Navy’s Triton UAV Expected to Deploy in Summer 2019

WASHINGTON – The Navy’s director of air warfare said the service expects to deploy the MQ-4C Triton high-altitude, high-endurance unmanned aerial vehicle later this year.

“The Triton is going forward this year, probably later this summer,” Rear Adm. Scott D. Conn, director of air warfare in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, said during an April 4 hearing of the Tactical Air and Ground Forces subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee.

The deployment will mark the achievement of Early Operational Capability, which originally was planned for last year at Andersen Air Force on Guam for two MQ-4Cs assigned to Unmanned Patrol Squadron 19. The deployment was postponed when one of the two Tritons experienced a landing mishap on Sept. 13 at Naval Air Station Point Mugu, California.

The MQ-4C eventually will be deployed to several bases and will be used to establish five orbits – patrols – with a 24/7 presence over the oceans. Its sensors will be used to search for, detect and identify shipping and other targets of interest. The Triton will work closely with the Navy’s fleet of P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft.

“We’re going to continue to build capability and capacity with that system,” Conn said, noting that the capacity and capability need to be increased before the Navy can retire its EP-3E electronic reconnaissance aircraft in 2021. “We are on track to do that.”