General Atomics has demonstrated electronic attack capability on an MQ-9 Reaper unmanned aircraft fitted with a Northrop Grumman jamming pod. A test flight took place during a U.S. Marine Corps weapons and tactics instructor (WTI) course in April, the results of which have only now been made public.

The companies plan to participate with the Reaper in the next WTI course in October, as part of a joint demonstration with smaller unmanned aircraft and EA-6B Prowler electronic warfare (EW) jets.

Doug Hardison, a strategic development executive with General Atomics and a former Marine, said the companies have self-funded the Reaper effort to support the Marine Corps’ concept of a distributed, networked approach to EW combining ground and aviation assets, both manned and unmanned. The Marine Air-Ground Task Force Electronic Warfare 2020 (MAGTF) document, issued in June 2011, is the vision for Marine Corps electronic warfare capability after the service retires its four Prowler squadrons between 2016 and 2019. The F-35B Joint Strike Fighter also figures in the concept, the marines have said.

“How do we satisfy our electronic warfare requirements?” after retiring the Prowlers, Hardison asked. “Obviously a UAV is not going to be able to do the entire mission, but there are certain aspects of the EW mission that it’s well suited for.”

The companies demonstrated the pod-equipped Reaper on April 12 during the WTI held at Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, Ariz. The pod, containing a Northrop Grumman digital receiver/exciter, was mounted on a wing hard point and controlled by a General Atomics ground control station. The Reaper was “fully integrated” into command and control networks and the EW architecture of the exercise, which involved 20 aircraft, General Atomics said. Hardison said the pod jammed at low frequency for the demonstration, drawing power from the aircraft. AIN could not reach Northrop Grumman’s program contact.

Future demonstrations will focus on "more integrated and networked EW capability," General Atomics said, including control of the jamming pod from the Marines’ Cyber/Electronic Warfare Coordination Cell located at MCAS Yuma and supporting aircraft strike packages confronting simulated targets 300 miles away at Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake, Calif.