

FUTURE DEFINING

Bahamas Relief Operation

AeroVironment Team Supports Hurricane Dorian Aid Efforts

By Alyce Moncourtois, Content Marketing

"The damage was unimaginable," said AeroVironment Flight Operations Manager Eric Thompson as he surveilled the destruction from Hurricane Dorian on Abaco — a small group of islands in the northern Bahamas. "When we arrived, we could see that the hurricane had destroyed everything in its path."

The team — Thompson, Stu Orozco and Bogdan Pugach — arrived in Abaco on Sept. 7, setting up operations in a house with limited power and services. They immediately began working with the local government to obtain airspace and operational approvals.

During their 10-day stay, they provided much needed surveillance, reconnaissance, mapping and data collection using Puma II and a Quantix unmanned aircraft for their missions.

They flew the first area reconnaissance mission over an area called "The Mudd," which was the hardest hit spot on the island. The data collected on the infrastructure damage offered all the details that were needed to continue search and rescue and begin recovery efforts.

"Having a UAS tool set of Puma and Quantix gave us the advantage to assist with multiple requests coming from the command center," reported Thompson. "We were using Puma to fly beyond the broken bridges into inaccessible areas to

see and document if people and buildings were okay. In addition, in one day we captured 2,000 acres of high-resolution map data for damage assessment utilizing Quantix."

The team worked closely with the United Nations and local authorities, providing them with valuable data and information. Their assistance was greatly appreciated.

"The Quantix data was a huge help for the Bahamian government to understand our capabilities and what we could offer for the search and rescue operations," said Thompson. "This prompted a request for us to stay an additional 5 days." The team donated the Quantix aircraft to the Bahamian government at the end of their mission recognizing that its simple, automated features would make the learning curve minimal and aid in their continuing recovery efforts.

In addition to search and rescue operations, the team helped pass out food and brought much needed medical supplies to the hospital.

As the team headed home, Thompson described their assistance as valuable and effective. "This was a great experience to support the Bahamas and exciting to see AeroVironment's products being used to help with the recovery of Hurricane Dorian."



Quantix sits ready for a mission to collect mapping data.



A washed out bridge made access to part of the island impossible so Puma was launched from this site to obtain damage assessment information.

Photo Credit: Stu Orozco