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## MQ-9 Reaper: The First Operational UCAV?

May 30, 2012 12:45 EDT

**Latest updates:** Arming the Italians.



[http://media.defenseindustrydaily.com/images/AIR\\_UAV\\_MQ-9\\_Reaper\\_Armed\\_Frontal\\_Taxiing\\_Ig.jpg](http://media.defenseindustrydaily.com/images/AIR_UAV_MQ-9_Reaper_Armed_Frontal_Taxiing_Ig.jpg)

Reaper, ready...

(click to view full)

The MQ-9 Reaper UAV, once called "Predator B," is somewhat similar to the famous Predator. Until you look at the tail. Or its size. Or its weapons. It's called "Reaper" for a reason – while it packs the same surveillance gear, it's much more of a hunter-killer design. Some have called it the first fielded Unmanned Combat Air Vehicle (UCAV).

The Reaper UCAV will play a significant role in the future USAF, even though its capability set makes the MQ-9 considerably more expensive than MQ-1 Predators, whose price benefits from less advanced design and volume production orders. Given these high-end capabilities, and expenses, one might not have expected the MQ-9 to enjoy better export success than its famous cousin. Nevertheless, that's what appears to be happening. MQ-9 operators currently include the USA and Britain, who have both used it in hunter-killer mode, and Italy. Other countries are also expressing interest, and international deployments are accelerating. Then the US Air Force's FY13 President Budget cut its requested order pipeline, all of a sudden:

- [The MQ-9 Reaper, and its Little Brothers](http://www.defenseindustrydaily.com/MQ-9-Reaper-The-First-Operational-UCAV-05021/#mq-9) (<http://www.defenseindustrydaily.com/MQ-9-Reaper-The-First-Operational-UCAV-05021/#mq-9>)
- [Program Highlights](http://www.defenseindustrydaily.com/MQ-9-Reaper-The-First-Operational-UCAV-05021/#program-data) (<http://www.defenseindustrydaily.com/MQ-9-Reaper-The-First-Operational-UCAV-05021/#program-data>)
  - [Future Planning & Developments](http://www.defenseindustrydaily.com/MQ-9-Reaper-The-First-Operational-UCAV-05021/#projected-lifecycle) (<http://www.defenseindustrydaily.com/MQ-9-Reaper-The-First-Operational-UCAV-05021/#projected-lifecycle>)
- [Contracts & Key Events](http://www.defenseindustrydaily.com/MQ-9-Reaper-The-First-Operational-UCAV-05021/#contracts), (<http://www.defenseindustrydaily.com/MQ-9-Reaper-The-First-Operational-UCAV-05021/#contracts>) 2005 SDD – Present [updated]
- [OICU: MQ-9 Ancillaries](http://www.defenseindustrydaily.com/MQ-9-Reaper-The-First-Operational-UCAV-05021/#uav-sensors-testing) (<http://www.defenseindustrydaily.com/MQ-9-Reaper-The-First-Operational-UCAV-05021/#uav-sensors-testing>)
- [Additional Readings & Sources](http://www.defenseindustrydaily.com/MQ-9-Reaper-The-First-Operational-UCAV-05021/#readings) (<http://www.defenseindustrydaily.com/MQ-9-Reaper-The-First-Operational-UCAV-05021/#readings>)

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