# US Navy's 'Manta Ray' Undersea Drone Prototype Spotted on Google Maps Sparks Online Frenzy



A top-secret U.S. Navy undersea drone prototype, named "Manta Ray," gained attention after it was spotted on Google Maps and quickly went viral online. The drone was seen docked at Port Hueneme, a naval base located approximately 63 miles west of Los Angeles, California. The sleek, autonomous vessel, named for its resemblance to the sea creature, was designed by Northrop Grumman as part of the U.S. Navy's efforts to develop long-range underwater weapons.

The "Manta Ray" can operate in a low-power mode, anchoring itself deep underwater and hibernating for extended periods without refueling. It uses buoyancy-driven gliding to navigate through the water. According to the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), the drone completed in-water testing in Southern California from February to March. The tests demonstrated its hydrodynamic performance, including submerged operations using various propulsion and steering modes.

The Manta Ray's modular design allows it to be disassembled and transported in standard shipping containers, eliminating the need for dedicated port facilities. DARPA describes the unmanned undersea vehicle (UUV) as a potential game-changer, capable of enhancing naval capacity without disrupting existing operations, and suitable for a variety of missions including reconnaissance and ocean mapping.

Defense analysts believe the development of the Manta Ray is a strategic move to counter underwater drones being developed by Russia and China. The Russian navy has also been working on similar drone technology, with plans to acquire nearly three dozen underwater drones capable of significant ranges and speeds.

Dr. Kyle Woerner, DARPA's Manta Ray program manager, emphasized the successful testing of the UUV, noting that it validates the vehicle's readiness for real-world operations and sets a precedent for rapid assembly and deployment in the field.