Boeing Delivers 500th F/A-18 Modified at Cecil Field

The Boeing Company [NYSE: BA] today celebrated the delivery of the 500th U.S. Navy F/A-18 strike fighter modified at the company's Cecil Field facility near Jacksonville, Fla.

Boeing and prime contractor Northrop Grumman have installed a wide range of avionic upgrades, technology improvements and structural enhancements to Navy and Marine Corps F/A-18 Hornets and Super Hornets since the modification facility opened in September 1999. The former naval air station functions as a "drive-in" facility that ensures modified aircraft are immediately available for deployment as soon as the work is completed.

"Cecil Field is vital to the health and performance of the U.S. Hornet fleet," said Mike Rudloff, Cecil Field F/A-18 programs manager. "We've proven for almost eight years that we can successfully perform modifications and repairs and return aircraft to the customer very quickly. That's important for the warfighter in the field who depends on us to deliver improved capability. The bottom line is: we get the jets out on time."

The oldest and most heavily used Hornets are in the midst of an extensive inspection process aimed at lengthening aircraft lifespan from 6,000 to 10,000 flight hours. Inspectors look for cracks, corrosion and fatigue to determine if the life of the aircraft can be safely extended.

Newer Hornets at Cecil Field receive upgraded display systems, miniaturized GPS receivers, helmet mounted cueing systems and more advanced radios. The modifications give the Hornet improved communications and information systems and allow the strike fighter to carry the latest weapons.

In January 2008, Boeing will begin modifying F/A-18 C- and D-model aircraft for the U.S. Navy Blue Angels flight demonstration team, which has used A- and B-model Hornets since 1986.

A unit of The Boeing Company, Boeing Integrated Defense Systems is one of the world's largest space and defense businesses specializing in innovative and capabilities-driven customer solutions. Headquartered in St. Louis, Boeing Integrated Defense Systems is a $32.4 billion business with 72,000 employees worldwide.
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