

First Australian MQ-4C Triton to Arrive in Mid-2024, Official Says



The Australian government's first MQ-4C Triton was unveiled Sept. 15 in Palmdale, California. *NORTHROP GRUMMAN*

PALMDALE, Calif. – The Australian government will receive its first MQ-4C Triton unmanned aircraft at Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Base Tindal in the Northern Territory in 2024, an official said at an unveiling ceremony here Sept. 15.

Air Vice-Marshal Robert Denney, the RAAF head of Air Force capability, said during the ceremony that when the RAAF receives the aircraft, it will be used for many capabilities beyond its core intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance functions.

“It will revolutionize the ways the Australian Defense Forces conduct operations with our allies,” he said.

The aircraft was unveiled at manufacturer Northrop Grumman's high-altitude, long-endurance aircraft production site in Palmdale. Both Australian and U.S. government officials were on hand to talk about the Triton and the ongoing cooperation between Australian and U.S. defense forces.

Australia was a cooperative program partner in the Triton program as it was being developed. As a result, they will be able to share data with the United States that is collected by both countries' Tritons.

Rear Adm. Stephen Tedford, program executive officer for Unmanned Aviation and Strike Weapons for the U.S. Navy, said during the ceremony that continued partnership between Australia and the United States will “allow both of our

nations to better project military power, maintain our competitive edge, and maintain peace and stability in the region.”

He noted that Australian personnel had been embedded in the Triton program since 2009.

“Since that time, this platform has expanded its capabilities far beyond those it started with,” he said. “I am confident that our dedicated team ... will work tirelessly to deliver this aircraft and many more to come.”

The MQ-4C provides persistent ISR capabilities in a maritime environment, making it useful as a long-endurance surveillance platform in the Asia-Pacific region.

Northrop Grumman started building the first Australian Triton in October 2020 at its facility in Moss Point, Miss. In December 2021, the fuselage and one-piece wing were joined together in Palmdale. Production completion is planned for 2023 ahead of delivery in 2024.