Boeing Joint Helmet-Mounted Cueing System Begins Aft Seat Testing in F/A-18

Boeing [NYSE: BA] started flight tests today at Naval Air Warfare Center China Lake, Calif., as part of the integration of the Joint Helmet Mounted Cueing System (JHMCS) into the aft cockpits of the U.S. Navy's F/A-18 Hornet.

While the helmet has been used extensively for F-15, F-16, and F/A-18 pilots in the forward cockpit, today's flight marks the first time both the pilot and weapon systems officer have used the helmet during flight. This flight is a first step in a flight test program that will include integration tests for F/A-18D and F/A-18F aircraft.

"Providing both members of the F/A-18D and F/A-18F aircrew with the JHMCS will provide a dramatic improvement in situation awareness and coordination, resulting in a significant increase in combat effectiveness and survivability," said Todd Harper , the JHMCS F/A-18 Team Leader.

Pilots first used the JHMCS operationally Iraqi Freedom. The systems gives flight crew members the ability to rapidly acquire and designate a target simply by looking at it. By putting an aiming cross, which is projected on the helmet visor, over the desired target and pressing a button, the pilot can quickly and easily aim the weapons and sensors to designate and attack airborne or ground targets. This not only makes the aircraft more lethal, it also reduces the time it is exposed to potential enemy fire. JHMCS also displays aircraft altitude, airspeed, g's and angle of attack on the visor, as well as tactical information, to increase the crew member's awareness of the state of the aircraft and the combat situation.

As stated by one of the VFA-41 "Black Aces", among the first F/A-18F Super Hornet squadrons to fly in combat with the JHMCS, "Our operational and combat experiences during deployment in the F/A-18F [in support of Operational Iraqi Freedom] leave no doubt that a dual JHMCS-equipped F/A-18F will prove to be the most dominant, lethal, and survivable strike-fighter platform in the world."

Boeing is the prime contractor and integrator for JHMCS and Vision System International, based in San Jose , Calif. , is the major subcontractor.

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