Navy developing Unmanned Air System for ship cargo resupply

From NAWCAD Communications

The Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division (NAWCAD) recently acquired a logistics Unmanned Air System (UAS) prototype to demonstrate long-range naval ship-to-ship and ship-to-shore cargo transport at NAS Patuxent River.

Delivered in late October, NAWCAD engineers, testers and military test pilots are now evaluating the commercially procured air vehicle — dubbed Blue Water Maritime Logistics UAS — and tailoring it to requirements set by Military Sealift (MSC) and Fleet Forces Command (FFC).

"The Blue Water logistics UAS will be further developed and tested by the Navy, for the Navy," said NAWCAD Commander Rear Adm. John Lemmon. "NAWCAD has organic talent and facilities you can’t find anywhere else. Combined with increased acquisition freedom granted by Congress, this effort shows how we’re doing business differently."

The rapid prototyping capability, facilitated by NAWCAD’s experimentation office, is funded by the Naval Innovative Science and Engineering (NISE) initiative, also known as NISE.

"This requirement is unlike other cargo requirements that online retailers like Amazon are exploring," said Blue Water’s project lead, Bill Macchione. "Naval cargo transport requires vehicles that can successfully operate through difficult environments that include heavy winds, open water and pitching vessels at sea."

Historic data from Navy casualty reports show that warships that move to non-mission capable or partially mission capable status often do so due to logistics-related issues like electronics parts or assemblies — 90% of which are logistical deliveries weighing less than 50 pounds.

Currently, tactical aircraft like the H-60 helicopter and V-22 tilt-rotor aircraft fly these missions.

Recognizing the cost and inefficiency of using these aircraft in missions that could be completed by Group-3 size UAS, MSC tapped NAWCAD to demonstrate an ability for an autonomous vehicle to fly these logistics missions.

The warfare center solicited industry to demonstrate potentially viable platforms that existed commercially. Industry was required to prove its UAV could autonomously transport a 20-pound payload to a moving ship 25 miles away without refueling. Of over 65 UAS platforms that were analyzed, two systems were technically advanced enough to partially meet the difficult requirements.

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Pax personnel must cooperate with health department COVID-19 contact tracing efforts

Answer the call!

By Donna Cipolloni
NAS Patuxent River Public Affairs

Contact tracing is a process used by the St. Mary’s County Health Department (SMCHD) to identify people who came in close contact with an individual testing positive for COVID-19, and NAS Patuxent River personnel — military, civilian or contractor — who receive a call from the county must cooperate with health officials by answering their questions.

‘Contact tracing helps slow the transmission of the virus by quickly identifying and informing people they’ve been exposed and may be infected and contagious, so they can take steps to stay home and not infect others,” said Terry Prochnow, director of Public Health Preparedness and Response with the St. Mary’s County Health Department.

Following an interview with an infected person, SMCHD contact tracers will phone others identified as coming in close contact with that person to ask follow-up questions and provide guidance regarding how to quarantine and monitor themselves for symptoms.

“The contact tracers are trying to reach those who should be in isolation or quarantine, and to assist them with challenges that make quarantine difficult,” said Dr. Patricia Bray, Pax River’s public health emergency officer. "Quarantine and isolation are legal orders delegated to the public health officer. Public health workers strive for voluntary cooperation in contact tracing and quarantine, but residents should be aware there is also a legal obligation to participate in health investigations and follow public health orders.”

Cooperation is not an operational security violation

Military and county contact tracers report their phone calls are frequently not answered and Bray wants to allay Pax River employees’ fears about violating operational security (OPSEC).

"Recently, the county health department was trying unsuccessfully to contact two Pax personnel [who had been in close contact with an infected person] but they didn’t want to answer the calls over concerns they may be violating safety measures," Bray said. ‘Because their close contacts at work had already been assessed by Navy personnel, the individuals thought the contact tracing was complete, not realizing the county completes contact tracing relevant to their lives at home. The county was on the verge of sending the sheriff to their homes, but first requested intervention from the Naval Health Clinic. Once the misunderstanding was resolved, the necessary information was exchanged and visits from the sheriff were avoided."

The message health professionals would like to spread widely, Bray said, is “Please answer the calls and assist tracers with interrupting the transmission of COVID-19.”

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Happy Thanksgiving’
Tester returns Dec. 3