

Phoenix International Recovers U.S. Air Force F-16



Underwater survey company Phoenix International, based in the USA, has successfully completed an underwater search and recovery of a U.S. Air Force F-16 aircraft from over 16,400 feet of sea water (fsw). Underwater search operations commenced using the Navy's 20,000fsw depth search system, ORION. After searching the initial planned search area spanning a 2 x 4 nautical mile (nm) area, search operations shifted to another high-probability area and the suspected F-16 debris field was quickly identified.

In early August 2012, at the direction of the Naval Sea Systems Command's Director of Ocean Engineering, Supervisor of Salvage and Diving (SUPSALV), Phoenix mobilised the Navy's ORION deepwater side scan sonar system, the CURV 21 remotely operated vehicle (ROV), and the Navy's motion compensated, 30,000 pound Fly-Away Deep Ocean

Salvage System (FADOSS). All equipment was transported over land from Phoenix's facility in Largo, Maryland, to Dover Air Force Base in Delaware. From there, military transport aircraft moved the equipment to Hawaii, where the gear was loaded aboard USNS Navajo (T-ATF 169).

After finding the debris, Phoenix personnel deployed the CURV 21 deepwater ROV system and conducted a detailed video survey of the area in which several high-priority items, including the Flight Data Recorder and engine, were identified. Over the next 10 days, the Phoenix team piloted the CURV 21 ROV through 12 dives and recovered all critical items desired by the embarked accident investigating board. Throughout the operation, Phoenix search and recovery personnel worked tirelessly to overcome a number of significant challenges, including extreme water depths, and adverse weather conditions to include erratic high winds, large waves, and strong currents to successfully complete this operation.

Phoenix provides manned and unmanned underwater operations, design engineering, and project management services to a diverse set of clients worldwide. Expertise is available from six regional offices in the areas of wet and dry hyperbaric welding, conventional and atmospheric diving, Autonomous Underwater Vehicles, Remotely Operated Vehicles, and other robotic systems and tooling.

Image: CURV21 deployment. Image Courtesy: Phoenix International.

<https://www.hydro-international.com/content/article/phoenix-international-recovers-u-s-air-force-f-16>
