

AIRSCOOP

Edited by
Wendy Leland

EP-3E Returns Home

Three months after a Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadron 1 EP-3E *Aries II* made an emergency landing in Hainan, China, following a collision with a Chinese F-8 fighter (see May–Jun 01, pp. 6–7), the plane was released. Chinese officials refused the U.S. request to repair the plane in Hainan and fly it home, so the EP-3E was disassembled and returned in pieces on board a Russian Antonov-124 cargo jet, arriving at Dobbins ARB, Marietta, Georgia, on 5 July. The fuselage will be repacked with surveillance equipment and fitted with a new tail section plus new wings and engine nacelles. The old nacelles will be retained in the Navy supply system.



Photos courtesy of Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Co.

Following its release by Chinese authorities, on 13 June Lockheed Martin personnel began disassembling the VQ-1 EP-3E *Aries II* that was damaged in a midair collision with a Chinese fighter. A cargo plane carried the parts back to the United States.



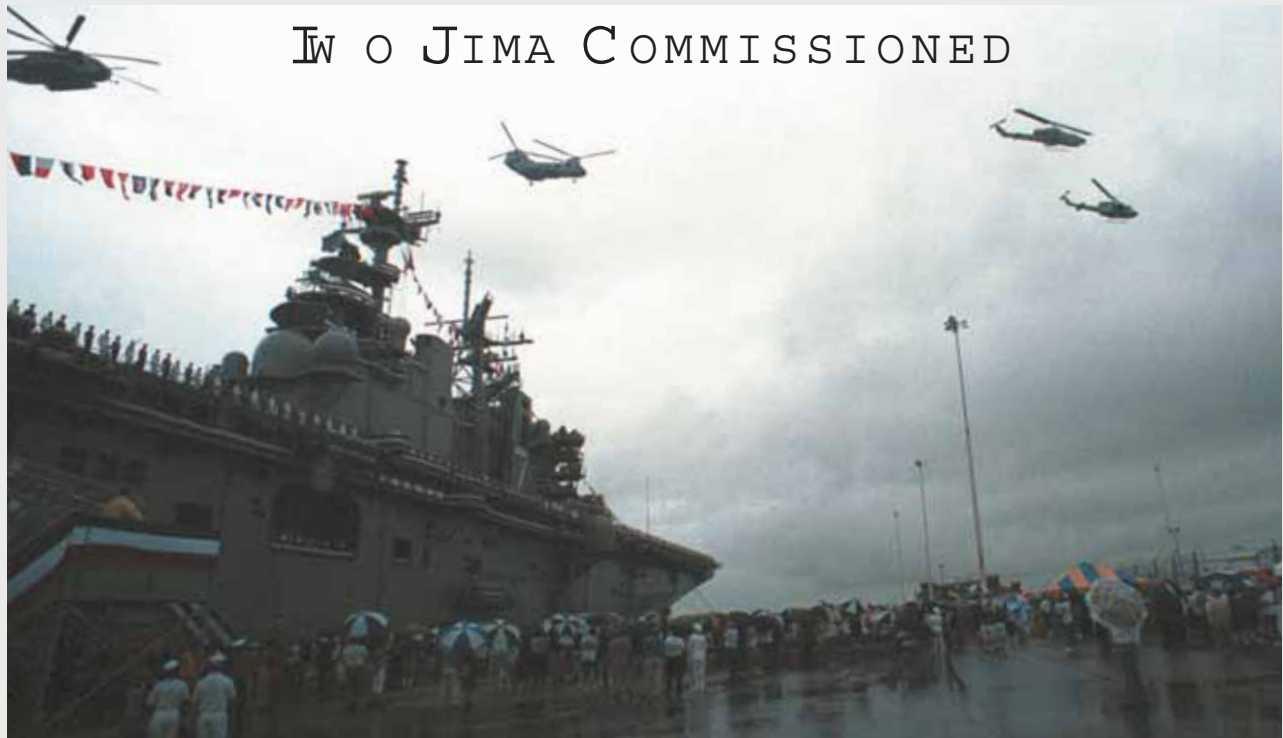
Carriers Get Mid-Life Boost

Nimitz (CVN 68) departed Newport News Shipbuilding on 25 June, right, at the completion of a three-year refueling and complex overhaul (RCOH). After three days of sea trials, the carrier returned to her Norfolk, Va., home port. She was the first *Nimitz*-class aircraft carrier to undergo the mid-life

refueling, modernization and overhaul. The ship was flight deck certified in July, and in August underwent a material inspection conducted by the Board of Inspection and Survey. In late September, the ship will steam around South America to her new home port in San Diego, Calif. In early 2002, *Nimitz* will start the last phase of RCOH,



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The Navy's newest amphibious assault ship, *Iwo Jima* (LHD 7), officially joined the fleet following a 30 June commissioning at NAS Pensacola, Fla.

Iwo Jima is the seventh of the *Wasp*-class amphibious assault ships. At 40,500 tons, *Iwo Jima* is larger than the aircraft carriers that supported her namesake WW II battle. She has a large flight deck for helicopters, AV-8B *Harrier II* jets and the new MV-22 *Osprey* tilt-rotor transport aircraft. The ship also has a large floodable well deck to carry and deploy three air-cushion landing craft.

LHD-7's command, control, communications, computers and intelligence system equips the ship to serve as the flagship of an amphibious readiness group. She also features a 600-bed hospital, complete with surgical facilities.

"This ship is the right ship at the right time in the right place," said General Michael J. Williams, assistant

commandant of the Marine Corps. "She's going to sail with a main battery of almost 2,000 Marines. Their presence in friendly waters will reassure our allies, and in unfriendly waters they can ensure that the United States has the means to meet its goals anywhere in the world."

While the ship represents the state of the art in "brown-water" warfare, current plans call for her to be the last Navy ship built with a conventional steam propulsion plant. In the future, only nuclear-powered ships will use boilers and steam turbines to drive their propellers. Other new ships will use gas turbines or diesel engines.

Iwo Jima is the second Navy amphibious warfare ship to be named after the Pacific island battle in which more than 6,000 U.S. Marines and an estimated 20,000 Japanese soldiers died. The first *Iwo Jima* (LPH 2), the lead ship in a class of helicopter carriers built in the 1960s, was decommissioned in 1993.

post-shakedown availability and selected-restricted availability, to complete all remaining work in support of the ship's next deployment.

The second *Nimitz*-class ship to undergo RCOH is *Dwight D. Eisenhower* (CVN 69), which arrived at Newport News Shipbuilding in May. The major life-cycle milestone marks the ship's only refueling in a 50-year life span. The scope of the work is valued at approximately \$1.5 billion and includes a major upgrade of the island house, a new antenna mast and a new radar tower. Both of *Eisenhower's* reactors will be refueled and modernized.

Remains Identified

The remains of a Marine Corps aerial observer missing in action from the Vietnam War were identified. The O-1 *Bird Dog* in which Col. Winfield W. Sisson was flying crashed in South Vietnam on 18 October 1965.

For the Record

On 22 June the **AH-1Z Super Cobra**, above right, logged its 100th flight hour in a test program at NAS



Patuxent River, Md. The previous week, Lt. Gen. Fred McCorkle, head of Marine Corps aviation, flew the AH-1Z.

With the **S-3 Viking** (below) fleet nearing its planned 13,000-hour structural life, Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Company began full-scale fatigue testing of an S-3 on 26 June to determine how much longer the platform can remain in service.

Ingalls Shipbuilding received an \$81.3 million contract modification on 2 July for continuation of work toward the construction of an eighth **Wasp-class** large-deck multipurpose amphibious assault ship.

Mishaps

An F/A-18C *Hornet* of Fighter Attack Squadron 106 crashed in Florida on 29 May, killing the pilot.

A T-34C *Turbo-Mentor* assigned to Training Air Wing 6 crashed in Alabama on 8 June, killing both occupants.

On 22 June a Helicopter Combat Support Squadron 8 HH-46D *Sea Knight* operating from *Kearsarge* (LHD 3) crashed into the Mediterranean Sea. There were no fatalities.

An HH-1N "Huey" assigned to NAS Fallon, Nev., was damaged by a hard landing in California on 8 July.



PHO Michael J. Pusnik, Jr.

JSF TESTING CONTINUES



The flight test program for the Boeing X-32B Joint Strike Fighter concept demonstrator, above and below left, concluded on 28 July at NAS Patuxent River, Md. On 19 July, Lockheed Martin's X-35B demonstrator, right and below right, transitioned in flight from short-takeoff vertical landing propulsion to conventional flight for a supersonic run.



On 9 July a CH-46E *Sea Knight* of Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 365 crashed into the water at MCAS New River, S.C., killing three crew members.

Two F/A-18C *Hornets* assigned to Fighter Attack Squadron 151 were damaged but landed safely after a midair collision while operating from *Constellation* (CV 64) in the Arabian Gulf on 14 July.

The aircrew of a Training Squadron 21 T-45A *Goshawk* ejected safely as the aircraft departed the runway during field arrested landing training on 18 July.

Marine aviators and maintainers from MCAS Cherry Point, N.C., completed four months of familiarization training aboard NAS Patuxent River, Md., in the first KC-130J. Among other improvements, the new model features a glass cockpit, right, with four multifunction liquid crystal displays and two head-up displays. The Navy will receive four more KC-130Js by the end of the year, with three going to Cherry Point and four to Pax for additional testing. The aircraft's initial operating capability is scheduled for April 2003.

