

Mystery of US military drone floating off Philippines



Filipino fishermen find a US navy drone.

MANILA

HUGO GYE

A US naval drone has been found floating off the coast of the Philippines — hundreds of kilometres away from the nearest American military base.

The fishermen who found the 3m orange device originally reported it could have been a bomb, prompting local officials to send for munitions experts.

But when it was determined to

be safe, the unmanned aerial vehicle was taken into the care of the Filipino navy.

The BQM-74E military drone — marked “Navy” — was found by a diver and fishermen on Sunday off the coast of Masbate Island, towards the centre of the island chain.

A Filipino naval officer said officials did not know how it ended up more than 300km from the capital Manila.

The drones are frequently used by the US military as targets during weapon testing.

A spokesman for the US Embassy in Manila said officials were trying to work out whether the drone found near Masbate had been used by the navy, adding the drone was not armed and had not been used for surveillance.

While the Philippines used to host multiple US military bases, the American naval facility in the country was shut down more than two decades ago.

The nearest US Navy base to Masbate is the facility in the Japanese province of Okinawa, about 1500km away.

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