NEXT GENERATION OF FIGHTER PILOTS GEAR UP

News was received from Defence Public Affairs that Australia’s next generation of fighter pilots were set to graduate as F/A-18 Hornet pilots as they prepare to return to RAAF Townsville in North Queensland to participate in Exercise HIGH SIERRA.

The pilots from No. 2 Operational Conversion Unit at RAAF Base Williamtown in New South Wales are expected to be put through their paces during the final phase of the six-month long operational conversion course.

Exercise HIGH SIERRA will be conducted from 21st November to 8th December and represents the last three weeks of the F/A-18 operational conversion course, which converts fighter pilots from the Hawk Mk127 Lead-in-fighter aircraft to the F/A-18 Hornet.

It is understood that more than 150 Air Force personnel and up to 12 F/A-18 Hornet fighter jets were due to arrive at RAAF Townsville on 18th November in preparation for this vital training activity, which will be conducted in the Shoalwater Bay and Townsville Field training areas.

The exercise allows RAAF to maintain its key capabilities such as the performance of precision strike missions.

It also provides participants with high complexity air combat training opportunities for the RAAF to test and practice its deployment capabilities so that it can operate away from its home bases when necessary.

Commanding Officer of No. 2 Operational Conversion Unit, Wing-Commander David Smith, said the exercise was the culmination of six months of intensive training on the F/A-18 for his students. “Exercise HIGH SIERRA represents vital training for the next generation of Air Force fighter pilots. They must achieve and maintain the skills needed to operate very sophisticated flight and weapons systems, ultimately for the defence of our nation and to maintain peace and security into the future. The Squadron is looking forward to returning to Townsville on deployment this year. We all have fond memories of the region from previous exercises. Townsville is a great place to operate from. I’d like to thank Townsville and the surrounding community for their ongoing support of our vital training requirements.”
Exercise HIGH SIERRA will involve day and night flying operations.