

Marine AV-8B Harrier Attack Jet Crashes Near Cherry Point; Pilot Ejects Safely



An AV-8B Harrier similar to the one out of Marine Corps Station Cherry Point, North Carolina, that went down May 20. The pilot ejected safely. No injuries were reported on the ground. U.S. Marine Corps/Cpl. Matthew Teutsch

ARLINGTON, Va. – An AV-8B Harrier II based at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, North Carolina, crashed May 20 near Cherry Branch, according to May 20 and May 21 releases from 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing Strategic Communications. The pilot ejected safely.

The Harrier II pilot was transported to Carolina East Medical Center in New Bern for evaluation and was released with no injuries, the May 21 release said. There are no reports of civilian casualties or property damage.

Personnel from 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing responded to the scene and assisted local authorities, who had responded first.

The pilot was assigned to Marine Attack Squadron 542, a unit of the 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing. Cherry Point is home of three Marine attack squadrons and one Marine attack training squadron, all of which fly the Harrier II.

The aircraft is cordoned off at the crash site and an emergency reclamation team is

onsite and beginning recovery operations.

The

Marines of VMA-542 “are working closely with the Marines of Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting, Explosive Ordnance Disposal and both military and local authorities,” the May 21 release said. “The scene has been deemed safe and secure by all parties involved, but recovery personnel are still implementing environmental and personal protective measures.”

“I

would like to start by thanking the Craven County sheriff’s office and the community for their ongoing support,” said Maj. Gen. Karsten Heckl, commanding general of 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing.

“On

days like this, our dedication to duty is reaffirmed, and we are reminded how proud we are to call Havelock our home. Thankfully, there were no serious injuries. The safety of our Marines and the local community is of the utmost importance to us, and we are extremely grateful that everyone who was involved is OK.”

The

cause of the incident is still under investigation.

According to one

source, the Marine Corps AV-8B fleet has lost 104 aircraft (36%) of its aircraft in mishaps over the service life of the jet. An

additional 13 were
combat losses – either shot down, destroyed in a ground attack
or damaged by
enemy fire and not repaired. The Marine Corps plans to keep
the Harrier II in
service until 2028.