

Four Unmanned Surface Vessels Being Demonstrated in RIMPAC



The large unmanned surface vessel Ranger transits the Pacific Ocean to participate in Exercise Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) 2022. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Tyler R. Fraser*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Four prototype unmanned surface vessels are participating in the Rim of the Pacific 2022 exercise, known as RIMPAC, delivering warfighting capabilities and extending the reach of the manned U.S. fleet with fewer risks to the warfighter, Program Executive Office Unmanned and Small Combatants Public Affairs said July 22.

Though unmanned systems have participated in exercises before, the involvement of four different vehicles, operating both autonomously and by manned teams, is a major milestone.

The vessels – Seahawk, Sea Hunter, Nomad and Ranger – will execute a range of missions. The prototypes will work side-by-side with exercise participants, carrying payloads, providing intelligence, and most significantly, gathering data in a real-world environment to determine how they will function in the larger fleet.

The significance of the occasion is not lost on Navy Capt. Scot Searles, program manager of the Unmanned Maritime Systems (PMS 406) program office.

“The integration of autonomous USVs with manned combatants will give fleet commanders much-needed enhancements to maritime domain awareness, thereby increasing decision speed and lethality in surface warfare.” Searles said.

PMS 406, the office responsible for the participating RIMPAC prototypes, is a program office within the Program Executive

Office, Unmanned and Small Combatants.

“While our prototyping efforts have grown and matured significantly in the last four years, their performance in the RIMPAC exercise marks another significant milestone in manned-unmanned teams.” Searles said.

The manned-unmanned team, in the case of RIMPAC, will include service members and civilians supporting the mission from various organizations all over the country.

The PMS 406 assets participating in RIMPAC are the Overlord unmanned surface vehicles, Nomad and Ranger, and the medium unmanned surface vehicles, Sea Hunter and Seahawk. Though primarily operated and maintained under the control of PMS 406, personnel from Unmanned Surface Vessel Division One within Surface Development Squadron One control much of the practical execution.

RIMPAC is the largest joint maritime exercise in the world. Lasting over five weeks and spanning massive areas in the Pacific Ocean, the exercise will include hundreds of ships, submarines and aircraft, along with over 25,000 personnel.

Brian Fitzpatrick, PMS 406 principal assistant program manager for unmanned surface vessels, said, “RIMPAC is an incredible opportunity to not only show that we can develop these vessels, but we’re also showing the Navy’s commitment to unmanned and manned teams.”