

Marine Squadron Completes F/A-18 Phase-Out



Two F/A-18 Hornets, attached to Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 314, fly over San Diego during the Marine Corps Air Station Miramar Air Show in September. U.S. Marine Corps/Lance Cpl. Israel Chincio

ARLINGTON, Va. – The next U.S. Marine aircraft squadron scheduled for transition to the F-35 Lightning II strike fighter made its last flight in an F/A-18 Hornet strike fighter Jan. 23.

The flight by Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (All-Weather) 225 (VMFA(AW)-225), based at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, California, completed the phase-out of its last F/A-18D Hornets, the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing said on its website.

The squadron is slated to begin transition to the F-35B, the short-takeoff/vertical landing version of the Lightning II. According to the fiscal 2019 Marine Corps Aviation Plan, VMFA(AW)-225 is scheduled to begin its transition to the F-35B in fiscal 2021.

Presumably the squadron designation will drop the (AW) suffix for transition. The squadron will follow VMFAs 121, 211 and 122 as the Corps' fourth operational F-35B squadron. VMFA-225 will move to MCAS Yuma, Arizona, to join 211 and 122.

The Corps plans to stand up a second F-35B replacement training squadron, VMFAT-502, at Miramar this year to support the increasing F-35B training load. The temporary stand-down of VMFA-225 will enable the Corps "to recapitalize structure and manpower to help VMFAT-502's stand up and then transition to F-35B at MCAS Yuma," according to the aviation plan.

The last Hornet flight of VMFA(AW)-225 occurred two days after

VMFA-314 flew the Corps' first carrier-capable F-35C versions to Miramar from Naval Air Station Lemoore, California, where VMFA-314 has been going through transition from the F/A-18C Hornet to the F-35C. VMFA-314 is scheduled to be ready for a deployment on an aircraft carrier in early fiscal 2022.