

Navy's MQ-4C Triton UAV Deploys, Reaching Early Operational Capability



An MQ-4C Triton UAS sits in a hangar at Andersen Air Force Base after arriving for a deployment as part of an early operational capability test. U.S. Air Force/Senior Airman Ryan Brooks

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy's MQ-4C Triton unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) has deployed to the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations, with this initial deployment marking the achievement of early operational capability (EOC), the U.S. Pacific Fleet said in a release.

Unmanned Patrol Squadron (VUP) 19, the Navy's first Triton UAS squadron, deployed two MQ-4Cs to Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, by Jan. 26 "as part of an [EOC] to further develop the concept of operations and fleet learning associated with operating a high-altitude, long-endurance system in the maritime domain," the Pacific Fleet release said.

VUP-19 is headquartered at Naval Air Station (NAS) Jacksonville, Florida, but its Tritons are based at NAS Point Mugu, California. While deployed to Guam the Tritons will be under operational control of commander, Task Force 72, which also controls the operations of the Navy's P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft and EP-3E Orion electronic reconnaissance aircraft in the western Pacific.

The Triton eventually will achieve initial operational capability when a total of four MQ-4Cs are deployed to a single site to establish a 24/7 orbit over the western Pacific area of operations.

"The introduction of MQ-4C Triton to the 7th Fleet area of

operations expands the reach of the U.S. Navy's maritime patrol and reconnaissance force in the Western Pacific," Capt. Matt Rutherford, commander of CTF-72, said in the release. "Coupling the capabilities of the MQ-4C with the proven performance of P-8, P-3 and EP-3 will enable improved maritime domain awareness in support of regional and national security objectives."

"The Navy's Persistent Maritime UAS program office at Patuxent River, managed by Capt. Dan Mackin, and industry partner Northrop Grumman, worked closely with VUP-19 in preparation for EOC," the release said.

"Prior to flying the aircraft to Guam, the team completed extensive operational test and unit level training. This significant milestone marks the culmination of years of hard work by the joint team to prepare Triton for overseas operations. The fielding of the Navy's premier unmanned aircraft system and its additive, persistent, multi-sensor data collection and real-time dissemination capability will revolutionize the way maritime intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance is performed."

Rear Adm. Peter Garvin, commander, Patrol and Reconnaissance Group, said in the release: "The inaugural deployment of Triton UAS brings enhanced capabilities and a broad increase in maritime domain awareness to our forward fleet commanders. VUP-19, the Navy's first dedicated UAS squadron supported by an outstanding NAVAIR and industry team, is superbly trained and ready to provide the persistent ISR coverage the Navy needs."