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## First MQ-4C Triton test flight with multi-intelligence upgrade

From NAVAIR News

The Navy conducted its first test flight of the MQ-4C Triton in its upgraded hardware and software configuration July 29 at NAS Patuxent River, beginning the next phase of the unmanned aircraft's development.

The MQ-4C Triton flew in its new configuration, known as Integrated Functional Capability (IFC)-4, which will bring an enhanced multi-mission sensor capability as part of the Navy's Maritime Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance and Targeting (MISR&T) transition plan.

Triton's Integrated Test Team (ITT) comprised of the U.S. Navy, Australian cooperative partners, and government/industry teams completed a functional check flight and initial aeromechanical test points, demonstrating stability and control of the MQ-4C after a 30-month modification period.

"Today's flight is a significant milestone for the program and a testament to the resolve of the entire ITT, their hard work, and passion for test execution and program success," said Capt. Dan Mackin, Persistent Maritime Unmanned Aircraft



U.S. NAVY PHOTO

An MQ-4C Triton flew its first test flight in its new hardware and software configuration July 29 at NAS Patuxent River. The new configuration will bring an enhanced multi-mission sensor capability as part of the Navy's Maritime Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance and Targeting transition plan.

Systems program manager. "This flight proves that the program is making significant progress toward Triton's advanced multi-intelligence up-

grade and it brings us closer to achieving the initial operational capability (IOC) milestone."

Multiple Triton assets have been modified into

the IFC-4 configuration in support of IOC in 2023. A single test asset is in the current IFC-3 configuration to support sustainment of deployed systems as well as risk reduction for IFC-4.

Currently, two MQ-4C Triton aircraft in the baseline configuration known as IFC-3 are forward deployed to 7th Fleet in support of early operational capability (EOC) and Commander Task Force (CTF)-72 tasking. VUP-19 will operate Triton to further develop the concept of operations and fleet learning associated with operating a high-altitude, long-endurance system in the maritime domain.

"The MQ-4C Triton has already had a tremendous positive impact on operations in USINDOPACOM and will continue to provide unprecedented maritime intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities which are especially critical to national interests with the increased focus in the Pacific," Mackin said.

Triton is the first high altitude, long endurance aircraft that can conduct persistent Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) missions to complement the P-8 in the maritime domain. The Navy plans to deploy Triton to five orbits worldwide.

## NAS Patuxent River turns to wildlife rehabilitators when needed

By Donna Cipolloni  
NAS Patuxent River Public Affairs

The Environmental Division at NAS Patuxent River manages robust resource compliance, community service, and environmental stewardship programs while still ensuring the installation is able to carry out its mission. Occasionally, that stewardship involves wildlife protection and a collaborative effort between Pax personnel and wildlife rehabilitators outside the fence line.

Such was the case recently when a juvenile Red-Tailed Hawk — a species protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act — was struck by a vehicle near South Engineering Building 2187. Traffic stopped as the dazed hawk lay in the roadway and a call was placed to Pax River police who were on the scene within minutes.

"I had taken the day off and was driving back from doing laundry when I saw the officers and the bird in the road; as I was coming towards it, it stood up," said Lance McDaniel, installation environmental director. "I stopped the car to see if I could help. Turns out the police had been trying to reach me but I didn't have my cell phone with me."

On site, but without his phone, McDaniel was unable to contact any of his trained staff to come lend assistance, so he took charge of the situation.

"I knew at that moment, I was a wildlife biologist," joked McDaniel, riffing on the iconic "Seinfeld" episode where George Costanza, after encountering a beached whale, seizes the opportunity to become his fantasy alter ego — a marine biologist. "I got leather gloves from the Natural Resources Center and called my boys, who were helping me move out of base housing, to come down and help me."

Another passerby happened to be Ben Springer, a summer intern hired by Environmental to conduct a breeding bird survey. With Springer in front and McDaniel's sons on either side catching the hawk's attention, McDaniel was able to successfully approach from behind.

"It had tried to fly and landed on a branch, but it was so concussed it fell off," McDaniel said. "It was standing on the ground in the woods and that's when I came up from behind and was able to throw one of the sheets from my laundry over it, put my hands on its



COURTESY PHOTO

Public Works Officer Cmdr. Jonathan Higdon prepares to release a recovered juvenile Red-Tailed Hawk near the location where it had been struck by a vehicle onboard NAS Patuxent River in July. The hawk is a protected species under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

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