

Last Carrier Deployment for Marine Corps Legacy F/A-18 Hornets Underway



An F/A-18C Hornet of VMFA-323 lands on the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz on May 7. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Olivia Banmally Nichols
ARLINGTON, Va. – When the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz deployed last week for a major deployment in the Pacific Ocean, it was carrying a bit of history. On board as a unit of Carrier Air Wing 17 was Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 323 (VMFA-323), taking the F/A-18C Hornet on its last scheduled carrier deployment.

The “Death Rattlers” of VMFA-323 left with the Nimitz on June 8. The squadron is the only Marine squadron assigned to a carrier air wing, down from a peak of four VMFAs assigned a few years ago under the TACAIR Integration Concept. VMFA-314, the Corps’ first F-35C squadron, is scheduled to deploy as a unit of a carrier air wing in 2022 as a resumption of the TACAIR Integration concept.

The last Navy legacy Hornet squadron to deploy on a carrier was Strike Fighter Squadron 34 (VFA 34), which returned home in April 2018 from a deployment with Carrier Air Wing 2 on board the USS Carl Vinson. VFA-34 transferred its last F/A-18C on Feb. 1, 2019, and has upgraded to the F/A-18E Super Hornet.