MARMC, Blue Water, USS Gerald R. Ford Partner for UAS Exercise

A logistics Unmanned Air System (UAS) prototype, called Blue Water UAS, approaches to deliver cargo on USS Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) flight deck during supply demonstration Feb. 21, 2021. The test was successfully conducted by transporting light-weight logistical equipment from one part of Naval Station Norfolk aboard Ford while the aircraft carrier was in port. U.S. Navy / Chief Mass Communication Specialist RJ Stratchko

NORFOLK, Va. – Mid-Atlantic Regional Maintenance Center (MARMC) hosted the Blue Water Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) Skyways team for an exercise that could impact the way the Navy handles transporting parts for repairs needed aboard forward deployed ships, Chris Wyatt, MARMC public affairs specialist, said in a March 2 release.

MARMC, in collaboration with the USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) Beach Detachment and the Blue Water team, tested the abilities of a Maritime Logistics UAS to deliver a part to the ship from MARMC Headquarters.

"The UAS departed the MARMC parking lot with a simulated package pickup and took the part needed for repair over to the Ford," said MARMC Logistics Department Head, Cmdr. Kevin Borkert. "For this evolution MARMC handed the part to the UAS crew and they placed it in the cargo bay along the underside of the UAS."

In October 2020, the US Navy acquired a commercial unmanned vehicle developed by Skyways of Austin, Texas, to further develop and demonstrate long-range naval ship-to-ship and ship-to-shore cargo transport. Navy engineers and test pilots

continue to organically enhance the system with developments like folding wings for better handling and ship storage and consider alternative air vehicle designs with advanced propulsion systems to provide greater range and payload performance, optical and infrared collision avoidance and landing systems, and navigation systems not only dependent on GPS.

“Our motto is ‘We Fix Ships’ and we feel like they chose the right place to show this innovation in action,” said MARMC Commanding Officer Capt. Tim Barney. “I want MARMC to be a part of any program that uses advancements in technology, which could potentially save time, money and reduce the Navy’s carbon footprint, while helping to keep the fleet mission ready.”

Moving forward, if MARMC is chosen as a pivot point in the procurement process for parts needed for repairs, it could potentially have a large and lasting impact on how business is done.

MARMC provides surface ship maintenance, management and oversight of private sector maintenance and fleet technical assistance to ships in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States and provides support to the fifth and sixth Fleet Area of Responsibilities. They are also responsible for the floating dry-dock Dynamic (AFDL-6).