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USS Coronado Underway for MQ-8C Fire Scout Testing



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PACIFIC OCEAN (NNS) -- USS Coronado (LCS 4) began underway operational testing of the Navy's newest unmanned helicopter, the MQ-8C Fire Scout, off the coast of San Diego, June 15.



The operations are a continuation of MQ-8C operational testing that began in April. This next phase is testing the MQ-8C's ability to operate concurrently with other airborne assets and littoral combat ships. The enhanced capability will provide commanders an improved and integrated intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance picture.

Coronado is one of four designated LCS testing ships and the ship's commanding

officer says he and his crew are excited to help further advance Navy lethality.

"It is a great privilege to advance the Navy's ability to conduct unmanned aerial vehicle operations," said Cmdr. Lawrence Repass, USS Coronado's commanding officer.

Fire Scout operations are a whole-ship effort, requiring effective coordination between the aviation and surface entities aboard.

"Whether it is ensuring that the data links required are functional, fire team personnel are standing by to respond, or managing the airspace and contact pictures; every single Sailor plays a role in Fire Scout operations," said Lt. Josh Riley, the ship's combat systems officer. "These Sailors



and this testing will help shape how the surface force will utilize the strengths and advantages that this valuable asset brings to the table in the coming years."

During Coronado's 2016-2017 deployment to the Western Pacific, the ship successfully used MQ-8B Fire Scout as an organic sensor to strike a target beyond visual range using a Harpoon surface-to-surface missile.

With that recent success fresh in their minds, LCS Sailors are excited for future employment of the MQ-8C Fire Scout, saying that the newer technology has increased speed, a higher ceiling, over twice the fuel endurance, and an improved payload capacity.

"Operating with the MQ-8C Fire Scout offers unique challenges, but it is the perfect partner to an LCS," said Lt. j.g. Alex Giltz, Coronado's auxiliaries officer and one of the few shipboard officers who has operated with both versions of the Fire Scout.

LCS is a high-speed, agile, shallow draft, mission-focused surface combatant designed for operations in the littoral environment, yet fully capable of open ocean operations. As part of the surface fleet, LCS has the ability to counter and outpace evolving threats independently or within a network of surface combatants.

For more news from Littoral Combat Ship Squadron 1, visit www.navy.mil/local/lcsron1/.

Webmaster's Note:

USS Coronado (LCS-4) is an *Independence*-class littoral combat ship. She is the third ship of the United States Navy to be named after Coronado, California. The contract was awarded to General Dynamics-Bath Iron Works in May 2009 for the construction of LCS-4.

The Northrop Grumman MQ-8C Fire Scout (known as the Fire-X during development) is an unmanned helicopter developed by Northrop Grumman for use by the United States Navy. The MQ-8C also has autonomous take-off and landing capability. It is designed to provide reconnaissance, situational awareness, aerial fire support and precision targeting support for ground, air and sea forces. The MQ-8C airframe is based on the Bell 407.