



The Finnish Air Force



Boeing F/A-18C and F/A-18D Hornet

The Boeing F/A-18C and F/A-18D Hornet are twin-engined multi-role fighters manufactured in the United States. Most of Finland's Hornet fleet is divided between Lapland Air Command (Fighter Squadron 11) and Karelia Air Command (Fighter Squadron 31) to form the backbone of the Air Force's combat capability. Carrying the military designation HN, they are flown on peacetime training and air policing missions. In a time of crisis, the Hornets are set to execute defensive counterair operations to protect the nation's vital assets, civilian population, and operations conducted by all services against air attacks. The aircraft will also be tasked to support joint operations with long-range standoff weapons.

The wide range of modern weapons the aircraft can carry combined with its sensor suite and data link systems enables beyond and within visual range engagements under all weather and lighting conditions either by a single aircraft or by packages in seamless cooperation with surface-based air defense units and other air defense assets. In the event of crisis, Hornets can be deployed to operate from dispersed highway strips.



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The fleet has undergone an extensive mid-life upgrade program. The first phase, designated MLU 1, was aimed at maintaining and improving the aircraft's air-to-air capability and was completed in 2006–10. The aircraft were fitted with provisions for a helmet-mounted sighting system for better close-range combat capability and the new AIM-9X version of the infra-red guided Sidewinder missile. A new identification friend-or-foe combined interrogator/transponder for easier identification during combat was also fitted. These features were supplemented by a tactical moving map capability.

The most important addition brought about by MLU 2, incorporated in 2012–16, was an air-to-ground mission capability and the associated purchase of short-, medium-, and long-range bombs and standoff missiles. MLU 2 also fielded an improved version of the original radar-guided advanced medium-range air-to-air missile (AMRAAM); in addition, communication and navigation systems were updated and the aircraft was fitted with the Link 16 tactical information distribution system datalink for combined operations. Link 16 enables cooperation between various air defense platforms and command echelons and distribution of information to support network-centric operations.

These upgrades were augmented by new LCD cockpit displays, a new BOL chaff/flare dispenser system, and a global positioning system capability. MLU 2 was accompanied by separate software updates, spares purchases for the remainder of the service life of the aircraft, structural beefing up, and power plant overhauls.

History and development

The F/A-18C and F/A-18D variants of the Hornet entered serial production in 1987. They were the second version of the aircraft, which was designed in the late 1970s and early 1980s as an all-weather carrier-based strike fighter for the United States Navy.

Finland selected the Hornet to replace its ageing Saab Draken and MiG-21bis interceptors in 1992, and the aircraft entered Finnish service between in 1995–2000. The Finnish two-seaters were built in the United States by McDonnell Douglas, which later merged with Boeing, while the single-seat aircraft were assembled at the Patria Finavitec facility in Finland.

In addition to the Finnish aircraft, around 1,000 Hornets are in service with the armed forces of seven nations.



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Technical Data

Wing span: 11.43 m

Length: 17.10 m

Height: 4.67 m

Empty weight: 10,680 kg

Maximum operating weight: 23,541 kg

Structure: metal and composites

Power plant: Two General Electric F404-GE-402 turbofans, each rated at 7,983 kp (78.30 kN) afterburner thrust

Maximum speed: 1,300 km/h at low level, 1.8 Mach at altitude

Ceiling: 15,000 m

Armament: One fuselage-mounted 20 mm M61 Vulcan gun. For air-to-air combat, maximum of 12 short-range AIM-9 Sidewinder infra-red guided missiles and/or medium-range AIM-120 AMRAAM active radar-guided missiles on wing and fuselage stations. Air-to-ground weapons including smart bomb (Joint Direct Attack Munition, JDAM), medium-range glide bomb (Joint Stand-Off Weapon, JSOW), and long-range standoff missile (Joint Air-to-Surface Stand-off Missile, JASSM)

Systems and equipment: E.g. APG-73 pulse doppler radar. Countermeasures suite consisting of BOL flare/chaff dispensers and various electronic systems. Helmet-mounted sighting system (Joint Helmet Mounted Cueing System, JHMCS), APX-111 interrogator, moving map system, Link 16 datalink, and Litening targeting pod

In service with the Finnish Air Force: 62 55 single-seat F/A-18Cs and seven two-seat F/A-18Ds

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