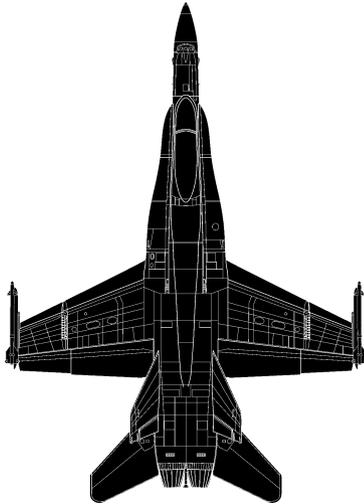


F/A-18 Hornet



The F/A-18 fighter/attack aircraft is the dominant tactical system of the sea services. The term “F/A-18” actually applies to two different aircraft—the original Hornet (A/B/C/D models) and a far larger and more-capable derivative, Super Hornet (E/Fs). Both Boeing fighters are in service in the Navy and Marine Corps, on carriers and ashore.

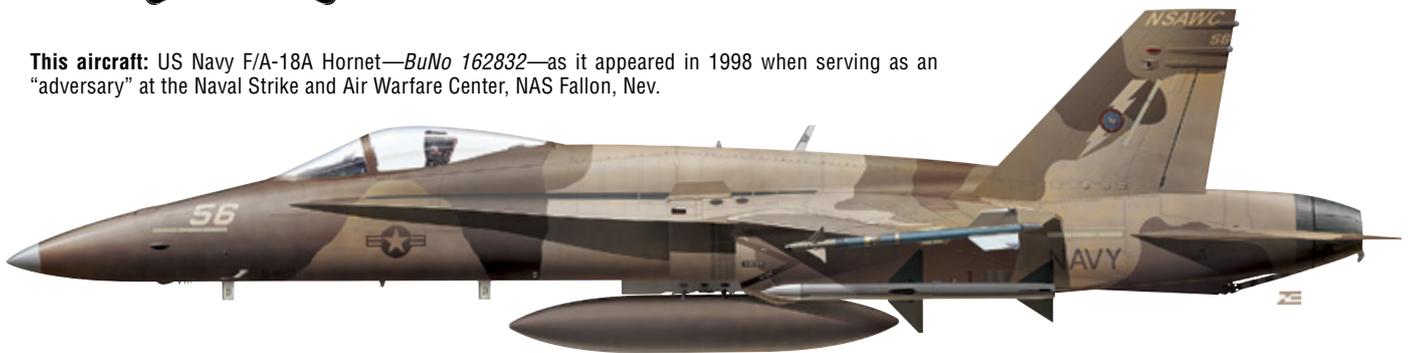
The original twin-engine, supersonic, multirole Hornet is a redesign of the lightweight Northrop YF-17 of the 1970s, intended for both air combat and attack. It is maneuverable and versatile, capable of carrying a wide array of ordnance, though limited in range. It is easy to maintain. Hornet replaced A-4s, A-6s, and A-7s and first

saw combat in 1986 in Libya. It has taken part in virtually all US operations since then.

The Hornet was the baseline for the F/A-18E/F Super Hornet, unveiled in the 1990s. Super Hornet is 25 percent larger, carries more fuel and weapons, has more powerful GE engines, and sports upgraded avionics—essentially, a different airplane. Naval aviators informally call it “Rhino” to differentiate it from legacy Hornets and avoid call-sign confusion. It supplanted the F-14, A-6, S-3, and KA-6D aircraft types. (An F/A-18G variant will replace the EA-6B.) Its first combat occurred in 2002 over Iraq.

—Robert S. Dudley with Walter J. Boyne

This aircraft: US Navy F/A-18A Hornet—BuNo 162832—as it appeared in 1998 when serving as an “adversary” at the Naval Strike and Air Warfare Center, NAS Fallon, Nev.



In Brief

Built by McDonnell Douglas, Boeing, Northrop ★ first flight Nov. 18, 1978 (Hornet) and Nov. 29, 1995 (Super Hornet) ★ number built 1,980 (1,480 Hornet, plus 500 Super Hornet) ★ crew of one or two ★ defensive armament (typical) one 20 mm cannon and four AIM-9, plus two AIM-120 air-to-air missiles ★ max speed 1,190 mph ★ cruise speed 777 mph ★ combat radius ~460 mi ★ ceiling 50,000 ft. **Specific to Hornet:** two F404-GE-402 turbofans ★ load 13,700 lb. of bombs, missiles, rockets ★ weight (loaded) 51,900 lb ★ span 40 ft 5 in ★ length 56 ft ★ height 15 ft 4 in. **Specific to Super Hornet:** two F414-GE-400 turbofans ★ load up to 17,750 lb of bombs, rockets, missiles ★ weight (loaded) 66,000 lb ★ span 44 ft 8 in ★ length 60 ft 1 in ★ height 16 ft.

Famous Fliers

US Navy Notables: Mark Fox and Nick Mongilio (first Hornet victories, Gulf War), Scott Speicher, Robert Dwyer (KIA in Gulf War), John Turner (first Super Hornet combat, 2002). **Test pilots:** John Padgett (first Navy pilot to fly Hornet).

Interesting Facts

Started out with two designations: the F-18 and A-18 ★ can drop B61 nuclear bomb ★ flown by Blue Angels since 1986 ★ initially opposed by Vice Adm. William Houser, Navy’s highest ranking aviator ★ has engines that can be removed in 20 minutes ★ flown by Navy test pilots instead of civilians in early development ★ featured in Hollywood films “A Few Good Men” (1992), “Under Siege” (1992), “Clear and Present Danger” (1994), “Independence Day” (1996), “Behind Enemy Lines” (2001), “The Sum of All Fears” (2002), “Tears of the Sun” (2003), “The Dark Knight Rises” (2012) ★ operated by Australia, Canada, Finland, Kuwait, Malaysia, Spain, and Switzerland.



Blue Angel Hornets fly in formation at an air show in 2014.