F/A-18 Super Hornet Passes 1,500 Flight Hours

The F/A-18E/F Super Hornet soared through the 1,500 flight-hour mark at 11 a.m. Friday, Aug. 29. F/A-18E/F Integrated Test Team (ITT) pilot Jim Sandberg, of Northrop Grumman, was at the controls of F/A-18E1 when the milestone occurred. The Super Hornet is closing in on the 1,000-flight mark, having flown a total of 970 flights as of Sept. 3.

Flights earlier in the day by ITT pilots Dave Desmond of Boeing, U.S. Navy Cmdr. Tom Gurney and Navy Lt. Ken Ham, set the stage for Sandberg's milestone flight. Desmond flew F/A-18E2, Gurney flew F/A-18F2, and Ham flew F/A-18F1.

Cmdr. Robert O. Wirt, F/A-18E/F Government Flight Test director, praised the achievement. "The Super Hornet continues to perform extremely well, meeting or exceeding our expectations. The support we've received from all disciplines across the Naval Air Systems Team has been a textbook case study of how teamwork and communication can lead to a model flight test program. We continue to perform to schedule."

The flight test team at Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Md., had a highly successful week. Super Hornets flew 34 flights for 48.1 hours Aug. 25 through Aug. 30. The Super Hornet completed flutter tests with its fourth stores configuration, began high angle-of-attack stores tests for interdiction and air-to-air loadings, and performed weapons launches and releases.

"The Boeing/Navy Integrated Test Team at Patuxent River continues to excel at keeping the Super Hornet flight test on track," said Pat Finneran, Boeing vice president and general manager for F/A-18. "This superb team and the Super Hornet test aircraft continue to exceed our expectations."

Well into the second year of a three-year flight test program, development of the Super Hornet is on schedule and on budget.

Production of the first Super Hornets for fleet replacement squadrons begins at Boeing facilities in St. Louis later this month.

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