Northrop Grumman Wraps Initial In-Water Testing of AQS-24 Sonar Using Next-Gen Deploy, Retrieval Payload

The AQS-24 mine-hunting sonar during recent testing of a next-generation deploy and retrieval payload. Northrop Grumman Corp.

PANAMA CITY, Fla. – Northrop Grumman Corp.'s AQS-24 mine-hunting sonar recently completed initial in-water testing of a next-generation deploy and retrieval payload, the company said in a release.

Operated from the Mine Countermeasures Unmanned Surface Vessel (MCM USV), the AQS-24 D&R demonstrated the unmanned operations needed to perform a mine hunting mission off the MCM Mission Package aboard the littoral combat ship (LCS).

"Achieving this important milestone demonstrated reliable unmanned mine hunting operations, while using operationally representative hardware from the LCS MCM Mission Module," said Alan Lytle, vice president of undersea systems for Northrop Grumman. "This allows the program to begin preparation for further at-sea testing of the system for extended duration missions in rigorous conditions."

The MCM USV tests are ahead of planned user-operated evaluation system testing of the AQS-24 on LCSs. The company has multiple versions of the AQS-24 to provide mine-hunting capabilities for navies. The AQS-24B is a deployed system which uses side-scan sonar for real-time detection, localization and classification of bottom and moored mines in addition to a laser line scanner for precise optical identification.

Integration of the AQS-24 sonar with USVs allows for the real-time transmission of all AQS-24 data to a remote sonar operator, who can then commence real-time mission analysis (RTMA) of all recorded mission data. RTMA significantly reduces MCM detect to engage timelines, as well as the real-time reacquisition and identification of bottom mines following traditional mine hunting sorties.