Boeing Super Hornets Pass 3,000 Flight Hours

The F/A-18E/F Super Hornet program passed 3,000 flight hours during testing at Naval Air Station, Patuxent River, Md., today.

As part of the engineering and manufacturing development (EMD) phase of the program, seven flight test Super Hornets have conducted more than 2,000 flights at Patuxent River and other test sites such as Naval Air Warfare Center, China Lake, and Edwards Air Force Base, both in California, and Naval Air Station Lakehurst, N.J.

During their first 3,000 flight hours, the Super Hornets have completed the requirements for the basic flight envelope of the aircraft, conducted more than 1,400 aerial refuelings, and completed initial sea trial carrier qualifications and cross-winds landings. Weapons configuration flights have been initiated on all 26 different configurations to be tested. Weapons separation tests have included the firing of 25 missiles and dropping of more than 430,000 pounds of ordnance. Missiles fired include Aim-7, Aim-9, Aim-120, HARM and Mavericks.

"This milestone is further evidence of the Super Hornet's success," said Patrick J. Finneran, vice president and general manager, Boeing F/A-18 program. "We have consistently stayed on schedule and remained under budget while meeting or exceeding all key performance parameters.

"For a program this size and an aircraft this advanced, these are impressive accomplishments. The U.S. Navy will receive an outstanding airplane, and the taxpayers can be reassured their money is being used wisely and carefully."

Remaining EMD flight testing includes qualifying more weapons configurations and additional carrier qualifications. When EMD testing is complete, the Super Hornet will have been cleared for 26 weapons configurations, compared with two at the same stage of development of the original F/A-18A/B Hornet.

The first production F/A-18E/F Super Hornet is in final assembly here and will be delivered to the U.S. Navy later this year. The U.S. Navy program calls for procurement of between 548 and 785 F/A-18E/F aircraft.

Three ground test articles have conducted barrier and drop tests and are undergoing static and fatigue testing. Live-fire testing will be conducted from July until December at China Lake.

The flight test phase of EMD is approximately 75 percent complete, and overall, EMD for the F/A-18E/F program is more than 95 percent complete.

The next phase of flight testing, operational evaluation, will begin in May 1999, with seven of the first 12 low-rate initial production aircraft. At the same time, after EMD flight testing is complete next spring, the seven original flight test aircraft will be used in follow-on test and evaluation.

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