Navy Reduces Planned F/A-18C+ Hornet Conversions



F/A-18C form up after an aerial refueling over San Diego in February. U.S. Marine Corps/Cpl. Joshua S. McAlpine

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy has reduced the number of F/A-18C Hornet strike fighters it is modernizing to the F/A-18C+ configuration from 25 to 19, only enough to field one squadron for the U.S. Marine Corps, according to Michael Land, a spokesman for the Naval Air Systems Command.

As an upgrade to the F/A-18C, the F/A-18C+ is equipped with an upgraded APG-73 radar, Link 16, color cockpit displays, a moving-map display, ALE-47 infrared countermeasures, the Naval Aircrew Common Ejection Seat and the Joint Helmet-Mounted Cueing System. The service life of the airframes is being extended from 6,000 flight hours to 8,000 hours.

Originally the C+ program was to include 30 aircraft, enough to field two squadrons. The number later was reduced to 25.

The aircraft are being upgraded by Boeing at its facility at Cecil Field in Jacksonville, Florida.

As of early May, three of the C+ versions had been completed.

Two had been delivered to Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 115 (VMFA-115), one of which had been lost in a mishap. The third has been delivered to reserve squadron VMFA-112 at Naval Air Station Fort Worth in Texas in May. That squadron is scheduled to receive most of the C+ Hornets.