

EA-18G achieves Initial Operational Capability



NAVAL AIR SYSTEMS COMMAND, PATUXENT RIVER, Md. -- The Navy's first electronic airborne attack aircraft to be manufactured in more than 35 years achieved initial operational capability (IOC) Sept. 22.

Electronic Attack Wing, U.S. Pacific Fleet officially declared the first EA-18G electronic attack squadron, VAQ-132, "safe for flight operations" in a ceremony Oct. 2 at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, Wash.

By reaching IOC, the Navy can effectively employ the EA-18G aircraft for operational missions to take full advantage of its airborne electronic attack capabilities.

"The system development and demonstration contract was signed in December 2003, kicking off the EA-18G program in earnest, with an IOC planned for fall of 2009. That schedule and goal has held and is a testament to the hard work and talent of thousands of program, industry, Navy, and fleet professionals who played a part in this program over the past six-plus years," said Capt. Frank Morley, F/A-18 & EA-18G deputy program manager.

"We are pleased that the EA-18G has been, and continues to be, on cost and on schedule," said Capt. Mark Darrah, F/A-18 & EA-18G program manager. "The Growler's IOC means our country's warfighters will soon be able to utilize

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the unique capabilities of the nation's first, newly-designed electronic attack aircraft in more than three decades.”

The EA-18G aircraft combines the two-seat, twin-engine F/A-18E/F Super Hornet Block 2 with the Improved Capability III electronics receiver system from the EA-6B Prowler to provide next-generation electronic attack capability to the warfighter. The aircraft also retains all of the Super Hornet's multi-mission capabilities and the capability to perform a wide range of enemy defense suppression missions.

Integrating the latest electronic attack technology, the Growler combines the ALQ-218 receiver, ALQ-99 jamming pods, communication countermeasures and satellite communications. Along with the electronic attack suite, the Growler also features the APG-79 Active Electronically Scanned Array (AESA) radar, a game-changing radar in its own right.

The commonality between the Super Hornet and the Growler's flexible platform allows the Growler future upgrades, growth and maintainability.

The first Growler test aircraft went into production October 2004 and made its first flight August 2006. Following the delivery to the fleet in June 2008, the Growler conducted sea trials and entered initial operational test and evaluation (IOT&E). The major milestone of IOC marks the end of the IOT&E phase for the Growler program.

“Meeting this IOC milestone was essential to support Navy plans and operational force structure in this time of active combat operations. Congratulations to NAS Whidbey Island and everyone that has been a part of this extremely successful effort,” Morley said.

The first potential deployment of the Growler is slated for 2010, while the Navy expects the Prowler-to-Growler transition to be completed by 2013.

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Cutline: Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 132 is declared safe for flight operations at a ceremony Sept. 22 as the EA-18G Growler reaches its initial operational capability. U.S. Navy photo