

MQ-8C Fire Scout Reaches IOC



The MQ-8C is cleared for fleet operations and training after reaching initial operational capability. Naval Air Systems Command

PATUXENT RIVER, Md. – The Navy declared initial operational capability of the MQ-8C Fire Scout unmanned helicopter June 28, clearing the way for fleet operations and training, Naval Air Systems Command announced on July 8.

The MQ-8

Fire Scout is a sea-based, vertical lift unmanned system that is designed to provide reconnaissance, situational awareness and precision targeting support for ground, air and sea forces.

“This milestone is a culmination of several years of hard work and dedication from our joint government and industry team,” said Capt. Eric Soderberg, Fire Scout program manager. “We are excited to get this enhanced capability out to the fleet.”

The MQ-8C

variant is an endurance and payload upgrade to its predecessor, the MQ-8B, offering up to 12 hours on station depending on payload, and incorporates the commercial Bell 407 airframe.

The

Northrop Grumman-built Fire Scout complements the manned MH-60 helicopter by extending the range and endurance of ship-based operations.

The MQ-8C has flown more than 1,500 hours with more than 700 sorties to date. Over the next few years, Northrop Grumman will continue MQ-8C production deliveries to the Navy to complete a total of 38 aircraft.

The MQ-8C will be equipped with an upgraded radar that allows for a larger field of view and a range of digital modes, including weather detection, air-to-air targeting and a ground moving target indicator (GMTI). It will deploy with littoral combat ships (LCS) in fiscal 2021 while the MQ-8B conducts operations aboard LCS in the 5th and 7th Fleets.