Boeing Begins Work on First EA-18G Test Aircraft

Tomorrow Boeing (NYSE:BA) employees begin working on the forward fuselage for EA-1, the first EA-18G test aircraft being built for the U.S. Navy under a $1 billion System Development and Demonstration (SDD) contract.

The EA-18G is the Navy's next-generation electronic attack aircraft and combines the combat-proven F/A-18 Super Hornet with a state-of-the-art Improved Capability III electronic attack subsystem provided by Northrop Grumman Corporation.

EA-1 will be the first of two test aircraft produced under the SDD contract covering all laboratory, ground and flight-testing.

"Today marks a note worthy day in naval aviation history as the first EA-18G officially commences on the Boeing production line," said the NAVAIR F/A-18 and EA-18G Program Manager Capt B.D. Gaddis. "The joint Navy and Industry team has done a remarkable job of managing an aggressive acquisition strategy that included achieving the best value for the government by anticipating change instead of reacting to it. The EA-18G, like the Super Hornet that precedes it, will be a great example of the Navy's ability to operate on a joint, networked battlefield."

During a ceremony in St. Louis commemorating the start of production, Boeing employees will watch as the first aluminum bulkhead is installed in the forward fuselage of EA-1. The radar ring bulkhead is a critical component of the forward fuselage, providing support for the Advanced Electronically Scanned Array (AESA) radar and the nose cone of the aircraft. This is the first of many parts in the build cycle of the test aircraft, scheduled to fly in September 2006 .

"The Hornet team has a reputation for always being on or ahead of schedule," said Chris Chadwick, F/A-18 vice president for Boeing. "Because we are using program management practices currently employed by the Super Hornet program, we'll perform better than plan, remain ahead of schedule, under cost and under weight. It's what the customer expects and deserves -- it's what we will do."

Built on the same assembly line as the F/A-18E/F Super Hornet, the EA-18G retains a high degree of commonality with the Super Hornet. Boeing will begin assembly of the second test program aircraft, EA-2, in the fourth quarter of 2004. Initial Operational Capability for the EA-18G is scheduled for 2009.

Boeing is the prime contractor for the F/A-18E/F Super Hornet and the EA-18G. Northrop Grumman Corporation makes the center and aft fuselage of the Super Hornet and EA-18G at its El Segundo , Calif. facility and is the EA-18G electronic attack subsystem integrator at its Bethpage , NY , facility. Raytheon makes the advanced APG-79 AESA radar and General Electric makes the two F414-GE-400 engines that power the Super Hornet.

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