

# THE F/A-18A/B HORNET FLEET

F/A-18A/B 'Classic' Hornets are multi-role fighter aircraft introduced from 1985 to replace the Dassault Mirage III fighter fleet which had been in service since 1963. Seventy five F/A-18A/Bs were acquired and delivered over a five-year period between 1985 and 1990, allocated across the four fighter squadrons, in sequence 2OCU, 3SQN, 75SQN and 77SQN:

- 18 F/A-18B twin-seat variants (A21-101 to -118); and
- 57 F/A-18A single-seat fighter variants (A21-001 to -057).

Original differences between the Australian variant and US Navy standard F/A-18 included a larger landing light which replaced the catapult launch nose wheel tie bar (later re-fitted with a dummy version to reduce wheel shimmy). Other differences included ILS/VOR instead of the US Navy's carrier landing system; inclusion of a high frequency radio; SUU-20 practice bomb dispenser / BDU-33 practice bomb capability; an Australian fatigue data analysis system and an improved video/voice recorder.

To enhance the fleet's combat effectiveness and longevity, from 1999 a comprehensive ten-year multi-phase Hornet Upgrade Program (HUG) installed electronic and structural upgrades to create a unique Australian configuration, more similar in capability to later-model F/A-18C/D aircraft.

The F/A-18 'Classic' Hornet fleet is being replaced from 2020 by the Lockheed F-35A Lightning II aircraft.



## A21-001

Type: F/A-18A  
'Classic' Hornet

Manufacturer: Boeing  
(originally McDonnell Douglas)

MFR Construction Number:  
AF-01 (Block 14)

Entered RAAF Service:  
25 Nov 1985

Operating Wing & Squadrons:  
81 Wing, 3SQN, 75SQN, 77SQN,  
2OCU and 481SQN / 81WG CWKS  
(Maintenance)

Retired: 8 July 2020 at RAAF Base  
Williamtown NSW

Flying Hours: 6181.8 AFHRS

## F/A-18A/B 'Classic' Hornet Missions

Multi-role fighter aircraft, capable of air-to-air and air-to-ground missions including air interception, air combat, close air support and interdiction.

## F/A-18A Technical Data

**Max Airspeed:** over Mach 1.8 (1910 km/h / 1187mph) at altitude; **Ceiling:** above 15,240 m (50,000 ft);

**Range: Ferrying:** over 3700 km (without refuelling) **Interdiction:** over 1,000 km **Combat Radius:** 740 km

**Weights:** **Empty:** 10,455 kg (23,050 lb); **Max Loaded:** 25,400 kg (56,000 lb)

**Length:** 17.07 m (56 ft) **Wingspan:** 12.31 m (40 ft 4.75 in) **Height:** 4.66 m (15 ft 3.5 in)

**Power Plants:** Two General Electric F404-GE-400 low bypass turbofans, each producing 4808 kg (10,600lb) thrust (dry) or 7257 kg (16,000 lb) with afterburner

**Armament:** AIM-120 Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missile (AMRAAM); AIM-132 Advanced Short Range Air-to-Air Missile (ASRAAM); Practice, Conventional and Laser-Guided Bombs; Joint Direct Attack Munition (JDAM) and Laser JDAM; AGM-158 Joint Air-to-Surface Stand-Off Missile (JASSM); M61A1 Nose-mounted 20mm Cannon

**Avionics:** Mission Computers; Helmet-Mounted Cueing System; Heads-up Displays; Radar and Infrared Sensing & Targeting Systems; Electronic Warfare & Infrared Self Protection Systems

**Fuel:** Up to three 330 US-gallon (1,200 L) external fuel tanks and in-flight refuellable using internally-retractable fuel probe (probe & drogue system compatible)

**Crew:** 1 Pilot (F/A-18A fighter variant) or 1/2 Pilots (F/A-18B twin-seat trainer variant).

# A21-001

Type: F/A-18A 'Classic' Hornet



## A21-001 Combat Operations Fast Facts (1985-2020)

### Deployed Operation OKRA (Middle East)

September 2016 to 13 May 2017 (RAAF 3, 75 and 77 Squadrons)

- Over 800 operating airframe hours (AFHRs) and over 100 combat missions with 3SQN, 75SQN & 77SQN against ISIL targets in Iraq and Syria
- Highest number of operating air frame hours flown in a single Op OKRA rotation
- Overall second-highest number of F/A-18A operating air frame hours during Op OKRA
- Flew on the final day of Op OKRA operations
- Delivered ordnance with all three No 81 Wing combat squadrons: 3SQN, 75SQN and 77SQN



### A21-001 taxis prior to its final Operation Okra mission on 13 May 2017

[Air Force Image Gallery 20170513raaf8540618\_0029.jpg © Commonwealth of Australia 2015]



### A21-001 Op OKRA and 77SQN 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Nose Art

[Air Force Image Gallery 20170519raaf8227810\_0114.jpg © Commonwealth of Australia 2015]

# A21-001 Type: F/A-18A 'Classic' Hornet



## A21-001 1985-2020 continued

### Other A21-001 Events of Note

- 25 Nov 1985 – First of 57 fighter variants (single-seater F/A-18A) manufactured and delivered from the Australian F/A-18 production line at Government Aircraft Factories (GAF) Avalon Victoria Australia. Allotted to No 2 Operational Conversion Unit (2OCU).
- 22 July 2011 – First Australian AGM-158 JASSM live high explosive (HE) firing. Successfully test-fired by No 77 Squadron over Woomera South Australia, destroying a hardened concrete bunker.
- Classic Hornet fleet leader (as at July 2020)– highest accrued airframe operating hours of all F/A-18A/Bs



**77SQN A21-001 First Australian JASSM Live Fire at Woomera 2011**