



In order to operate the MQ-25 Stingray, the first carrier based unmanned aerial vehicle in the Navy, the Secretary of the Navy has approved the establishment of the Aerial Vehicle Operator (AVO) warrant officer designator. Unlike traditional Navy Chief Warrant Officers, 737X warrant officers will be accessed through Navy recruiting vs. conversion of chiefs through a board process. 737X warrant officers will be trained as technical specialists in the operation of the MQ-25 platform. In the future, 737X warrant officers may also be qualified to operate additional unmanned aerial vehicles to support Navy requirements. This signifies continued agility and flexibility of talent management under Sailor 2025, which seeks to put the right Sailors in the right jobs.

What you need to know

How to Apply	Aerial Vehicle Operator	W-1 Corps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Navy Recruiting Command will begin accepting applications for initial 737X accessions beginning in FY22. Civilian applications will be the primary accession source for this program with enlisted communities being a secondary source. Civilians interested in applying to the program should contact their local recruiter for application details. Enlisted service members interested in transferring into the community should contact their career counselor or detailer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The Aerial Vehicle Operator will be trained to fly the MQ-25 Stingray, which will be used in the near-term as an aerial refueling asset based on carriers.</i> <i>While these warrants will not have to go through a traditional aviation pipeline, they will need safety of flight technical proficiency and also the skills to conduct in-flight refueling. The pipeline is estimated at 15-18 months, slightly less than today's aviators.</i> <i>There will be 450 Warrant Officer billets established over 6-10 years, with expected distribution: 23 W5, 113 W4, 135 W3, 179 W2/W1.</i> <i>Aerial Vehicle Operator WOs (737X) will wear WO/CWO bars on both collars and will be awarded AVO wings upon the completion of undergraduate flight training as a warfare device similar to pilot/NFO wings.</i> <i>Some qualified MQ-25 AVOs may be utilized in the future to operate the MQ-4C Triton on shore duty following their initial MQ-25 sea tour.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This will be the second phasing-in of the Warrant Officer-1 corps, with the first being W-1s in the cyber field last year. W-1s allow the Navy to recruit talent more directly from the civilian workforce and junior enlisted personnel with needed skill sets. The Navy phased out the bulk of its W-1s after 1975, with the last W-1s leaving service in 1995. It returned with W-1s in cyber.
Squadron Leadership		Sailor 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MQ-25 squadron leadership positions (CO, XO, Department Head) will be filled by administratively screened 13XX officers from other Type/Model/Series. These officers will provide valued aviation leadership and career experience for mentorship and mission accomplishment. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sailor 2025 is a talent management concept that seeks to place the right Sailor in the right job. It is modeled after a concept that Sailors should be placed in roles that match their skill sets vs. being forced into position based on career timing. Establishment of W-1s to fly UAS is in line with this concept.
Developing Leaders		MQ-25 Stingray
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By creating this under the warrant officer corps, the W-1s who enter will continue to rise up to become W-2s and so forth. They will take on the same qualities as their warrant officer peers and be the Navy's go-to subject matter experts for aerial vehicle operation. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The MQ-25 is an unmanned aircraft system that will provide a refueling capability from a carrier, extending the combat range of deployed F/A-18 Super Hornet, EA-18G Growler, and F-35C fighters. It is said to be a game changer for carrier operations.

Policy Guidance Links:

NAVADMIN 315/20: <https://www.public.navy.mil/bupers-npc/reference/messages/Documents/NAVADMINS/NAV2020/NAV20315.txt>

Aerial Vehicle Operator WOs

~ Questions & Answers ~

Q1. Why is this being done?

A1. The MQ-25 Stingray will be the Navy's first carrier based unmanned aerial vehicle and is expected to reach Initial Operational Capability in Fiscal Year 2024. Unlike other unmanned aerial system (UAS) platforms, the complexity in operating and performing its mission from a carrier requires specialists rather than pilots from other type-model series. Warrant Officers were selected as the primary operator source from an accession standpoint and also due to ability to bring continuity of back-to-back tours in career progression. Unlike traditional Navy Chief Warrant Officers (CWOs) the majority of these officers will be accessed much younger and trained as Aerial Vehicle Operators similar to current Naval Aviators and Naval Flight Officers. The primary accession source will be through Navy Recruiting.

Q2. How many will be affected through this designator?

A2. Upon approval of the designator, 450 Warrant Officer billets will be established over 6-10 years, culminating in approximately 450 total billets. SECNAVINST 1412.8B provides funding levels for WO grades. These percentages result in the following for AVO grade distribution: 23 W5, 113 W4, 135 W3, 179 W2/W1.

Q3. When will it be implemented?

A3. We expect to start taking applications in FY22. After the initial announcement goes out, the Aviation and CWO officer community managers will begin to coordinate to get the designator instituted in our accession plan. Navy Recruiting Command will then take the lead for bringing in applicants who meet the eligibility requirements.

Q4. How long has this been in the works?

A4. Planning for this began back in 2019 when the Navy began to look at the manning requirements to field this new class of aviation assets. It was decided by then Air Boss Vice Adm. Miller that instead of creating a new URL designator for this type/model/series, it would be filled by warrant officers. We have been working with the aviation community managers and training schoolhouses to ensure we can field an officer corps ready to operate when the aircraft becomes operational in 2024.

Q5. What other manning considerations are being looked at to field the MQ-25?

A5. Much of that is still being developed. We recognize that maintainers will need mostly special schools and expertise. In general, we are treating this like any other aircraft in both supply chain, maintenance, and ensuring it remains fully mission capable.

Q6. Will there be an avenue for enlisted sailors to apply for the program?

A6. Yes, just like enlisted Sailors can apply for OCS currently, the same would apply for this program. They would apply through CNRC and go through the Professional Recommendation Board process.

Q7. This community is being accessed for the MQ-25 aircraft, but is it possible the community could expand to include other platforms, such as the MQ-4C Triton?

A7. Yes, the plan is that some qualified MQ-25 AVOs would be utilized in the future to operate the MQ-4C Triton on shore duty following their initial MQ-25 sea tour.