Marines Demo Range of Long Range UAS for Future Operations

UAS operators from Kraus Hamdani exhibit its system during a Marine Corps demo in Southern Maryland in July. The company was one of five vendors who participated in the event to showcase their Group 2 unmanned systems. (U.S. Navy photo)
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NAS PATUXENT RIVER, Md. – The Navy and Marine Corps Small Tactical Unmanned Aircraft Systems (PMA-263) program team put Long Range Tactical (LRT) systems through their paces during a two-week technical demonstration in Chaptico, Maryland in mid-July.

Five vendors attended the event to help inform the Marine Corpsof the functions and capabilities available on the commercialmarket for the Family of Small UAS

(FoSUAS). The five systems evaluated include: AeroVironment P550, Kraus-Hamdani K1000 ULE Block II, Aurora Skiron X, Edge Autonomy Stalker LRT, and Vector Longbow.

All systems are fixed wing, vertical take-off and landing Group 2 unmanned systems. In addition to basic measurements, the vendors collected performance data for ease of operation, audibility, range, and endurance while carrying the maximum payload requirement of seven pounds.

PMA-263's FoSUAS team, in partnership with the University of Maryland (UMD) UAS test site, evaluated each system against a standard test card to determine its suitability for the MarineCorps LRT requirements. UMD's team of evaluators are experienced drone pilots, experts in their field and some, have military service, including program director Jim Alexander.

"This is a great relationship for the University of Maryland and PMA-263," said Alexander, who has worked with the program office for nine years for technical evaluation events like the LRT tech demonstration. "Our job is to serve as an impartial third party; but in the process, we get to learn new systems, and the Navy is able to collect a lot of data in a short amount of time."

The Small UAS Capabilities and the Deputy Commandant for Plans, Policies and Operations team and PMA-263's team attended the event and had the opportunity to engage directly with the participating vendors and to observe the flight demonstrations.

"Flight demonstration events like this are a critical market research function for the PMA and help us to validate performance data reported by vendors," said Olivia Douglass, PMA-263 FoSUAS Integrated Product Team lead. "We would love to see all the vendors meet the requirements; it translates into options for the government and options for the end users. We

want to see industry taking an interest in recognizing end user requirements and using that as a driving factor in improving their systems."

PMA-263 will use University of Maryland UAS test site's assessment data and observer feedback from the event to inform the program's priorities for follow-on engineering assessments, potential for operational testing, and inclusion of new platforms within the FoSUAS programs of record.