

Ballarat strikes gold with unmanned aerial vehicle



Two of Navy's newest cutting-edge capabilities have combined, with the Anzac Class Frigate HMAS Ballarat embarking an S-100 Camcopter Unmanned Aerial Vehicle for flight trials off the Eastern coast of Australia.

Personnel from Navy's 822X Squadron and test specialists from the Aircraft Maintenance and Flight Trials Unit (AMAFTU) embarked Ballarat to collect data on how the 200 kilogram S-100 Camcopter UAV can launch and be retrieved at sea.

Trial Director, Lieutenant Commander Chris Broadbent, said the trials were an important part of learning how to combine the payload capacity of the S-100 Camcopter with the warfare capabilities of the 118-metre long Anzac Class Frigate.

"The deployment of unmanned systems at sea will become a more common theme in modern maritime warfare, especially with the advent and continued development of artificial intelligence and robotic or autonomous systems," Lieutenant Commander Hamilton said.

"Maximising their ability to safely operate in a variety of environmental conditions is fundamental to their operational utility and making them a force multiplier."

Embarked in Ballarat, 822X Squadron Flight Commander, Lieutenant Michael Mulquiney, said the S-100 Camcopter could support surface, amphibious or anti-submarine warfare, as well as in search and rescue and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

"The introduction of unmanned aviation operations at sea is a paradigm shift for Navy and it will enable us to detect threats at greater ranges and better defend our ships and give us enhanced situational awareness," Lieutenant Mulquiney said.

"S-100 Camcopter is capable of vertical take-off and landing while carrying multiple payloads simultaneously.

"It can fly for up to several hours at a time and reach a maximum speed in excess of 100km/h."

822X Squadron commissioned in 2018 and is based at HMAS Albatross near Nowra.

Ballarat is one of eight Anzac Class Frigates in Navy's fleet and is capable of long-range air defence, surface and undersea warfare, surveillance, reconnaissance and interdiction.