U.S. Navy Squadron Receives First Boeing Super Hornets

The nation's first Super Hornet squadron -- VFA-122 -- received seven aircraft during an arrival ceremony here yesterday. The squadron will receive more than 34 F/A-18E/F Super Hornets during the next two years. The aircraft ferried from Naval Air Warfare Center China Lake, Calif., where the U.S. Navy recently completed the flying portion of the Super Hornet's operational evaluation.

VFA-122 is a fleet readiness squadron responsible for Super Hornet aircrew and maintenance training. The squadron, established on Jan. 15, currently is composed of about 165 personnel but is expected to grow to more than 500 over the next several years as Super Hornets and their crews populate the fleet.

"There is an enormous amount of detailed work that must be done to prepare for the Super Hornet to go to sea and to operate as part of the fleet," said U.S. Navy Capt. Mark Fox, commanding officer of VFA-122. "Our next major milestone is in June 2000 when we say we are ready to train and the first class starts flying."

From now until June, the squadron will focus on verifying the syllabus and qualifying the first group of Super Hornet instructor pilots, instructor weapon system operators and maintenance personnel to perform their jobs in preparation for the first class of replacement aircrew.

Fox says the first class will graduate from VFA-122 in early 2001. Graduates are destined for the first fleet squadron of operational Super Hornets. The first fleet deployment is scheduled for spring of 2002.

The Super Hornet is produced by the Hornet Industry Team, led by Boeing, Northrop Grumman, General Electric Aircraft Engines and Raytheon.

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