



Super Hornet Extends Sea Legs

Another page in Naval Aviation history was written when the nation's newest aircraft carrier played host to the Navy's newest aircraft. On 3 March, the F/A-18E/F *Super Hornet* began its second round of sea trials on board *Harry S. Truman* (CVN 75). During an afternoon flight originating from NAS Patuxent River, Md., F/A-18F1, piloted by Lieutenant Commander Mike Wallace, trapped aboard the carrier kicking off two weeks of rigorous testing to examine the aircraft's carrier suitability.

Sea trials demonstrate an aircraft's ability to operate effectively in the often-harsh carrier environment. In the final phase of the *Super Hornet's* three-year





engineering, manufacturing and development (EMD) program, a full spectrum of tests included pilot qualifications, catapult launches, approaches and landings, flight deck and hangar deck operations, weapons carriage and stores separation, and waveoff and bolter tests.

Initial sea trials of the *Super Hornet* took place in January 1997 and demonstrated an impressive reduction in final landing approach speed—8 knots slower than the F/A-18C/D, which increases the safety margin and handling characteristics for the pilot.

Following completion of EMD in April, the *Super Hornet* entered operational evaluation with Air Test and Evaluation Squadron (VX) 9 in

China Lake, Calif., where the first seven production-model *Super Hornets* will be flown for a six-month period beginning in May.

After proving its steady sea legs, the *Super Hornet* moves closer to fleet operation. ✈



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Counterclockwise from right: *Super Hornet* F1 flies over *Harry S. Truman* (CVN 75) during follow-on sea trials; F/A-18F's aircrew mans up in preparation for launch; a *Super Hornet* makes an off-nominal approach in which the pilot deliberately flies off centerline/glideslope during traps and touch and goes to determine how accurately the aircraft corrects itself; the hangar deck "buzzes" with activity; during the sea trials, *Super Hornets* F1 and F2 were flown by Navy test pilots (left to right) LCdrs. Mike Wallace, Tim Baker and Lance Floyd.



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