



FLIR image of an SR-71 flying in formation with an F/A-18

## **Amazing clip filmed through a FLIR (Forward Looking Infra Red) of an F-16 shows a Blackbird and an F/A-18 Hornet flying together.**

Have you ever seen a FLIR video of an [SR-71](#)? Well, there's a really interesting clip showing a Blackbird in formation with an F/A-18 included in a 48-min video that was posted 4 years ago on YouTube but is doing the rounds on social media these days.

The full video whows the "highlights" of [Maj. Russell "Crancky" Prechtl](#) who graduated from the U.S. Air Force Test Pilot School in 1993 and went to work at the F-16 Combined Test Force at Edwards AFB, California, until 1996. For three years, he got to fly all blocks of the F-16 (USAF and Foreign Military Sales), all 5 engines, and new software and hardware for the F-16, was a Viper demo pilot for two seasons and also achieved the 3,000 Flying Hours mark on the Fighting Falcon.

According to the description he added to YouTube, the full video "covers the 1% of the nailbiters, High Angle of Attack Flight testing, to include the spin chute deployment, engine failure with the Japanese pilot in the front seat, high speed (1.93 Mach) run, engine restart testing, and some avionics testing. It ends up with the Live HARM missile launch."

Indeed, the video is pretty cool and shows the variety of tests Prechtl was involved into.

But the really insane part comes at the 24:00 mark when you can see “Crancky” working on the FLIR (most probably of a LANTIRN pod) to track an [SR-71 Blackbird](#) flying in formation with an F/A-18 Hornet. Considered the airspace (near Edwards AFB, where F-16s of the CTF normally operated), it is also possible that the dissimilar formation was made of [NASA aircraft](#): at that time the agency flew both the SR-71 and the F/A-18 out of [Dryden Flight Research Center](#), at Edwards AFB.

The last [SR-71](#) flight was made on Oct. 9, 1999, at the Edwards AFB air show. The aircraft used was NASA 844 that flew to 80,100 feet and Mach 3.21 in the very last flight of any Blackbird. Actually, the aircraft was also scheduled to make a flight the following day, but a fuel leak grounded the aircraft and prevented it from flying again. The NASA SR-71s were then put in flyable storage, where they remained until 2002. Then, they were sent to museums.

Back in the 1990s, an F/A-18B was often used by NASA as a chase plane during many mission out of Edwards. Interestingly, in 1996 was still flying the F/A-18 High Alpha Research Vehicle (HARV) that flew its final mission at NASA Dryden Flight Research Center on May 29, 1996, piloted by NASA pilot Ed Schneider. The highly modified F/A-18 airplane flew 383 flights over a [nine-year period](#) and demonstrated concepts that greatly increase fighter maneuverability.

Anyway, enjoy the clip!



David Cenciotti is a freelance journalist based in Rome, Italy. He is the Founder and Editor of “The Aviationist”, one of the world’s most famous and read military aviation blogs. Since 1996, he has written for major worldwide magazines, including Air Forces Monthly, Combat Aircraft, and many others, covering aviation, defense, war, industry, intelligence, crime and cyberwar. He has reported from the U.S., Europe, Australia and Syria, and flown several combat planes with different air forces. He is a former 2nd Lt. of the Italian Air Force, a private pilot and a graduate in Computer Engineering. He has written four books.

Source: [Check Out This Insane Footage Of An SR-71 Blackbird Flying In Formation With A Hornet Filmed From An F-16’s FLIR](#)