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Drones will seek pirates at sea

by Staff Writers
Arlington, Va. (UPI) Apr 5, 2012

The U.S. Navy says it will begin tests of airborne pilotless drones equipped with sensors that could distinguish small pirate boats at sea from other vessels.

Airborne tests of the Multi-Mode Sensor Seeker will take place this summer, the Office of Naval Research reported Thursday.



Placed on a robotic helicopter called Fire Scout and carrying advanced automatic target recognition software, the sensor will allow the helicopter to autonomously identify small boats on the water, reducing the workload of sailors operating it from control stations aboard Navy ships, researchers said.

disclaimer: image is for illustration purposes only

▶ "Sailors who control robotic systems can become overloaded with data, often sifting through hours of streaming video searching for a single ship," said Ken Heeke, program officer in ONR's Naval Air Warfare and Weapons Department.

"The automatic target recognition software gives Fire Scout the ability to distinguish target boats in congested coastal waters using LADAR, and it sends that information to human operators, who can then analyze those vessels in a 3-D picture."

The target software compares the 3-D imagery to vessel templates or schematics stored in the system's memory, researchers said.

"The 3-D data gives you a leg up on target identification," said Dean Cook, a researcher at the Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division said. "Infrared and visible cameras produce 2-D pictures, and objects in them can be difficult to automatically identify."

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PILLAGING PIRATES

African piracy a threat to U.S. security?

Washington (UPI) Mar 19, 2012

Pirate attacks on merchant vessels in Africa pose a threat with ripple effects for U.S. homeland security and must be tackled as such, security industry experts say. The industry's experts want specialist teams from commercial security firms deployed on every ship that sails in the danger zone in east Africa, where most recent piracy incidents have taken place. "Success at sea by ... read more



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