Second Boeing EA-18G Growler Takes to the Air

The Boeing Company [NYSE: BA] has flown the second EA-18G Growler airborne electronic attack (AEA) aircraft for the first time, and like the first aircraft, the flight took place ahead of schedule.

The second EA-18G, known as aircraft EA-2, successfully completed its maiden flight from Lambert International Airport in St. Louis on Nov. 10. With Boeing pilot Gregory Bigalk and weapons system operator Dana Perkins on board, the aircraft flew for 1.4 hours before returning safely to the airport. EA-2 is the second of two test aircraft built under a System Development and Demonstration (SDD) contract Boeing signed with the U.S. Navy on Dec. 29, 2003.

The aircraft will fly later this year to Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Md., where it will join the first EA-18G, now undergoing electromagnetic testing in an anechoic chamber. EA-2 will be used primarily for avionics and AEA flight testing.

"Flying EA-2 ahead of schedule is another step in a promise we made in 2003 to deliver capability to our customer," said Mike Gibbons, Boeing EA-18G program manager. "Our team -- the Navy, Boeing and our Hornet Industry partners -- set out to develop a product that met every requirement, including cost and schedule, and we are doing that, every day."

Four additional aircraft will be produced under modifications to the SDD contract and the F/A-18E/F Multi-Year II production contract. The first of those aircraft, designated G1, has begun assembly at Northrop Grumman Corporation facilities in El Segundo, Calif.

A derivative of the two-seat F/A-18F Super Hornet, the EA-18G's highly flexible design enables warfighters to perform an array of AEA missions, operating from either the deck of an aircraft carrier or land-based fields. The EA-18G will replace the Navy's current AEA platform, the EA-6B Prowler, which has been in service since 1971. The Growler will join the Navy's aircraft fleet in 2008.

Boeing, acting as the weapon system integrator and prime contractor, leads the EA-18G Growler industry team. Northrop Grumman is the principal subcontractor and airborne electronic attack subsystem integrator. The Hornet Industry Team will divide EA-18G production across Boeing, Northrop Grumman, General Electric and Raytheon manufacturing facilities. The SDD program concludes with an Initial Operational Capability in 2009. Naval Air Systems Command PMA-265 is the U.S. Navy acquisition office for the EA-18G.

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