Northrop Grumman-Developed U.S. Navy Unmanned Fire Scout Nears Operational Evaluation

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SAN DIEGO, Aug. 10, 2009 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- The Northrop Grumman Corporation-developed (NYSE:NOC) MQ-8B Fire Scout Vertical Takeoff and Landing Tactical Unmanned Aircraft Vehicle (VTUAV) recently completed flight tests aboard the USS McInerney. This is part of a series of shipboard evaluations leading to Operational Evaluation (OpEval) scheduled for this fall.

The recent flight tests took place the weekend of July 10 off the coast of Mayport, Fla. During the four days of wind envelope and mission system testing, the ship/aircraft team pushed up the total number of shipboard landings to 88, under a variety of shipboard deck motion conditions and wind conditions, and including the use of the grid and harpoon system. Additionally, command and control operations with payload imagery transmission were conducted over 100 miles from the ship.

"The recent flight test success aboard the USS McInerney continue to highlight Fire Scout's maturity and status as a U.S. Navy program of record," said Doug Fronius, Director of Tactical Unmanned Systems for Northrop Grumman's Aerospace Systems sector.

The Fire Scout first embarked aboard the guided-missile frigate USS McInerney, an Oliver Hazard Perry-class frigate, while in port for operational fit checks and ship integration testing on Dec. 10, 2008. The Fire Scout is slated to deploy aboard USS McInerney during its next counter-narcotics trafficking deployment later this year.

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