

(9) Fuel/Air Explosives: *A Terrifying Psychological Weapon*

Fuel/Air explosives (FAE) munitions use cluster bomb technology to scatter submunitions that contain ethylene oxide, a highly flammable chemical. When the submunitions explode, they disperse the ethylene oxide in the form of a fine mist or aerosol cloud. This cloud of flammable material is approximately 60 feet in diameter and 8 feet thick. It is then ignited with a secondary explosion. The entire cloud then instantly explodes into a fireball.

The pressure shock created is so powerful that it can knock over buildings. It easily exceeds 90-pound-per-square-inch blast pressure "lethality limit" for humans.

The US Naval Weapons Center, at China Lake, California, developed the 500-pound (BLU-95) and 2,000-pound (BLU-96) FAEs in the 1970s and 1980s.

First used in Vietnam, this weapon is considered so terrifying that it is now used as a psychological weapon. In the destruction of Iraq in 1991, the US also used FAEs to ignite mine fields and to incinerate Iraqi personnel that were hiding in trenches.

Fuel/air explosive bombs contain a mixture of three heavier than air gases. When dropped, the bomb releases these gases into the atmosphere, forming a highly explosive mixture. A delayed-action fuse ignites the gases, causing the contaminated air to burn. This fireball of burning gas rapidly expands, incinerating the target area.

In the open air, this is sufficient to set off mines, and flatten soft structures, parked aircraft, and personnel. However, in an enclosed space, the effect is magnified, blowing apart the walls, floor, and roof of the structure.

This makes Fuel Air Explosives highly effective against underground structures, like submarine pens or communication bunkers.

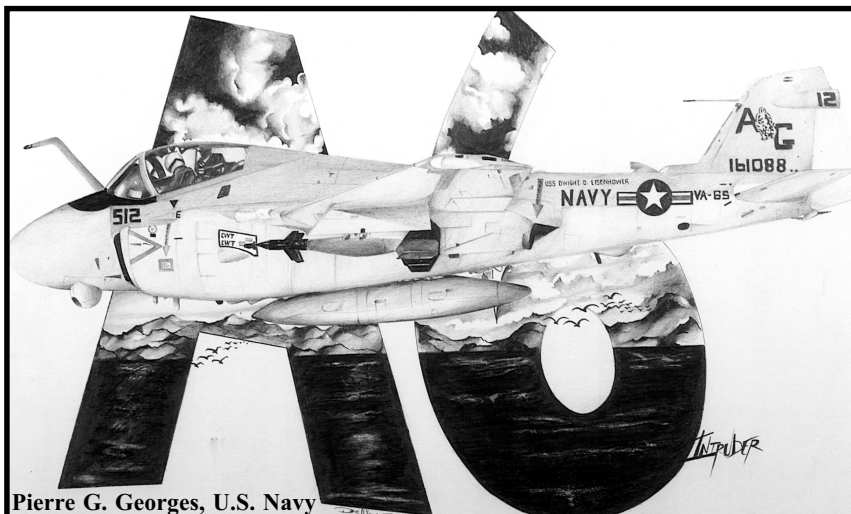
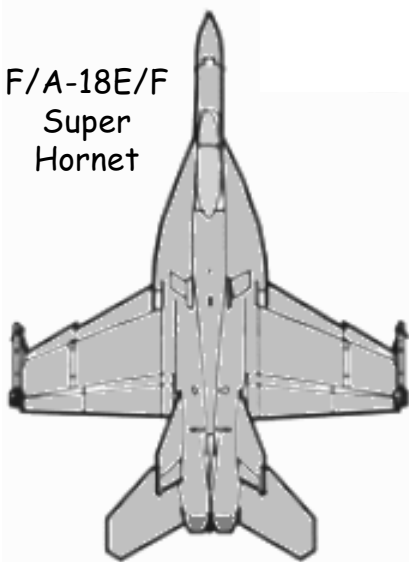
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Source: "Strike Warfare," U.S. Naval Academy web site: <www.usna.edu/Training/prorefcent/FallProbook/06_Strike.doc>

Two types of warplanes, known to use FAEs, have performed at Canadian air shows: F/A-18E/F Super Hornet (US) and the A-6 Intruder (US)

F/A-18E/F
Super
Hornet



Pierre G. Georges, U.S. Navy

The above drawing of an A-6 Intruder was "created at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, in July 2001 as a U.S. Central Command morale incentive."

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