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Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Crosses Atlantic

From: **David Clarke** <crazydiamonds@compuserve.com>
 Date: Sun, 13 Jun 1999 14:29:12 -0400
 Fwd Date: Sun, 13 Jun 1999 16:01:39 -0400
 Subject: Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Crosses Atlantic

This story will be released to the UK Media on 14.6.99:

Unmanned Aerial Vehicle sparks UFO Scare

by David Clarke

A MINIATURE robot aircraft survived a 2,000 kilometre trans-Atlantic test flight guided only by remote control to a missile range on a remote Scottish island.

The US-Navy funded UAV (unmanned aerial vehicle) landed safely at the British Army's testing range on the island of Benbecula following a record-breaking flight.

Three other tiny drones - just ten foot long with a ten foot wingspan - crashed and disappeared over the choppy north Atlantic seas during the secret operation last November. And the strange-looking aircraft - called the Aerosonde - triggered a string of UFO sightings to the Scottish Coastguard stations as it was guided in to land at the remote military base in the Outer Hebrides.

A British Army spokesman said: "It's a very small robot aircraft and its amazing that it managed to fly that distance and land safely." The UAV used a satellite guidance system to navigate and was programmed to avoid the worst of the North Atlantic weather. Once it came within range of Benbecula it circled until a US pilot on the ground was able to guide it slowly in to land at the missile testing range.

A spokesman for Stornoway Coastguard on the Isle of Lewis said: "All the coastguard stations in this area were warned by the Army to keep a look out for these drones coming in from the North Atlantic, especially in case they triggered UFO sightings.

"There were a number of people ringing in reporting having seen UFOs at the time, one of them even said it had flown over Stornoway."

Defence chiefs are now hailing the UAV as the strategic weapon of the future after the successful test flight of the Aerosonde, which is designed for "long range environmental monitoring."

Already the Royal Australian Air Force has invested 30 million dollars into the development of a long-range UAV called Global Hawk to carry out surveillance of neighbouring countries in southeast Asia.

The Global Hawk, developed by Teledyne Ryan, is capable of 20 hour endurance flights of more than 5,000 km before having to return to base.

And British Army experience who are developing their own sophisticated unmanned aircraft say the remotely piloted drones could be widely used on future battlefields.

UAVs are known to have played a large role in the recent NATO campaign in Kosovo and Serbia.

Major Roy Denton of the British Army Hebrides said: "We are involved in the development and testing of a number of unmanned aerial vehicles.

"It's cheaper and safer than putting a serviceman into a dangerous battlefield."

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