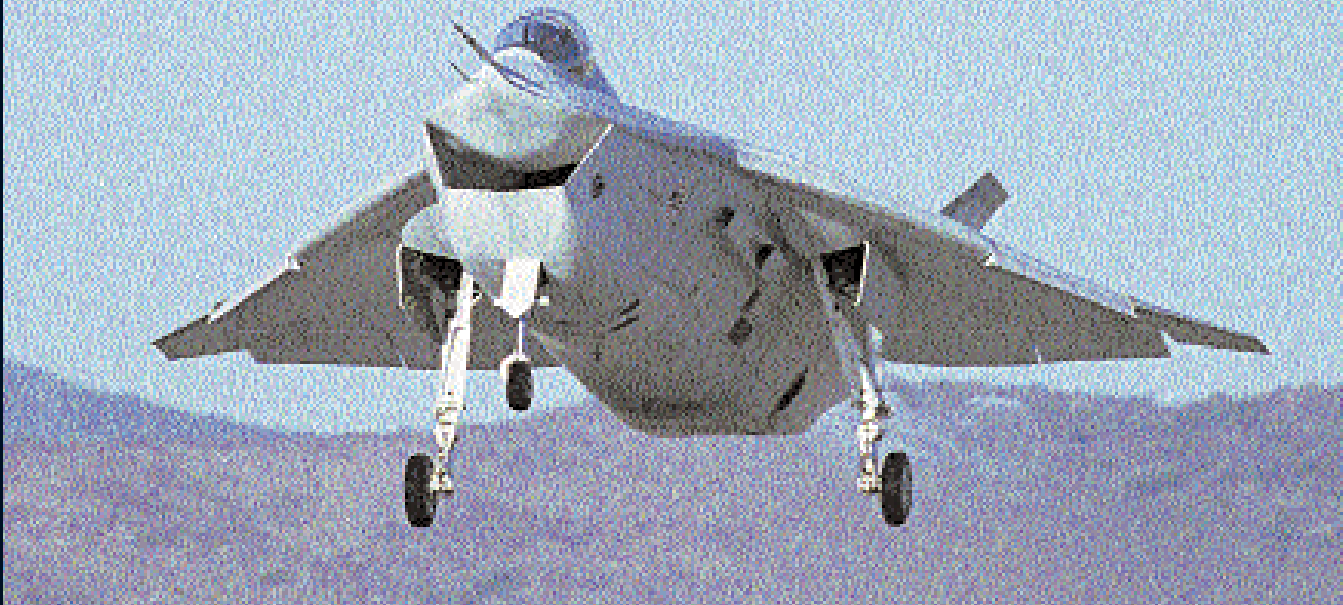


AIRSCOOP

Edited by Wendy Leland



FUTURE FIGHTERS TAKE FLIGHT

The Joint Strike Fighter program came one step closer to reality in late 2000 as the concept demonstrators from the two competing manufacturers took to the air for the first time.

The Boeing Company's version, above, took flight on 18 September. Lockheed Martin's model, below, flew on 24 October.



Upgraded Decoy Flies

The Improved Tactical Air Launched Decoy completed a successful flight at NAWS China Lake, Calif., on 24 August. Developed by Israeli Military Industries, the decoy features a radar repeater/augmentor that creates a radar signature like a tactical aircraft, and its turbojet engine and radar altimeter allow flight along terrain to more accurately mimic a manned aircraft. Further testing at China Lake is expected to lead to operational evaluation.

The Improved Tactical Air Launched Decoy, right, mimics the behavior and radar signature of a tactical aircraft.



For the Record

On 13 October, the Department of the Navy announced that the **MV-22 Osprey** is considered operationally effective and suitable for land-based operations. Additional evaluation of the blade-fold wing stow system is pending before shipboard suitability is declared.

Newport News Shipbuilding announced on 13 October the receipt of a \$161 million Navy contract for research and design development engineering in support of the future aircraft carrier program, **CVNX**.

Flight testing at NAWS China Lake, Calif., demonstrated the viability of a full-rate production variant of the **Joint Standoff Weapon**. The variant, using a low-cost guidance-electronics unit coupled with new software and a reconfigured control section, performed as well as the older version at a substantially lower cost.

H-53 Upgrade



Sgt. Brook Kelsey, USMC

The Naval Air Systems Command has authorized low-rate initial production of the Integrated Mechanical Health and Usage Monitoring System for the Marine Corps' CH-53E *Super Stallion* and MH-53E *Sea Dragon*. The new system provides full-time monitoring and diagnostics of engine, mechanical drive train and rotor system components, and will alert the crew if rapid degradation of a mechanical component is detected during flight. Following routine operations, performance data will be downloaded into a ground-based diagnostic system that is tied to the Naval Aviation Logistics Command Management Information System for reference throughout the fleet.

At NAWS China Lake, Calif., the first production-representative **AIM-9X Sidewinder** successfully intercepted a target drone despite infrared countermeasures. The range of the engagement and the shooter's angle off the target demonstrated the X-model's improvements over the current AIM-9M version. The missile has been approved for low-rate initial production.

Mishaps

On 5 October, an F/A-18C *Hornet* of VMFA-251 crashed aboard MCAS Yuma, Ariz. The pilot ejected safely.

An F/A-18C *Hornet* of VFA-151 crashed off southern California on 20 October after a night catapult launch from *Constellation* (CV 64). The pilot was lost at sea.

Two VFA-87 F/A-18C *Hornets* collided in midair over NAS Fallon, Nev., during a 27 October night flight. One aircraft was destroyed and the other damaged, but the pilots were not injured.