GLOBAL HAWK READIES FOR NEW PAYLOAD TESTS

News / Manufacturer

Northrop Grumman has scheduled **flight tests** of three **new payloads** for the **RQ-4B Global Hawk** fleet next year.

The tests are made possible by the development of a universal payload adaptor jointly funded by Northrop and the US Air Force.

In its original form, the RQ-4B lacked the payload attach points to fit two sensors carried by the Lockheed Martin U-2S, the reconnaissance aircraft the Global Hawk is scheduled to replace after Fiscal 2019.

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The optical bar camera is used to monitor the Sinai peninsula in Egypt, fulfilling US treaty obligations.

The senior year electro-optical reconnaissance system (SYERS-2) payload is used by the U-2 to collect multi-spectral images, a product that proved useful in the last decade for detecting improvised explosive devices recently buried in the ground.

Both sensors will be demonstrated on board the RQ-4 during 2016, says Mike Lyons, a Northrop business development director. The 544kg (1,200lb) UPA was observed fitted to an RQ-4B on a tour of Northrop's Global Hawk assembly line in Palmdale, California on 10 December.

The SYERS-2 flight test will be performed as a demonstration, Lyons says. The air force plans to install an upgraded version of the sensor, called the MS-177, for operational service.

The MS-177 includes modernized optronics and a gimbaled rotation device, increasing the field of view of the sensor by 20° without needing to change the flight path of the aircraft, Lyons says.

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