

# Saildrone Launches First Production Surveyor off the Manufacturing Line at Austal USA



MOBILE, Ala., March 6, 2024 – Today, Saildrone announced it has launched the first aluminum Surveyor unmanned surface vehicle (USV) off the Austal USA production line in Mobile, Ala. Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Admiral Lisa Franchetti was on site Monday to inspect the vehicle, ahead of these new USVs being tested under contract to the US Navy.

Primarily designed for ocean mapping and maritime domain awareness, the Saildrone Surveyor USV is powered by wind, solar, and a diesel generator for long-range, long-endurance missions in the open ocean.

The Surveyor carries the latest multibeam sonar equipment for seafloor mapping to depths of 11,000 meters (36,000 feet) and purpose-built defense and security payloads for accurate, dynamic, and confident decisions and responses to the full spectrum of maritime threats and challenges. Upcoming Navy missions will focus on the ability of the Surveyor to deliver both surface and undersea intelligence for a range of high-priority applications, including anti-submarine warfare (ASW).

To meet the increasing demand for Surveyor USVs, Saildrone partnered with Austal USA to leverage their advanced manufacturing production techniques and rapid assembly capabilities. Austal is currently producing one Surveyor every six weeks, with the ability to scale up production as demand requires.

“It is tremendous to see the first vehicle launched of many that will be produced here in Alabama,” said Saildrone founder and CEO Richard Jenkins. “We are honored to have Admiral Franchetti here in person to witness the start of the creation of a new fleet of USVs alongside traditional manned ships. Everyone at Saildrone is very proud to be supporting the US Navy and contributing to our defense and national security.”

At 20 meters long (65 feet) and weighing 15 tons, the Surveyor classifies as a medium USV, built to American Bureau of Shipping (ABS) Light Warship code. These first Surveyors are contracted to the US Navy for the initial testing and evaluation of Surveyor-class vehicles in multiple environments.

“Using unmanned assets helps put more players on the field by freeing up manned assets for more specific and important tasks,” said Franchetti. “It’s good to see high tech industry partnering with the traditional shipbuilding industrial base to rapidly deliver cutting-edge products at scale.”

Franchetti was joined on the tour by Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps (ACMC) Gen. Christopher J. Mahoney, Sen. Roger Wicker (R-Miss.S), ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, and Rep. Jerry Carl (R-Ala.).