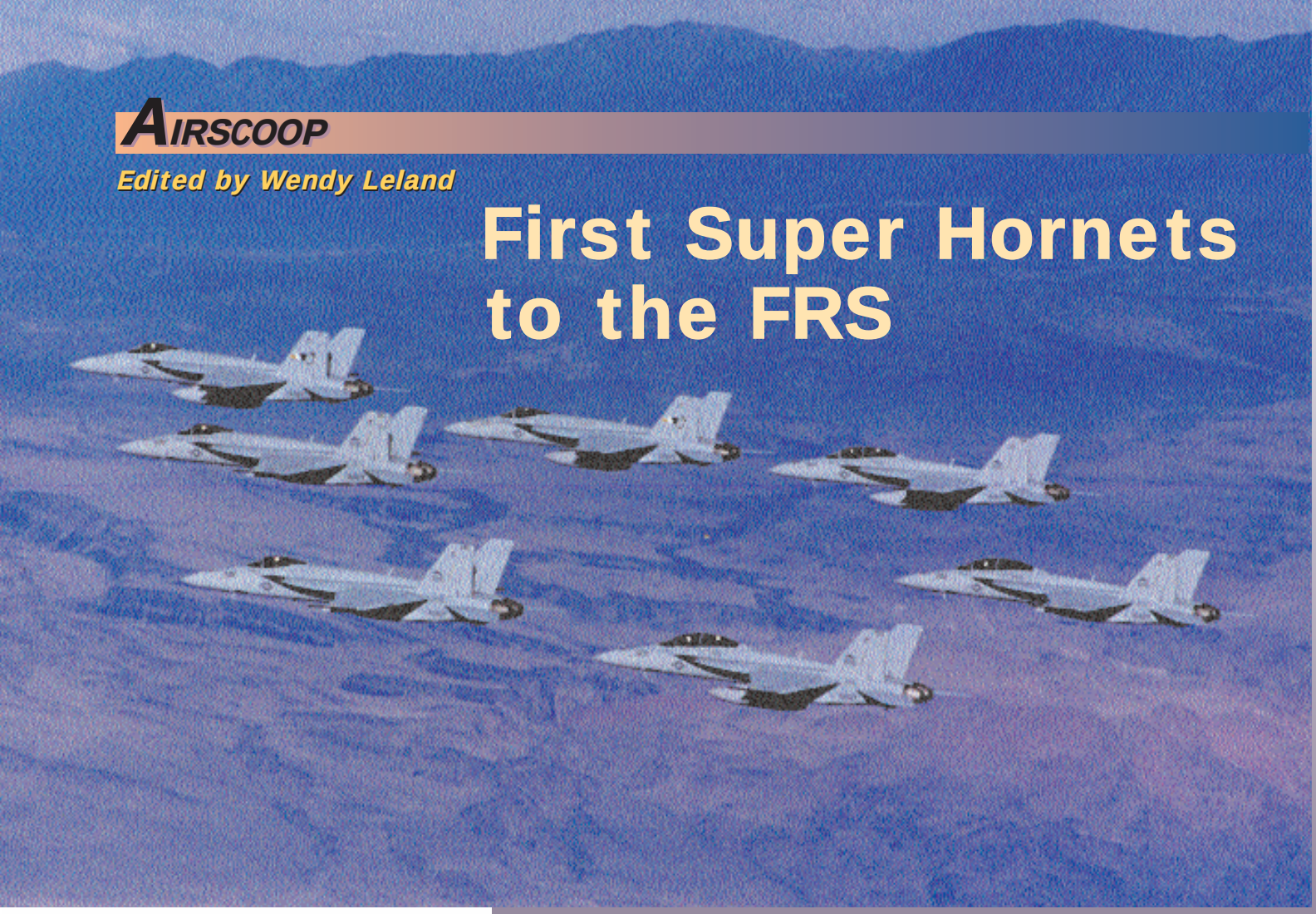
Edited by Wendy Leland

First Super Hornets to the FRS



Above, the first seven F/A-18E/F *Super Hornets* fly from NAWS China Lake, Calif., to join the fleet readiness squadron aboard NAS Lemoore.

Strike Fighter Squadron 122, NAS Lemoore, Calif., accepted seven F/A-18E/F *Super Hornets* during an arrival ceremony on 17 November 1999, the day after operational evaluation concluded at Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake, Calif. The *Super Hornet* fleet readiness squadron is working through June to verify the syllabus and qualify the first group of instructor pilots, weapon system operators and maintenance personnel in preparation for the first class of replacement aircrew, which will graduate from the squadron in 2001. The FY 2000 Defense Appropriations Bill approved the purchase of 222 *Super Hornets* over the next five years.

Angel in the Cockpit

Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division China Lake, Calif., is developing Active Network Guidance in Emergency Logic (ANGEL), a virtual copilot to help avoid flight mishaps. These processing algorithms will utilize information and systems already on board the aircraft to calculate an alternative flight path and automatically pilot the aircraft away in the event of an impending ground or midair collision. In addition, ANGEL will provide detailed procedures to assist the pilot during an in-flight emergency, and attempt to analyze the cause of a malfunction as it occurs.

New Ship Named for Aviator

On 6 November 1999 the Navy's newest guided missile destroyer was named *Lassen* (DDG 82), after the first Naval Aviator to be awarded the Medal of Honor for actions in Vietnam. Ltjg. Clyde Lassen piloted a UH-2A *Seasprite* in a daring night rescue of two aviators shot down behind enemy lines (see Sep–Oct 98, p. 27).

Vision Correction Approved

For the first time, Navy and Marine Corps aviators with less than perfect vision may now consider corrective surgery. Currently, aviators may receive a waiver and undergo photorefractive keratectomy (PRK) surgery only if they are accepted into a Navy-sponsored clinical study and have prior permission from their commanding officers. New applicants to the air warfare community who have

already had PRK must meet other criteria. For more information, contact Capt. C. Barker at 202-762-3451 (DSN prefix 762) or log on to http://navymedicine.med.navy.mil.

WW II Aviators Return Home

The remains of eight Naval Aviators missing in action from WW II were recently identified and returned to their families for burial. The crew of a PBY-5 *Catalina*—Lieutenant Maurice Smith; Ensign Edward Reipl; and Petty Officers Clifford Pindell, James Pearson, William Pipes, Merlin Rich, William Osborne and Vernon Stolz—were lost when flying near Espiritu Santo, New Hebrides, on 6 August 1942.

RM Changes to IT

To reflect the changing skills and roles of Sailors in the Radioman (RM) rating in the information age, the rating has been renamed Information Systems Technician (IT). The traditional badge of electronic sparks associated with the rating will not change.

ATFLIR

The Advanced Targeting Forward Looking Infrared (ATFLIR) pod, right, made its first flight on 24 November 1999, above, aboard an F/A-18D *Hornet* at Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division China Lake, Calif. ATFLIR will eventually replace the targeting and navigation FLIR and the laser designator tracker on fleet F/A-18s, including the E/F *Super Hornet*. The new system's increased resolution and magnification (30x vice the standard FLIR's 4x) provides enhanced target acquisition and recognition capabilities. The pod will give precision targeting coordinates to "smart" weapons such as the Joint Direct Attack Munition and the Joint Standoff Weapon, as well as laser designation for the laser-guided GBU 24.

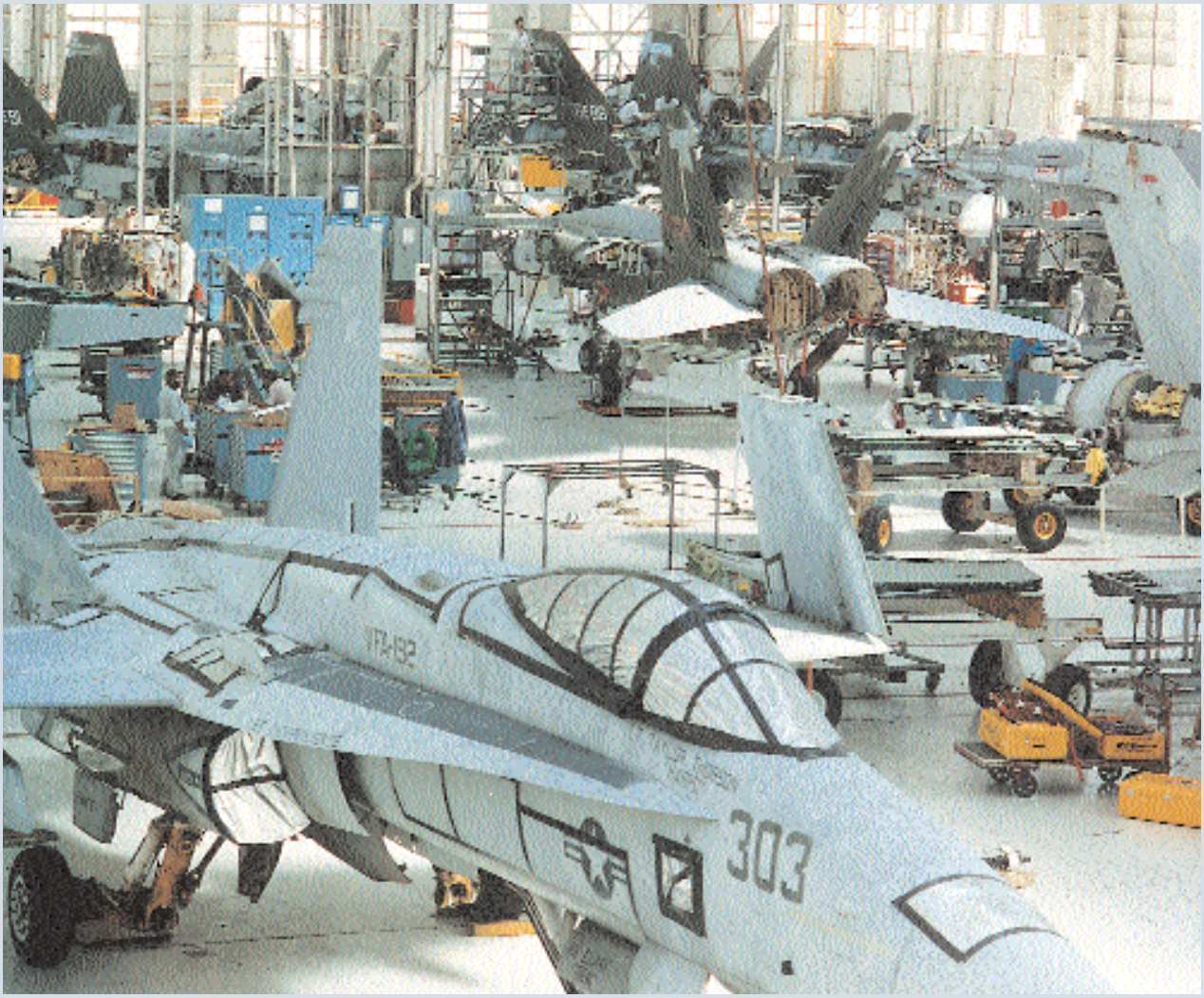
Enlisted Aircrew Incentive

The FY 2000 National Defense Authorization Act established Career Enlisted Flyer Incentive Pay (CEFIP) for both active duty and reserve Navy aircrew, replacing hazardous duty incentive pay (HDIP) for aerial flight. Although the CEFIP and HDIP pay rates are comparable, personnel previously receiving HDIP will receive a higher rate. To qualify, personnel must be in an AD, AE, AF, AM, AME, AMH, AMS, AO, AT, AV, AW, PR or TACAMO IT rating; must hold or be working toward a 78xx, 82xx or 94xx Navy Enlisted Classification; and must meet specific criteria for both time in service and flight time. Refer to NAVADMIN 329/99 for more information.

Civilian Helos to Fly for Navy

Civilian helicopters will fly from Military Sealift Command (MSC) ships to supply the Navy combatant fleet. Under a historic contract with the MSC, two SA-330J *Pumas* operated by Geo-Seis Helicopters, Inc., Fort Collins, Colo., will replace Navy helicopter units normally assigned to MSC ships for vertical replenishment and ship-to-shore services. The *Pumas* and attached personnel are scheduled to rotate among three combat stores ships in six-month deployments beginning in January.

HORNET REHAB



Above, F/A-18 *Hornets* undergo the Material Condition and Paint Program at Naval Aviation Depot North Island, Calif.

Aircraft Notes

The Surveillance System Upgrade for the **S-3B *Viking*** is now flying with the Naval Strike Warfare Center, Fallon, Nev. The upgrade includes a prototype synthetic aperture radar, tactical common data link and joint tactical information distribution system, which allows relocatable targets to be identified and information relayed to both shooter and command and control platforms via video link.

The Block 89A upgrade for the **EA-6B *Prowler,*** which enhances communication and navigation systems, is in operational testing, and two other upgrades have entered the fleet. The Multi-Mission Advanced Tactical Terminal/Improved Data Modem allows the reception of secure digital transmissions about the location of threats, which can then be integrated into cockpit displays. The SSA 5.2 operational flight software upgrade allows the *Prowler* crew to deploy the high-speed antiradiation missile in a wider range of situations.

The **MV-22 *Osprey*** entered operational evaluation in November 1999, with the first four low-rate initial production aircraft scheduled to fly approximately 700 hours during 350 sorties through spring 2000.

Weapons Technology

The **Tactical Aircraft Directional Infrared Countermeasure System** successfully completed live-fire tests at White Sands Missile Range, N.M., in October 1999. The tests demonstrated the system's laser-jamming capability against both surface-to-air and air-to-air threats.

A tank-killing version of the **Joint Standoff Weapon,** the AGM-154B, demonstrated its effectiveness in September and October 1999 using a replacement explosive that is safer for shipboard operations. The B variant is expected to begin multi-

service operational evaluation in early 2000; its predecessor is currently in full-rate production.

On 4 August 1999, crews from the Naval Rotary Wing Aircraft Test Squadron and Operational Test and Evaluation Squadron 1, NAS Patuxent River, Md., completed the final developmental test firings of the AGM-114B **Hellfire** missile for the SH-60B Armed Helicopter Program.

Mishaps

On 21 October 1999 an F-14B *Tomcat* of Fighter Squadron 143 was lost upon launching from *Dwight D. Eisenhower* (CVN 69) off Puerto Rico. Both crew members were recovered.

A U.S. Naval Test Pilot School UH-60A helicopter was destroyed by a hard landing at NAS Patuxent River, Md., on 12 November 1999. Both crew members were unharmed.

An S-3 *Viking* of Sea Control Squadron 32, NAS Jacksonville, Fla., was lost upon launching from *John F. Kennedy* (CV 67) on 14 November 1999 in the Arabian Gulf. Both crew members were killed.

A Strike Fighter Squadron 201 F/A-18A *Hornet* operating in Texas crashed on 3 December 1999; the pilot ejected safely.

An F/A-18C *Hornet* of Strike Fighter Squadron 34 was damaged by a ramp strike during a night recovery aboard *George Washington* (CVN 73) on 4 December 1999. The aircraft diverted and landed safely with no injuries to the pilot.

A CH-46 *Sea Knight* of Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 166 crashed off the California coast on 9 December 1999 while flying from *Bonhomme Richard* (LHD 6). Eleven Marines were rescued and transported to the ship. The remains of six Marines and one Sailor killed in the crash were recovered following an extensive search and rescue effort.

Deactivated

VQ-6 Black Ravens

A 26 August 1999 ceremony at NAS Jacksonville, Fla., marked the deactivation (officially 30 September) of Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadron 6 after eight years of service. Cdr. Christopher R. Bergey was the last CO of the *Black Ravens*.

VQ-6 was established on 5 August 1991 at NAS Cecil Field, Jacksonville, Fla., to operate the carrier-based ES-3A *Shadow*. The ES-3As assumed the carrier-based electronic reconnaissance role in preparation for the 1991 retirement of EA-3B *Skywarriors* from carrier duty. Like the S-3B, the ES-3A also served as an aerial tanker. VQ-6 was equipped with eight ES-3As and formed four detachments with two aircraft each. The squadron moved to NAS Jacksonville in March 1998 as NAS Cecil Field prepared for closure.

The *Black Ravens* deployed their first detachment, Det Alpha, in January 1994 aboard *Saratoga* (CV 60), with then-Lt. Cdr. Bergey as officer in charge. Over the next five years, the *Black Ravens'* four detachments made a total of 13 major deployments to the Mediterranean and the Arabian Gulf, on board *Enterprise* (CVN 65), *America* (CV 66), *John F. Kennedy* (CV 67), *Dwight D. Eisenhower* (CVN 69), *Theodore Roosevelt* (CVN 71), *George Washington* (CVN 73) and *John C. Stennis* (CVN 74).

From the start of NATO operations over Bosnia, the *Black Ravens'* ES-3As were heavily engaged and highly valued in electronic reconnaissance, including support for the carrier-launched strikes from *Theodore Roosevelt* and *America* in August and September 1995, respectively.

The VQ-6 detachments on carriers in the Arabian Gulf flew missions in support of Operation Southern Watch, enforcing the no-fly zone over southern Iraq. The squadron's last detachment, Det Alpha, on board *Enterprise* provided signals intelligence (SIGINT) and tanking support for Operation Desert Fox, the December 1998 air strikes against Iraq.

In 1998 the Navy made a budget decision to remove the ES-3A from its inventory. This was due to the expense of upgrading the aircraft's mission suite to maintain joint interconnectivity with other SIGINT platforms, relying instead on land-based aircraft such as the EP-3E *Aries II*. On 10 August 1999 VQ-6 retired the Navy's last two ES-3As to the Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Center, Davis-Monthan AFB, Ariz., for preservation in a war reserve status.

Rick Burgess wrote the deactivation article.