Navy’s Future Carrier Air Wing Configuration Coming into Focus



Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70) returns to its homeport in San Diego in this 2018 photograph. U.S. Navy / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Reymundo A. Villegas III

ARLINGTON, Va. — The Navy has laid out the planned configuration of its carrier air wings of the future in a presentation to a convention of active and retired naval aviation personnel.

Speaking Sept. 11 at the Virtual Hook convention webinar of the Tailhook Association, Rear Adm. Gregory N. Harris, director of Air Warfare in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, addressed the future and specified to some degree the numbers and types of aircraft in the future air wing envisioned by the end of the 2020s.

As illustrated in a PowerPoint slide, the future wing would still include 44 strike fighters as it does now, but the mix of Block 4 F-35C Lightning II fighters and Block III F/A-18E/F Super Hornet fighters changes from 10 and 34, respectively, to 16 and 28. The strike fighters would equip one 16-aircraft F-35C squadron and three F/A-18E/F squadrons totalling 28 Super Hornets.

The other aircraft in the wing would include five-to-seven EA-18G Growler electronic combat aircraft, five E-2D Advanced Hawkeye command-and-control aircraft, six-to-ten MH-60 Seahawk helicopters, three CMV-22B Osprey carrier-onboard delivery aircraft, and five-to-nine MQ-25 Stingray aerial tanker unmanned aircraft.

Next year, USS Carl Vinson will deploy, taking a 10-aircraft F-35C squadron (Strike Fighter Squadron 147) on the aircraft's first carrier deployment. The ship also will carry two 10-aircraft F/A-18E squadrons and one 14-aircraft F/A-18F squadron, according to a source.

The deployment also will mark the first for the CMV-22B.

The second carrier deployment of the F-35C is scheduled in 2022 by Marine Fighter Attack 314.