Boeing F/A-18E/F Super Hornet Program Completes Infrared Search and Track System Tests

ST. LOUIS, March 11, 2009 -- The Boeing F/A-18E/F Super Hornet Infrared Search and Track (IRST) program has successfully completed a series of risk-reduction flight tests that demonstrated the compatibility and effectiveness of the IRST system on the Super Hornet strike fighter.

IRST is a passive, long-range sensor system that searches for and detects IR emissions within its field of view. It can track several targets simultaneously and provide an effective air-to-air targeting capability, even when facing advanced threats equipped with radar-jamming technology.

Boeing, Lockheed Martin Missiles and Fire Control, and General Electric developed a prototype IRST sensor that was installed in the front section of a modified 480-gallon fuel tank. The U.S. Navy conducted six flight tests at Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Md., and four at Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake, Calif.

Chris Wedewer, F/A-18E/F IRST program manager for Boeing, said the flight tests allow for low-risk entry into the development phase of the program. "Boeing and Lockheed Martin successfully demonstrated transfer alignment, long-range target detection, and the ability to operate in a fuel tank," Wedewer said. "Boeing also demonstrated integration of the IRST into the F/A-18E/F's multisource integration algorithms, allowing for the fusion of IRST tracking data with data from other sensors."

Wedewer added that the demonstration ensures effective and efficient progress as the IRST program moves into development and production.

IRST is part of the Navy's F/A-18E/F Block II Super Hornet Flight Plan, which is a series of planned capability enhancements that ensures the Super Hornet will continue to outdistance known and emerging threats over the coming decades.

The Block II F/A-18E/F Super Hornet is a multirole aircraft able to perform virtually every mission in the tactical spectrum, including air superiority, day/night strike with precision-guided weapons, fighter escort, close air support, suppression of enemy air defenses, maritime strike, reconnaissance, forward air control and tanker missions. Equipped with the APG-79 Active Electronically Scanned Array radar, the F/A-18E/F seamlessly conducts simultaneous air and ground missions.

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