COMING SOON

F/A-18 Hornet

Lobos, Argentina



STARTING PRICE	OPENING PRICE	BIDS PLACED	RESERVE PRICE
—	—	0	Yes

LOT	AUCTION	BRAND	CATEGORY
#212	#183	McDonnell Douglas	Aircraft

BIDDING CLOSES	SELLER
—	C****s

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DESCRIPTION

The original F/A-18 Hornet—properly the A/B/C/D “Legacy Hornet,” rather than the later, larger F/A-18E/F Super Hornet—was the 1980s answer to a difficult naval question: how to replace specialist fighters and attack aircraft with one carrier-capable machine. It earned its reputation by being genuinely multirole. A Hornet could be configured for fleet air defence, strike, reconnaissance or forward air control, and it became particularly identified with the ability to move between air-to-air and air-to-ground work without changing the basic aeroplane.

McDonnell Douglas developed the Hornet from the Northrop YF-17 design after the U.S. Navy sought a smaller, less costly complement to the F-14. The programme had to prove it could live on a carrier deck as well as operate from shore bases: arresting gear, robust undercarriage, folding wings and twin engines were not optional extras. First flown in 1978, it entered Marine Corps operational service in 1983 and Navy service in 1984. The later C/D series introduced further mission-system development, while the two-seat D developed into a serious night-attack, tactical air-control and reconnaissance platform rather than merely a conversion trainer.

Quick facts

What made the F/A-18 Hornet stand out?

Its central idea was flexibility without asking the pilot to fly a truck. The Hornet brought together a digital fly-by-wire flight-control system, a mid wing, leading-edge extensions and twin tails in a compact carrier fighter. The result was an aeroplane built to tolerate high angles of attack, deck approaches and the repeated hard work of embarked operations. It was not designed as a long-legged interceptor in the F-14 mould, nor as a pure lightweight day fighter. It was designed to turn up with the right sensors and stores for an evolving tasking—and to get back aboard the ship afterwards.

That emphasis shows in the cockpit and in the variants. The single-seat A and C are the straightforward fighter-attack forms. The B began principally as a trainer, while the D’s second crew station gave the mission crew more capacity for complex night attack, reconnaissance and tactical-control tasks. The Hornet’s combat record reinforced the concept: naval aviation history records aircraft conducting fighter and strike actions on the same sortie during Operation Desert Storm. It is a useful reminder that the slash in F/A was intended as a job description, not a piece of punctuation.

Powerplant, systems and technical highlights

- Two General Electric F404-GE-402 afterburning turbofans provide redundancy valuable in over-water and carrier operations.
- Maximum speed is stated as Mach 1.7+; published ceiling is above 50,000 ft.
- Digital fly-by-wire controls combine with leading-edge extensions and full-span high-lift devices to manage carrier approach and high-alpha handling.
- The compact wing folds outboard for carrier-deck stowage; the airframe also incorporates an arresting hook and strengthened naval undercarriage.
- A/C and B/D aircraft differ materially in mission equipment and cockpit arrangement; later Hornets received successive radar, weapons and night-attack upgrades.
- The basic fighter carries an internal M61-series 20 mm cannon, while external stations supported a broad range of air-to-air and air-to-surface stores in military service.

How it compares

Comparison rival: the F-16 Fighting Falcon. Figures vary by Hornet and F-16 model, production block, mission fit and engine installation.

Honest ownership note: Civilian ownership of a Hornet is exceptional rather than routine. A prospective owner must establish the airframe's lawful demilitarised status, export-control position, operating category, technical records and access to authorised support before treating it as an aeroplane purchase. The hard part is not simply finding components: it is sustaining military-grade engines, hydraulics, oxygen, ejection-seat-related systems where applicable, naval landing-gear hardware and specialised test equipment within an approved maintenance framework. A pre-purchase inspection should be led by a team experienced with the exact Hornet variant and should focus on corrosion, fatigue-critical structure, folding-wing and arresting-gear mechanisms, engine condition, obsolete avionics support and the completeness of documentation. This is firmly a specialist-operation proposition, not a jet that an ordinary maintenance shop will casually adopt between light twins.

Exterior and cabin

Exterior

- High-mounted swept wing with prominent leading-edge extensions blending into the forward fuselage.
- Two rectangular engine intakes sit beneath the wing roots, feeding separate engines.
- Twin outward-canted vertical fins frame the rear fuselage; horizontal stabilators sit low at the tail.
- Carrier hardware includes a nosewheel launch-bar arrangement, stout main gear, folding outer wings and a tailhook.

Cabin and cockpit

- A/C models place one pilot beneath a framed bubble canopy.
- B/D models use a long, tandem two-seat canopy with separate forward and aft crew stations.
- The cockpit is a purpose-built tactical workspace, dominated by instrument displays, controls and a central control stick rather than cabin comfort.
- Visibility forward and to the sides is a major part of the canopy-led layout, though the twin fins naturally occupy the aft view.

Who is this aircraft for?

- A museum, heritage organisation or specialist operator able to manage military-aircraft compliance and preservation.
- A technically sophisticated jet owner with access to experienced ex-military maintenance personnel and substantial operating infrastructure.
- An organisation seeking an historically important Cold War and post-Cold War naval strike fighter rather than a simple recreational aeroplane.
- A buyer who values the Hornet's carrier-aircraft engineering, twin-engine layout and distinct operational history.

The Legacy Hornet remains compelling because its design logic is visible everywhere: two engines for the sea, a compact folding wing for the ship, a cockpit built around mission flexibility and an airframe engineered to absorb naval life. For the very small number of buyers equipped to take on that responsibility, it is not merely a fast jet with famous lines; it is a tightly argued piece of carrier aviation history.

SPECIFICATIONS

General Information

Model	**F/A-18A/B/C/D Hornet (Legacy Hornet)**

Engine & Power Systems

Engine Type	**Two General Electric F404-GE-402 afterburning turbofan engines**

PHOTOGRAPHS

5 of 6 photographs reproduced here. The complete gallery is on the listing page.

EXTERIOR





INTERIOR



MECHANICAL



EXTERIOR


AI Enhanced

HOW TO BID ON THIS LOT

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