Northrop Grumman Looks to Expand Fire Scout Missions

Sailors attached to Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 23, assigned to the Independence-variant littoral combat ship USS Jackson (LCS 6) and Naval Engineering Technology (NET) technicians perform ground turns on an MQ-8C Fire Scout on the flight deck of Jackson. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Andrew Langholf*

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. – With all 36 planned MQ-8C Fire Scout unmanned helicopters delivered to the Navy, the manufacturer, Northrop Grumman, is looking at expanding the range of missions the Fire Scout could provide.

Scott Weinpel, Northrop Grumman's business development official for the Fire Scout program, said the company will continue to support MQ-8C deployments on littoral combat ships. He also is looking forward to the MQ-8C's deployment on the Constellation-class guided-missile frigates; operation of the MQ-8C is included in the Capability Development Document for the frigate.

Weinpel also said the Fire Scout may have a role in operating from shore sites under the Expeditionary Advance Base Operations concept, including in a logistics cargo role.

Potential future roles for the MQ-8C include mine countermeasures and anti-submarine warfare. The Coastal Battlefield Reconnaissance and Analysis Block II, is the next-generation MCM sensor for the MQ-8C (the Block I is flown on the older MQ-8B version.

A Bell 407 helicopter, acting as a surrogate for the MQ-8C, has demonstrated the capability to drop ASW G-size sonobuoys. Weinpel said the MQ-8C could be modified to carry an ASW torpedo, although carriage would result in some loss of

endurance of the MQ-8C. The UAV also could monitor a sonobuoy field as an RF signal relay.

The MQ-8C currently flies with the Brite Stat II electro-optical/infrared sensor turret, the ZPY-8 radar, and the Automatic Information System.

Weinpel said the Navy so far has not indicated any plans to arm the MQ-8C, which has been tested to fire Advanced Precision Kill Weapon System rockets.