

Navy DeploysIRST on Super Hornets in Persian Gulf



Sailors taxi an F/A-18E Super Hornet, from the “Mighty Shrikes” of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 94, on the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz (CVN 68). U.S. Navy / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Dalton Reidhead

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy apparently had deployed the Infrared Search and Track (IRST) sensor pod on F/A-18F Super Hornet strike fighters currently deployed in the Persian Gulf region.

An Aug. 16 photograph of an F/A-18F of Strike Fighter Squadron 94, assigned to Carrier Air Wing 17 on board the USS Nimitz, was posted on the Navy’s website, clearly showing the IRST pod mounted on the centerline pylon of the aircraft.

The AN/ASG-34 IRST is a passive, long-wave infrared sensor mounted in the forward section of a centerline fuel tank that detects and tracks aerial targets at extended ranges. Its high angle accuracy allows it to passively track closely spaced targets at maximum ranges, enabling the Super Hornet to track without using its APG-79 radar. The aft section of the pod contains fuel for the aircraft.

The IRST system began flight testing on F/A-18E/F Super Hornets in February 2014 and was approved for Low-Rate Initial Production (LRIP) in December 2014. However, Full-Rate Production was deferred in favor of development of an improved version, IRST Block II, which is under development by contractors Boeing and Lockheed Martin and planned for fleet service in late 2021.