Largest group of underwater gliders join expedition in S. China Sea

A total of 12 Chinese-developed underwater gliders are carrying out scientific observations in the South China Sea and sending back real-time data, according to a briefing on the research vessel “Kexue” Saturday.

It is the largest group of gliders to perform simultaneous observations in the region.

Kexue left Qingdao in east China’s Shandong Province last Monday for a maritime scientific expedition and stopped in Xiamen, southeast China to resupply Friday after completing the first part of the mission.

“The gliders have collected detailed maritime information, including temperature, salinity, turbidity, oxygen levels as well as the intensity and direction of currents,” said Yu Jiancheng, a scientist with the program.

The 12 submersible devices will collect comprehensive ocean data over the next month, said Sun Song, another scientist with the program.

Underwater gliders are a new type of underwater robot featuring less energy consumption, higher efficiency and better endurance.

During the first stage of the mission, scientists also successfully placed three submersible buoys and conducted several diving missions.

Kexue will leave Xiamen on Sunday for the mission’s second stage.

Kexue is China’s most advanced, independently-made marine science expedition vessel. It was put into operation in April 2014. The 4,711-tonne vessel is capable of conducting deep and open sea exploration and research.