Next Generation Minehunting Tools Delivered

From Program Executive Office, Littoral and Mine Warfare Public Affairs

WASHINGTON (NNS) -- The U.S. Navy took delivery of the next generation of the AN/AQS-20A Minehunting Sonar and the AN/AQS-235 Airborne Mine Neutralization System (AMNS) from Raytheon Company at the company’s facility in Tewksbury, Mass. Sept. 2.

AN/AQS-20A Minehunting Sonar detects, localizes and identifies bottom, close-tethered and volume mines, and AMNS re-acquires and neutralizes the mines. These 'next-generation' tools represent a significant step forward in outfitting and sustaining tomorrow's mine countermeasures fleet.

"I am particularly pleased with the progress the AN/AQS-20A team has made," said Capt. Paul Siegrist, program manager for Unmanned Maritime Vehicles. "I am looking forward to an aggressive testing schedule leading to a successful operational evaluation."

The AN/AQS-20A Minehunting Sonar is towed underwater at various depths to scan forward, peripherally and below the host vehicle to detect sea mines. The system uses sonar and electro-optical sensors to provide high-resolution images of mines and mine-like objects, as well as high precision location information. It can be towed by a helicopter or the Remote Minehunting System.

AMNS is deployed from the MH-60S multimission helicopter to locate and destroy underwater anti-shipping mines detected by the AN/AQS-20A Minehunting Sonar. The system consists of a helicopter-based control console, as well as a launch and handling system equipped with four unmanned, neutralizer vehicles that destroy mines via remote control from the operator in the helicopter.

"The advancements of the AN/AQS-20A bring our minehunting capabilities to the next level," Siegrist said. "The flexibility and adaptability of the system allows us to effectively deploy from both the MH-60S helicopter and also from the Remote Minehunting System, extending our ability to ensure the safety of the fleet."

Developmental and operational testing of the AN/AQS-20A Minehunting Sonar and AMNS began in 2002. Under current contracts, Raytheon will deliver a total of 20 AN/AQS-20A systems by January 2011 and five AMNSs by December 2009.

Program Executive Office, Littoral and Mine Warfare is an affiliated Program Executive Office of the Naval Sea Systems Command, which designs, delivers and maintains the systems, equipment and weapons needed by the warfighter to dominate the littoral battle space and provide the warfighter 'assured access.'

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