

Mysterious New Jet Takes to the Air

Defense-Update

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Model 401 takeoff on its first flight at Mojave, CA. Photo: Scaled Composites

Scaled Composites announced the first flight of its newly developed, experimental aircraft Model 401. The company produced two such aircraft for an undisclosed customer, to demonstrate advanced, low-cost manufacturing techniques and research flight services for the United States government. This successful first flight is the beginning of the flight test phase for vehicle number 1. The Scaled team plans to continue envelope expansion on the first aircraft as they move toward first flight of the second vehicle.



Model 401 design indicates several signature reduction features, including the dorsal engine and exhaust. Photo: Scaled Composites



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DdLtcSUQmL4>

Scaled Composites is known for its advanced, innovative design and unique one of a kind' aircraft production legacy. Model 401 introduces new features, including signature reduction design features. Design similarities to the General Atomics Predator C Avenger could hint at a manned test platform for certain manned/unmanned applications. Scaled Composites is a wholly owned subsidiary of Northrop Grumman Corporation, one of General Atomics' competitors on the U.S. Navy's MQ-25 carrier-based unmanned tanker aircraft program, for which GA has proposed an Avenger derivative.

The aircraft is powered by a single Pratt & Whitney JTD-15D-5D engine developing 3,045 pounds of thrust, flying up to Mach 0.6 with a service ceiling of 30,000 feet and mission endurance of up to three hours. The two aircraft produced are identical in outer mold line. The Model 401 has a maximum takeoff weight of 8,000 lbs., double its empty weight. They have a wingspan and length of 11.60 meters (38 feet).



General Atomics' Predator C Avenger is a jet-powered unmanned aircraft that scales about three times larger than Model 401. The two vehicles are strikingly similar in their design features. Photo: GA-ASI



General Atomics is proposing a derivative of the Predator C Avenger for the US Navy carrier based unmanned refueling aircraft – Stingray. Photo: GA-ASI/USNI