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Aviation

GE Powers "Green Hornet" to Successful Flight

LYNN, Mass – April 23, 2010 – The F414 turbofan engine powered the 'Green Hornet,' an F/A-18 Super Hornet fueled by a 50/50 biofuel blend, marking the first time a United States Navy (USN) fighter had taken to the skies with a non-petroleum fuel source. The flight took place on Earth Day at the Naval Air Station in Patuxent River, MD.

"This flight culminates several months of component and ground testing by the F414 team to clear the engine for flight, and by all counts the aircraft did not know the difference between the conventional fuel and the 'drop in' biofuel blend during the 45-minute flight," said Mike Epstein, GE Aviation Alternative Fuels Leader. "We are proud to play a role in helping make energy independence and security a top priority for the Navy."

Prior to flight testing, GE ran more than 500 hours of component tests and close to 20 hours of F414 engine testing to validate that the engine would operate successfully using the biofuel blend.

The blend used in the Super Hornet is derived from the camelina plant, which is a U.S.-grown, renewable, non-food source. The USN has set a goal of meeting half of its energy needs from alternative sources by 2020. Applied to today's military aircraft, the 'Green Hornet' initiative can increase capability by reducing reliance on fossil fuels from foreign sources and decrease volatility associated with long fuel supply transport lines.

GE is working on a wide range of research and development efforts to support the broader Green Hornet initiative, including development of component technologies that could reduce specific fuel consumption (SFC) for the Navy's twin-engine F/A-18E/F Super Hornet fleet by 3 percent and save two million gallons annually.

Other "green" efforts include a noise reduction kit for the F414 that includes a chevron exhaust nozzle, where each serrated lobe penetrates into or out of the primary flow and generates a secondary stream to reduce engine noise. Testing has shown a 2-3 decibel reduction, which is equivalent to turning off one of the F/A-18's two engines.

Powering the Green Hornet extends GE Aviation's leadership in evaluating fuels from alternative energy sources for commercial and military engines to maximize economic benefits for customers and minimize the carbon footprint on the environment. In January 2009, a CFM56-powered Continental Airlines Boeing 737 demonstrated the use of sustainable biofuel to power a commercial aircraft for the first time in North America. One year earlier, Virgin Atlantic flew its GE CF6-powered Boeing 747 from London to Amsterdam, becoming the first airline in the world to fly on biofuel.

GE Aviation, an operating unit of GE (NYSE: GE), is a world-leading provider of jet engines, components and integrated systems for commercial and military aircraft. GE Aviation has a global service network to support these offerings. For more information, visit www.ge.com/aviation/. CFM is a 50/50 joint company of Snecma (Safran Group) and GE.



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