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The U.S. Navy reached a new milestone for a futuristic new stealth drone when it successfully retracted its landing gear and flew in cruise configuration for the first time, [engineers announced](#) Tuesday.

Developed by [Northrop Grumman](#), the X-47B is a tailless, strike fighter-sized unmanned aircraft designed to take off from and land on moving aircraft carriers at sea. [New images released today](#) depict a futuristic, almost UFO-like vehicle.

The test flight, conducted at Edwards Air Force Base, helped validate hardware and software that would enable the X-47B to land with precision on a moving deck, the company said.

"Last week's flight gave us our first clean look at the aerodynamic cruise performance of the X-47B air system ... and it is proving out all of our predictions," said Janis Pamiljans, vice president and Navy UCAS (Unmanned Combat Air System Carrier) program manager for Northrop Grumman's Aerospace Systems division.

"Reaching this critical test point demonstrates the growing maturity of the air system, and its readiness to move to the next phase of flight testing."

The aircraft is part of the U.S. Navy's growing fleet of drones as the military looks to shift away from manned aircraft.

Northrop Grumman hopes to have successfully demonstrated the first carrier-based launch by 2013 with autonomous in-air refueling coming

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