Boeing Delivers First Production Super Hornet One Month Early

The first production model F/A-18E/F Super Hornet was delivered to the U.S. Navy more than a month ahead of schedule. F/A-18E6, a single-seat version of the nation's newest strike fighter, was accepted by the Navy today.

"Delivering this aircraft ahead of schedule is a testament to the hard work and dedication of everyone associated with the Super Hornet program," said Capt. Gib Godwin, U.S. Navy F/A-18 program manager. "I'd like to congratulate everyone on the team for doing a tremendous job."

Production of the first lot of 12 low-rate initial production Super Hornets began at Boeing facilities here Sept. 15, 1997. The aircraft will ferry to Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Md., where it will join the flight test program prior to entering Operational Evaluation (OPEVAL) with Navy squadron VX-9 at Naval Air Station China Lake, Calif.

OPEVAL, scheduled to begin in May, will consist of more than 800 flights in a six-month period. The aircraft will be tested in all mission areas, in various climates and at sea aboard an aircraft carrier.

Assembly of the second lot of low-rate initial production Super Hornets began earlier this month. The 20 aircraft were funded in the fiscal year 1998 defense budget.

The three-year Super Hornet flight-test program is more than 96 percent complete. By early December, seven flight-test aircraft have completed 2,621 flights and flown 3,918.7 hours. In addition, the Super Hornet completed flutter flight testing Oct. 23 -- one month ahead of schedule -- and successfully completed Operational Test IIB, receiving the highest grade possible.

The Super Hornet is built by an industry team led by Boeing. Boeing builds the forward fuselage and wings, and conducts final assembly. Northrop Grumman Corp. is the principal airframe subcontractor, supplying the center and aft fuselage. General Electric Co. produces the engines, and Raytheon Co. provides the radar.

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