VUP-19 First Robotics Specialists Discuss Their Contribution to History

NAVAL STATION MAYPORT, Fla. (December 16, 2021) An MQ-4C Triton Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS), assigned to Unmanned Patrol Squadron 19 (VUP-19), lands at Naval Station Mayport, Florida, Dec. 16, 2021. VUP-19, the Navy's first Triton squadron, will continue to maintain and operate the aircraft off the East Coast to further develop the concept of operations and refine tactics, techniques, and procedures. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Nathan T. Beard/ Released)

by Commander, Naval Air Force Atlantic, 6 December 2024

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – The first crop of Robotics Warfare Specialists (RW) is contributing to the stand-up of their rating as they support MQ-4C Triton unmanned aircraft worldwide operations. The Robotics Warfare Specialists rating

was created in March 2024.

Chief Robotics Warfare Specialist Ryan Fox, assigned to Unmanned Patrol Squadron (VUP) 19 aboard Naval Air Station (NAS) Jacksonville, Florida, highlighted the need to build the team for the future.

“In the history of the Navy, there are moments where you can start something new – be on the leading edge and make a big impact,” Fox said. “The United States Navy is working concept and requirements analysis for larger robotic systems, as well as the artificial intelligence applications that elevate the Navy’s lethality in an information-centric battlespace, and we have a seat at the table to experience these advances in technology.”

The Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Navigation Plan 2024, Navy’s strategic guidance from the 33rd CNO, specifically calls out the operationalization of robotic and autonomous systems. Additionally, CNO Adm. Lisa Franchetti’s Project 33 sets priorities for accelerated implementation and seeks to move proven autonomous systems into the hands of the warfighters like Fox and Robotics Warfare Specialist 1st Class Brandon Walker.

Prior to converting into the RW rating, Walker served as an Information Systems Technician and joined the RW Community in May 2024. Walker emphasized how the Navy now leads the joint force in operationalizing robotic and autonomous systems.

“It is incredible that we can take a multi-million-dollar aircraft flown on another side of the world and manage it from Jacksonville,” Walker said.

The primary source ratings for RW conversions will be for those currently or previously assigned to billets in unmanned vehicle divisions, such as Fox and Walker and who hold an RW-

identified specialty or Navy Enlisted Classification.

The RW rating requires technicians to manage everything from deskwork to managing the operations required for the aircraft as well as trouble shooting and technical experience, servers, and equipment. The Navy will command and integrate distributed manned and robotic platforms across enormous distances in contested information warfare environments through resilient Maritime Operations Centers.

Falling under Commander Patrol and Reconnaissance Group (CPRG), headquartered in Norfolk Virginia, VUP-19 is part of the Maritime Patrol Reconnaissance Force (MPRF) which is administratively organized into two continental U.S. units, Patrol and Reconnaissance Wings at NAS Jacksonville, Florida, and NAS Whidbey Island, Washington: including 14 Patrol and Reconnaissance squadrons, one Fleet Replacement Squadron and over 45 subordinate commands. The forward-deployed MPRF consists of three Patrol and Reconnaissance Wings in Manama, Bahrain, (CTF-57); Sigonella, Sicily, (CTF-67) and Atsugi, Japan (CTF-72). The MPRF is the Navy’s premiere provider for airborne anti-submarine warfare, anti-surface warfare, and maritime intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance operations.