the UAV's Initial Operational Capability.

Unmanned Patrol Squadron (VUP) 19, home-based at Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Florida, deployed two MQ-4Cs to Andersen Air Force Base in Guam in 2020 to provide MISR&T for the U.S. 7th Fleet while developing the concept of operations and the

tactics to refine the Triton's operations. The detachment operated from Guam; Naval Air Facility Misawa, Japan; and Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan, the Navy said in a March 16 release.

The two MQ-4Cs deployed from VUP-19's maintenance base in Naval Air Station Point Mugu, California. While deployed, the maintenance detachment moved to Naval Station Mayport, Florida, which is near the squadron's operations center in Jacksonville. One of the two deployed Tritons arrived in Mayport in December to be used for training.

The two deployed Tritons were of the baseline Integrated Functional Capability (IFC) 3 configuration. The squadron has since received newer versions in the IFC 4 configuration, which are equipped with a more capable sensor suite that will allow them to replace the Navy's fleet of EP-3E Orion electronic reconnaissance aircraft. The MQ-4C will supplement the Navy's P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft.

VUP-19 is scheduled to bring the Triton to Initial Operational Capability later in 2023 when it deploys a full "orbit" of Tritons to the 7th Fleet's Task Force 72. With a full orbit, a squadron detachment will be able to maintain a Triton on patrol 24/7.

Last October, Seapower reported that Vice Adm. Karl Thomas, commander, U.S. 7th Fleet, said the fleet is working to build up an orbit "to learn our way through some of the capabilities that an EP-3 [Aries II Orion electronic reconnaissance aircraft] might bring back. It will be a different way of processing the information than we do with our EP-3s, so we're working as a Navy to see how we seamlessly transition."

"VUP-19 plans to introduce this capability to more fleet areas around the globe, paving the way for future Navy unmanned systems," the Navy release said.