

08 AUG 2001
AIRCRAFT-MALAYSIA
MSIA TO EVALUATE SUPER HORNETS

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 8 (Bernama) -- Visiting US Missouri Senator, Christopher Bond, hopes Malaysia will consider acquiring the Boeing F/A-18E/F "Super Hornet" after it has fully evaluated the performance of what is believed to be the finest military tactical aircraft in the world.

"We have made the proposal to provide our brand new world class fighter attack aircraft on terms which would be advantageous to Malaysia," he said today.

"We look forward and hope Malaysia will decide to be the first purchaser outside the United States of the Super Hornet from the Boeing Company," he told a press conference at the end of his two-day visit to Malaysia.

Senator Bond said the matter was touched upon during discussions with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at a meeting in Putrajaya this afternoon.

The Super Hornet, which has 11 weapon stations, is currently used by the US Navy.

These fighters are an upgraded version of the original F/A-18. They are used for reconnaissance, air control, air support and suppression of enemy defence.

The F/A-18E is a single-seater aircraft while the F/A-18F is a two-seater.

Bond said that a group of Malaysian pilots from the Royal Malaysian Air Force would later this month be testing the aircraft at St Louis in Missouri which is home to the plant manufacturing the F1 fighter aircraft.

The senator also had talks with Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

Bond also said that the Super Hornet would be the successor of the F/A-18C/D, or "Hornets" now used by the RMAF.

He said the F/A-18C/D "has served Malaysia well."

He also said that the Super Hornet would be the "premier aircraft now under production which would fill decks of our carriers aircraft."

It is extremely versatile and possesses the latest equipment and technology with characteristics which makes it hard to detect.

The Super Hornets, which are 25 percent bigger than the Hornets, are reportedly cheaper than their predecessors because of enhanced production efficiencies at Boeing which has resulted in the F/A-18E/F having 42 percent fewer parts.

Bond said that the Super Hornets were so brand new that major acquisitions for the aircraft were just now beginning with 48 budgeted to be purchased this year by the U.S. army with total projected purchases at 545. -- BERNAMA

MR SD