MQ-4C Triton Unmanned Navy Aircraft System Stands Up a Third Orbit

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U.S. 5th Fleet Area of Operations – The Navy's MQ-4C Triton unmanned aircraft system (UAS), operated by Unmanned Patrol Squadron (VUP) 19, has established a third orbit in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations (AOR), Oct. 1.

"Enabled by the Navy's Get Real, Get Better charge to think and act differently, and executed by the women and men of 'Big Red', the MQ-4C has achieved the unprecedented stand-up of three orbits, vastly increasing the maritime domain awareness for the Joint Force. Additionally, and through capitalizing on U.S. 10th Fleet's distributed networks, we are rapidly closing the sensor to shooter gap," Capt. Ronald Rumfelt, commanding officer VUP-19 said.

Triton first deployed to Andersen Air Force Base, Guam as an Initial Operational Capability (IOC) in August 2023 soon followed by a second detachment flying from Naval Air Station (NAS) Sigonella, Italy in April 2024. With the stand-up of a third orbit in U.S. Central Command, VUP-19, or "Big Red," achieved the unprecedented milestone of remotely operating simultaneously in three AORs from its home base at NAS Jacksonville, Florida.

More impressive is that the squadron, supported by Persistent Maritime Unmanned Aircraft Systems Program Office (PMA-262) at Naval Air Station Patuxent River, achieved this milestone in just over one year from IOC.

The MQ-4C Triton provides a persistent maritime ISR capability using multiple sensors. Along with P-8A Poseidon manned aircraft and TacMobile ground support system, the MQ-4C Triton is integral to the Navy's Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance Force (MPRF) Family of Systems (FoS). The MQ-4C is the numerical replacement for the retiring EP-3 Aries II, Navy's long standing manned signals intelligence platform.

The recently released CNO Navigation Plan 2024, Navy's strategic guidance from the 33rd Chief of Naval Operations, specifically calls out the operationalization of robotic and autonomous systems. 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. Embodying this warfighting approach, that is exactly what VUP-19 is doing.

Currently, Commander Patrol and Reconnaissance Group / Commander Patrol and Reconnaissance Group Pacific (CPRG/CPRG-PAC) provides oversight to more than 7,000 men and women on both coasts operating the U.S. Navy's maritime patrol aircraft.

The Maritime Patrol Reconnaissance Force is administratively organized into two CONUS Patrol and Reconnaissance Wings at NAS Jacksonville, Florida and NAS Whidbey Island, Washington: including 14 Patrol and Reconnaissance squadrons, one Fleet Replacement Squadron (FRS) 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

(ASW), anti-surface warfare (ASuW), and maritime intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) operations.