

AeroVironment, Kratos Partner on UAS Launched From Mother-Ship Drone



AeroVironment's Switchblade UAS (shown here) would be able to tube-launch from a Kratos mothership. AeroVironment Inc.

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. – Longtime unmanned aircraft provider AeroVironment and Kratos Defense and Security Systems announced on March 7 that they have formed a new partnership to jointly develop and demonstrate unmanned aircraft systems that could launch from another UAS to tackle near-peer denied environments – an increasingly important domain in light of the “Great Power Competition” era, defined by Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John M. Richardson.

This collaboration aims at demonstrating the ability to launch, communicate with and control a small, tube-launched loitering aircraft that jettisons from a larger, runway-independent UAS. The goal of the is to coordinate the effects of smaller AeroVironment systems and relay information back to the mother UAS, developed by Kratos.

The systems-of-systems would communicate back their findings to a ground-control station or be able to act upon the information they gather to modify their mission tasks. Kratos has demonstrated the mothership, its Mako Tactical UAS, which it developed and demonstrated in 2015, and

AeroVironment

has made its tube-launched Switchblade since 2012.

“Together, we are developing and will demonstrate the integration of tube-launched UAS and tactical missile systems into long-range, high-speed and low-cost unmanned systems for their transport and delivery into near-peer, denied environments,” said Trace Stevenson, vice president and deputy general manager of AeroVironment’s UAS business.

“With sufficient onboard autonomy, sensors, payloads and an integrated system design, we aim to demonstrate the deployment of large quantities of smart systems that overwhelm and disable enemy systems, while bending the cost curve to make it financially prohibitive for unfriendly nations to challenge our armed forces.”