Navy Orders 2 MQ-9 Reaper UAVs for Marine Corps



An MQ-9 Reaper sits on the flight line at Hurlburt Field, Florida, in 2014. U.S. AIR FORCE / Staff Sgt. John Bainter

ARLINGTON, Va. — The Naval Air Systems Command has ordered two MQ-9A Reaper unmanned aerial vehicles for the Marine Corps.

The Naval Air Systems Command ordered the two Reapers from General Atomics Aeronautical Systems Inc. (GA-ASI), of Poway, California, with a $26.9 million firm-fixed-price contract, according to the June 22 Defense Department announcement. The contract also provides for one dual-control mobile ground-control station, one modular data center and one mobile ground-control station

The MQ-9 Reaper is a medium-altitude, long-endurance unmanned aerial vehicle used for surveillance and strike operations. The Reaper is a battle-proven development of the RQ-1 Predator, upgraded for longer endurance, a heavier payload, and the ability to launch heavier precision munitions in a benign aerial environment.

The Marine Corps selected the Reaper in 2018 to fill an urgent needs request for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) in support of forward operations in Southwest Asia. GA-ASI has provided ISR services since September 2018 through contractor-owned/contractor-operated (COCO) Reapers and their teams to support Marine Corp forces in Afghanistan. Marine UAV squadrons (VMUs) have been learning to operate the Reaper in preparation for the Corps' procurement of government-owned/government operated MQ-9s. On March 20, 2020, a Marine crew of VMU-1 controlled a COCO Reaper for the first time on an operational mission in support of forward-deployed ground forces.

The Marine Corps plans to begin operations with its own Reapers in 2021.