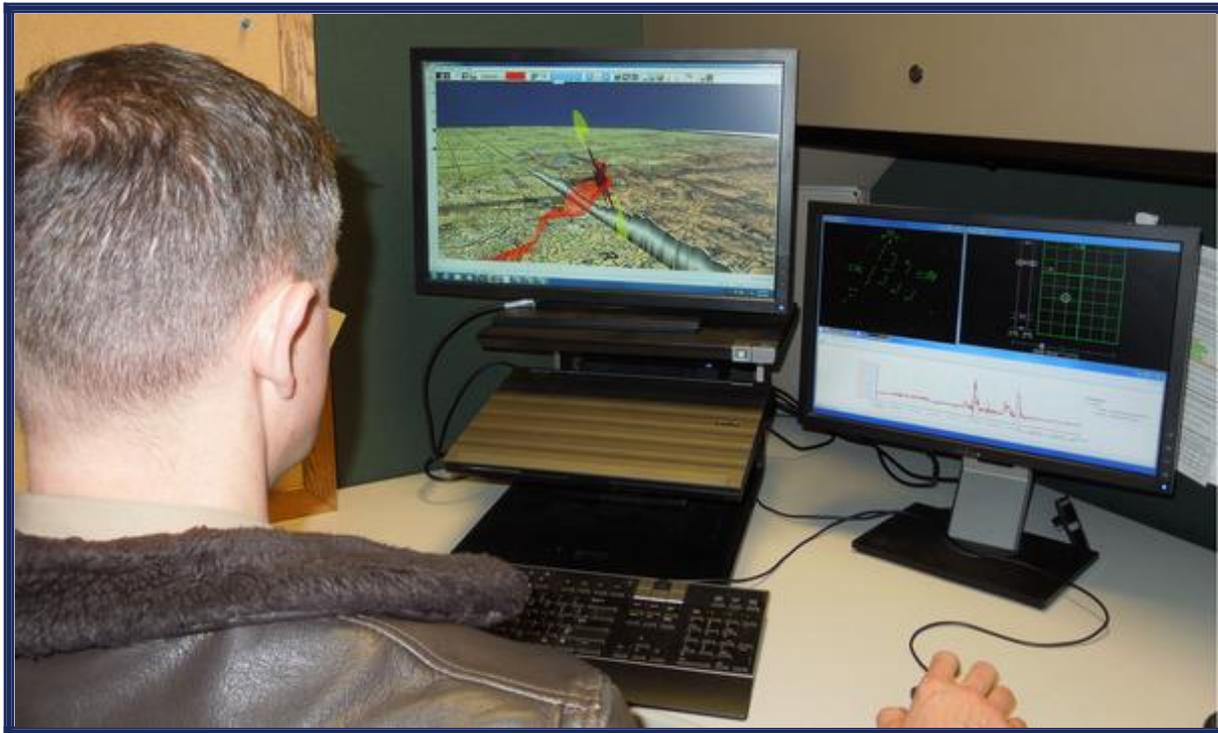


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Software tool to improve naval-aviation safety reaches key developmental milestone



Lt. Cmdr. Sean Paxton, assigned to the Air Combat Electronics Program Office (PMA-209), demonstrates the Military Flight Operations Quality Assurance, or MFOQA, software for a visitor on March 26 at Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Md. MFOQA, which will help the Navy and Marine Corps reduce its aviation mishap rate and enhance aircrew training, achieved Milestone C in its acquisition development on March 25, paving the way for limited production and installation on fleet computers. (U.S. Navy photo)

NAVAL AIR SYSTEMS COMMAND, PATUXENT RIVER, Md. — A software tool that will help the Navy and Marine Corps reduce its aviation mishap rate and enhance aircrew training reached a key developmental milestone March 25, laying the groundwork for limited production and installation on fleet computers.

Naval officials hailed the Milestone C achievement of the Military Flight Operations Quality Assurance, or MFOQA (pronounced em-FO-kwa), software and said plans are underway to deploy the application to about three F/A-18 squadrons per month, with phase 2 of the program providing capability to Navy and Marine Corps helicopter squadrons beginning in 2016.

“MFOQA will provide detailed data in a format that is user-friendly for post-flight analysis for naval aviators, maintenance personnel and squadron leadership,” said Capt. Tracy Barkhimer who leads the Air Combat Electronics Program Office (PMA-209), which is managing the software development. “It will alert fleet leadership to aircrew behaviors that,

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in the aggregate, could lead to unsafe situations of which they may not be aware.”

Initial Operational Capability is planned for late April at Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 106, an F/A-18 Hornet and F/A-18E/F Super Hornet fleet replacement squadron at Naval Air Station Oceana, Va.

MFOQA can identify unsafe trends in aircrew technique and enable fleet leadership to initiate remedial training to correct the problem before it results in a mishap, Navy officials said. For example, an instructor conducting a basic fighter maneuvers training flight on a non-Tactical Air Combat Training System mission must re-create all the details of the engagements from memory and notes taken during the flight. MFOQA provides a visual replay of the flight with extensive detail of the flight parameters, which significantly enhances the training experience. The tool also allows for a post-flight analysis of flight data, which will facilitate improved maintenance and operational procedures.

FOQA, the civilian aviation version of the software has already proven usefulness in the commercial airline industry, said Susan Whitley, MFOQA’s integrated product team lead, responsible for the program’s overall design, development and execution.

“The intent is to identify predictive indicators and trends by analyzing existing flight data on a regular basis, not just after the mishap or incident,” Whitley said. “MFOQA provides timely, tangible information on aircrew and aircraft system performance following every flight and puts that information into the hands of the people who can most directly make a difference — squadron aircrew, maintainers, and leadership. We want to ‘break the link’ before an aircraft mishap or maintenance failure occurs.”

MFOQA will support the following platforms: F/A-18C/D/E/F, EA-18G, MH-60R/S, CH-53E, MH-53E, CH-53K, AH-1Z, UH-1Y, T-45C, MV-22B, F-35B/C, P-8A, E-6B, KC-130J, E-2C/D and C-2A.

The MFOQA program was launched in 2005 as a result of a Secretary of Defense memorandum, directing the services to “implement the multi-faceted MFOQA process.”

PMA-209 provides the Navy and Marine Corps with products and support in the areas of communication and airborne networking, navigation and flight operations and mission systems and sensors.