Boeing’s Service-Life Modernization of Navy Super Hornets Underway

Production of the Super Hornets is planned to continue through 2023, with 12 per year for three years. THE BOEING CO.

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. – The first seven of Block II F/A-18E/F Super Hornet strike fighters have been inducted into the service-life modernization (SLM) at Boeing’s St. Louis, Missouri, facility, while next month the company’s San Antonino facility will induct its first Super Hornet.

Bob Kornegay, Boeing’s capture team lead for F/A-18, briefing reporters May 7 at the Navy League’s Sea-Air-Space Expo in National Harbor, Maryland, said the inducted jets will emerge as Block III Super Hornets with their 6,000-hour life extended to 10,000 flight hours.

Boeing plans to process 40 Super Hornets per year through the SLM sites, with production running through 2033.

Kornegay described the Block III Super Hornet as having conformal over-wing fuel tanks, freeing up two wing pylons for more weapons. The new version also will be equipped with the Distributed Targeting Processor-Networked (*DTP*-N), which incorporates the Tactical Targeting Network Technology

and produces a common operating picture. The Block II Infrared Search and Track sensor will be installed in a centerline pod. With some additional coating applied, the Block III will have a smaller radar cross-section and will feature the Advanced Cockpit System.

This year the Navy issued a contract for the fourth multiyear procurement for the Super Hornet, ordering 78 new Block III Super Hornets over fiscal years 2019, 2020 and 2021. Production is planned to continue through 2023, with 12 Super Hornets per year for three years.

The two Super Hornets selected by Boeing to be the test jets for the Block III program have been inducted into the factory and will be ready to turn over the Navy at the end of the year, said Jennifer Tebo, director of Development for the F/A-18 and EA-18G. This event had been accelerated by one year.

The conformal fuel tanks were flown in February and March.