Boeing F/A-18E/F Super Hornet Surpasses 4,000 Flight-Hour Test Mark

The Super Hornet reached another milestone as an F/A-18E soared through the sky here and logged the flight-test program's 4,000th flight hour.

Boeing test pilot Phil Pirozzi was at the controls of F/A-18E5 during the historic flight on Jan. 12. E5 is a single-seat version of the U.S. Navy's newest strike fighter. The early-morning flight lasted 2.6 hours.

The seven Engineering, Manufacturing and Development (EMD) flight-test aircraft at NAS Patuxent River have completed a total of 2,683 flights, bringing the total number of flight hours to 4,006.

"Four-thousand flight hours in this test program is indicative of the near conclusion of EMD, and a beginning of a great strike fighter aircraft for the fleet," said Pirozzi.

Capt. Robert O. Wirt, Jr., Government Flight Test Director, praised the entire Integrated Test Team for its most recent accomplishment.

"Four-thousand hours on a major aircraft development program is an accomplishment for which Naval Aviation should be very proud. The Super Hornet Government-Industry Team has achieved every milestone that was briefed seven years ago," Wirt said. "This airplane will be ready for OPEVAL on schedule, under cost, below weight and performing to the standards the fleet warfighters asked us to deliver to the carrier decks."

Operational Evaluation (OPEVAL) with Navy VX-9 is scheduled to begin in May at Naval Air Station China Lake, CA. The evaluation 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 aboard an aircraft carrier at sea.

The Super Hornet is the newest edition to the combat-proven family of F/A-18 Hornets. The aircraft features longer range, greater endurance, more payload-carrying ability, more powerful engines, increased carrier bringback capability, enhanced survivability and the growth potential to incorporate future systems and technologies to meet emerging threats.

Last month, Boeing delivered F/A-18E6, the first production-model Super Hornet, to the U.S. Navy more than a month ahead of schedule.

Assembly of the second lot of 20 low-rate initial production Super Hornets began at Boeing facilities in December 1998. The aircraft were funded in the fiscal year 1998 defense budget.

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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