

# Super Hornet Success Story— Only the Beginning



Randy Hepp

**By RAdm. John  
Nathman Director, Air**

**A**s this edition of *Naval Aviation News* goes to press, the report of the operational evaluation (OPEVAL) of the F/A-18E/F *Super Hornet* has just been released. After more than three and a half years of flight testing and six months of rigorous operational evaluation, the Commander, Operational Test and Evaluation Force has declared the F/A-18E/F to be operationally effective and operationally suitable, the highest endorsement a program can receive. The *Super Hornet* program has been called the most successful acquisition program in recent history, remaining within every fiscal requirement directed by Congress and delivering aircraft on time.

The *Super Hornet* places Naval Aviation in the vanguard of both the revolution in strike warfare and the implementation of network centric warfare it is a key element to transforming naval expeditionary forces to be truly decisive in the 21st century. Both in a maritime dominance role and, particularly, when projecting power landward from the littoral, the F/A-18E/F's ability to penetrate, deliver and survive will be critical to battlespace shaping and dominance. From build-

ing a common tactical picture to triumph in air combat, from deep strike to close air support, the *Super Hornet* is a first-day-of-the-war as well as a level-of-effort strike fighter. Its presence on our flight decks will also enhance the capability and effectiveness of existing platforms and truly complement Navy tactical air concepts of operation.

Also announced recently was receipt by the Boeing Company, Hornet Industry Team, and U.S. Navy of the prestigious Robert J. Collier Trophy for 1999, presented by the National Aeronautics Association. Established in 1911, the trophy is awarded each year in recognition of the greatest achievement in aeronautics and astronautics in America. The trophy, on permanent display at the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C., is considered the greatest and most prized of aeronautical honors in America. That this award only occasionally recognizes achievement in a military-related aircraft development program indicates just how significant the *Super Hornet* program's success is.

From an operator's perspective, the true importance of

**RAdm. John Nathman**  
Director, Air Warfare

Published by the Naval Historical Center under the  
auspices of the Chief of Naval Operations

**Dr. William S. Dudley**  
Director, Naval Historical Center

#### Staff

<b>Cdr. Jim Carlton</b>	Director, Naval Aviation History & Publications Division
<b>Sandy Russell</b>	Acting Editor
<b>Morgan I. Wilbur</b>	Art Director
<b>Wendy Leland</b>	Acting Managing Editor
<b>JO1 Joshua M. Hudson</b>	Associate Editor
<b>JOSN Amy L. Pittmann</b>	Assistant Editor

#### Associates

<b>Harold Andrews</b>	Technical Advisor
<b>Cdr. Peter Mersky, USNR (Ret.)</b>	Book Review Editor
<b>Capt. Ted Wilbur, USNR (Ret.)</b>	Contributing Artist
<b>Capt. R. Rausa, USNR (Ret.)</b>	Contributing Editor
<b>LCdr. Richard R. Burgess, USN (Ret.)</b>	Contributing Editor

## Contributions Welcome

*NAnews* considers for publication unsolicited manuscripts, photo essays, artwork and general news about aircraft, organizations, history and/or human endeavors which are the core of Naval Aviation. All military contributors should forward articles about their commands only after internal security review and with the permission of the commanding officer. Please **do not send a diskette** unless requested by *NAnews*. For guidelines on submissions, contact the Managing Editor at DSN 288-4407

*Naval Aviation News* is on-line as part of the Naval Historical Center home page. Look for the current issue at <http://www.history.navy.mil>.

Email us at [nanews@nhc.navy.mil](mailto:nanews@nhc.navy.mil).

**Personal Subscriptions:** To order this periodical for one year, cite "*Naval Aviation News* (NAVNV)" and mail a check or money order for \$16.00 (\$20.00 foreign) or provide VISA or MasterCard number and expiration date **directly to:** Superintendent of Documents, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250-7954. Telephone credit card orders can be made to (202) 512-1800 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Eastern time. Credit card orders can be faxed 24 hours a day to (202) 512-2250.

*Naval Aviation News* (USPS 323-310; ISSN 0028-1417) is published bimonthly for the Chief of Naval Operations by the Naval Air Systems Command and the Naval Historical Center. Editorial offices are located on the Washington Navy Yard, 1231 10th Street SE Suite 1000, Washington DC 20374-5020. Periodicals postage is paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. The Secretary of the Navy has determined that this publication is necessary in the transaction of business required by law. The use of a name of any specific manufacturer, commercial product, commodity or service in this publication does not imply endorsement by the Navy. Photographs are U.S. Navy unless otherwise credited.

**POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to *Naval Aviation News*, 1231 10th Street SE Suite 1000, Washington DC 20374-5059.

the OPEVAL report, though, is that it marks the beginning of the *Super Hornet* story for the fleet. Today, VFA-122, the F/A-18E/F fleet replacement squadron, is hard at work training the trainers as the squadron's instructor pilots prepare for the first two CAT I (first-tour) students slated to start training on 29 May. In just over two years, the first operational cruise of the *Super Hornet* will take place when VFA-115 embarks with Carrier Air Wing 14 aboard *Abraham Lincoln* (CVN 72).

The *Super Hornet* delivers key warfighting capabilities into the hands of the fleet aviators who sit at the controls. They will be able to destroy targets up to 40 percent farther from the aircraft carrier and deliver weapons to these targets with far greater accuracy, deepening the littoral battlespace and increasing our lethality. Payload flexibility includes two additional stations to carry new-generation precision weaponry, fuel tanks and tactical pods, and the *Super Hornet* can return to the carrier with three times the weapons payload, saving precious and costly ordnance for future use. Incorporation of stealth technology and other techniques into the *Super Hornet* provides a five-fold improvement in survivability compared with our current strike-fighter forces. The bottom line is that these characteristics combine to allow the destruction of targets at over twice the rate of our current fleet, giving our warfighters a decisive tactical edge.



Capt. Dana

**Opposite, an F/A-18F prepares to trap aboard *Harry S. Truman*. Above, *Super Hornets* wait on the ramp during operational evaluation.**

Additional internal volume, electrical power and cooling allows the incorporation of new technologies to keep ahead of future threats. Several of these technologies are already funded for development and early inclusion. They include the Active Electronically Scanned Array radar, Integrated Defensive Electronic Countermeasures, Advanced Tactical Forward-Looking Infrared, Shared Reconnaissance Pod, and the Multifunctional Information Distribution System, which provides connectivity for and display of LINK-16 information. And these represent only the first generation of upgrades to this versatile airframe.

The capabilities the *Super Hornet* brings to the fight are at the very heart of the effort to redefine the ability to project power from the sea. The successful completion of OPEVAL means that these capabilities will soon be entrusted to the men and women of Naval Aviation, who will ultimately be the ones to write the real story of *Super Hornet* success.

The F/A-18E/F also enjoys superb air-to-air maneuverability. It demonstrated superior high-angle-of-attack and nose-pointing capability during OPEVAL which, combined with its advanced sensors, air-to-air weapons like the AIM-120 Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missile and AIM-9X Sidewinder, and the Joint Helmet-Mounted Cueing System, will make it a most deadly foe in both beyond-visual-range and close-in engagements.

The *Super Hornet's* capacity for growth is the key to keeping it on the cutting edge throughout the aircraft's service life.

