Navy Takes Delivery of Final Block II Super Hornet, Looks Ahead to Block III

A Block II F/A-18E Super Hornet launches from the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman in the Mediterranean Sea on April 5. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Rebekah Watkins

PATUXENT RIVER, Md. – The U.S. Navy took delivery of the final Block II Super Hornet, closing out a run of 322 one-seater F/A-18Es and 286 two-seated F/A-18Fs, on April 17, the Navy's Program Executive Office-Tactical Aircraft said in a release.

Since 2005, F/A-18 Super Hornet Block II aircraft have been rolling off Boeing's production line and serving as the Navy's multimission capable workhorse.

"Aircraft E322 will leave Boeing's production line and head straight to Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 34 based in [Naval Air Station] Oceana," said Cmdr. Tyler Tennille, of the Defense Contract Management Agency (DCMA), who

oversees acceptance testing.

“When the Super Hornets first came online, they were a game-changer,” he said, pointing to the Block II’s Active Electronically Scanned Array radar as well as larger displays, upgraded sensors and avionics and increased range and capability to employ an arsenal of precision weapons that delivered advanced lethality and mission flexibility for the service.

The airframe was built with an open mission systems architecture, which has enabled easy integration of new weapons and technologies. The Block II Super Hornet serves as the Navy’s responsive aircraft, capable across the full mission spectrum, including air superiority, fighter escort, reconnaissance, aerial refueling, close air support, air defense suppression and day/night precision strike.

This aircraft been the backbone of the Navy’s carrier air wing and has proven itself repeatedly during numerous operations where it has been the pre-eminent platform performing multiple missions, sometimes rapidly reconfiguring on the fly.

Even though it is substantially larger – about 7,000 pounds heavier and a 50% higher range, the Super Hornet delivered with fewer parts and lower maintenance demands than its predecessor, the Hornet.

“Delivery of this last production Block II Super Hornet is hardly the end of an era, but rather a stepping stone along the path to continuously evolving our platforms to meet the Navy’s ever-evolving needs,” said Capt. Jason Denney, program manager of the F/A-18 and EA-18 Program Office.

Following the delivery of these aircraft, Tennille said he expects the transition from Block IIs to Block IIIs to be seamless.

The capabilities and successes of the Block II program were leveraged by the Navy in awarding a multiyear procurement contract for Block III Super Hornets to Boeing in March 2019, totaling about $4 billion. The Navy will procure 72 Block III Super Hornets between fiscal years 2019 and 2021.

Boeing is expected to deliver the Block III test jets to the Navy as early as late spring, where subsequent testing will commence at both Naval Air Station Patuxent River and Naval Air Weapons System China Lake. This latest version of the Super Hornet includes an advanced cockpit system, advanced network infrastructure, reduced radar cross-section and a 10,000-flight hour lifespan.