

Northrop Grumman's Optionally Manned Firebird Demonstrates Operational Flexibility



Northrop Grumman's optionally manned Firebird, which flew to various locations around the United States to showcase its flexibility and ability to fly in national airspace. *NORTHROP GRUMMAN*

SAN DIEGO – Northrop Grumman Corp.'s Firebird multi-sensor aircraft showcased the versatility of the optionally manned autonomous system as it flew to various locations across the United States last month, the company said in an April 6 release.

The ability of Firebird to be flown manned through national airspace is a demonstration of its unique operational flexibility for self-deployment and its rapid relocation ability to adapt to specific user needs and operational

requirements.

The company flew Firebird almost 9,000 miles around the US with stops in Dayton, Ohio, Washington D.C., Patuxent River, Maryland, as well as Tampa, Miami and Key West, Florida.

“Our flights showcased one of its key differentiators – the ability to position the system in a manned configuration, then convert to autonomous operations for persistent ISR in under two hours,” said Jane Bishop, vice president and general manager, autonomous systems, Northrop Grumman. “At each stop, plane-side briefings provided customers the opportunity to see first-hand the operational versatility of the platform, its large sensor bay, and rapid configurability for changing mission needs.”

Firebird is a medium-altitude, long-endurance unmanned aircraft system designed for flexibility and affordability. Customers can install new payloads in as little as one day and swap payloads in 30 minutes, making the system suitable for numerous domains and missions.

The flights concluded in Key West, where the team conducted a series of manned maritime operational events that included a four-sensor package containing two high-definition electro-optical sensors, a maritime configured multi-spectral sensor for small target detection and an Automatic Information System receiver.