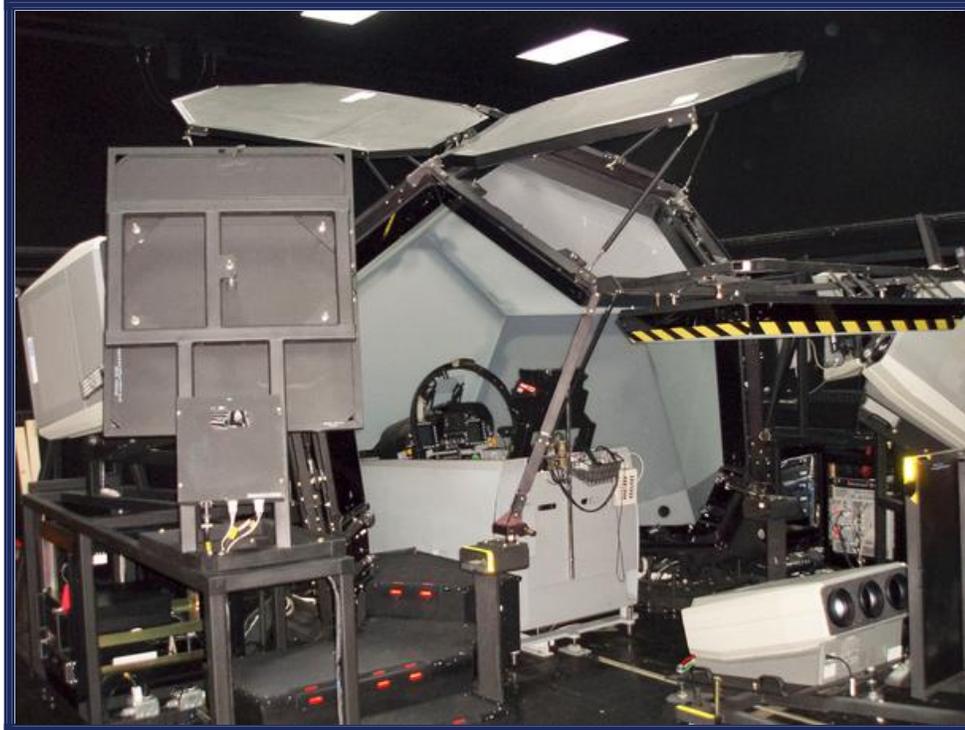


U.S. Marine Corps F/A-18 simulator hits the road in Japan



The F/A-18 Hornet Tactical Operational Flight Trainer (TOFT) is used by naval aircrew for procedures and safety training, weapons delivery and radar inception. Outfitted with only one TOFT, the Marine Corps recently relocated an additional TOFT to Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni from Naval Air Station Atsugi, both located in Japan. Marines can link the two devices to incorporate tactical training exercises into the curriculum. (U.S. Navy photo)

NAVAL AIR SYSTEMS COMMAND, PATUXENT RIVER, Md. – With the evolution of the virtual-training environment, the Marine Corps recently relocated an F/A-18C Hornet Tactical Operational Flight Trainer (TOFT) to Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan.

“The Marines at Iwakuni had only one TOFT, which limited pilots’ abilities to hone skills crucial to multiple plane tactics,” said Capt. John Feeney, Naval Aviation Training Systems (PMA-205) program manager, whose office oversaw the effort. “With the additional simulator, pilots can link the devices and transition from single plane training to multiple-plane tactical training exercises instantaneously.”

The TOFT was originally located at Naval Air Station Atsugi, Japan. Military and civilian personnel from PMA-205 and industry partner L-3 Communications in Arlington, Texas, began dismantling the device Jan. 15. The team packaged and transported the trainer 500 miles away to its new home, completing the process in only 90 days. Both PMA-205

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and L-3 were instrumental in the original design and development of the simulator, Feeney said.

“Relocating a simulator is relatively unheard of, especially on international soil,” said Lt. Cmdr. Brian Baller, PMA-205 F/A-18 integrated product team lead. “We relied on engineering acumen and logistics specialists to make the move successful. Due to the hard work and dedication of many, Marine pilots can effectively train with their wingman in a virtual arena.”

After assembly, the trainer received several hardware upgrades and software updates. One such upgrade was the sensor video-recording system that provides communication access and networking capability with other simulators, making air-to-air and air-to-ground tactical mission training a reality.

The TOFT was designed to support the entire strike-fighter training continuum, to include radar intercept, imagery and warning system operation; weapons delivery; high-speed, anti-radiation missile-system operation; and electronic attack.

“During real-world operations, whether land or sea-based, pilots depend on each other’s performance at all times,” Baller said. “Having both TOFTs together and interoperable, instructors can train aircrew in a wider variety of mission areas. Because of this ability, our pilots are able to maintain high levels of mission readiness.”