AIRSCOOP

Edited by Wendy Leland

VIKING STRIKE IN IRAQ

PH3 Casey D. Tweedell

PH2 Charles E. Alvarado

Sea Control Squadron 38, top, operates from *Constellation* (CV 64), above right. In a historic flight on 25 March, the squadron conducted the Viking's first combat firing of a Maverick missile, above.

On 25 March, an S-3B Viking of Sea Control Squadron 38 operating from *Constellation* (CV 64) destroyed a target near Basra, Iraq, with an AGM-63E Maverick missile. The historic event was the first overland combat strike by a Viking, and its first firing of a laser-guided missile in combat. The target was laser designated by an F/A-18C Hornet of Strike Fighter Squadron 151.

Super Hornet Gets Improved Imagery

The Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR) installed the Fast Tactical Imagery (FTI) photo reconnaissance intelligence strike module in the F/A-18Fs on *Abraham Lincoln* (CVN 72). These Super Hornets made the first operational flight of the module over Iraq on 3 April. Initially used in the F-14 Tomcat, NAVAIR upgraded the system and integrated it into the Super Hornet. The system enables the aircrew to capture, view, send and receive strike information in near-real time. FTI-equipped Super Hornets are interoperable with other platforms, and the ability to transmit data between aircraft or from the aircraft to ground stations makes it an integral part of today's network-centric environment.

SHARP Enters Production

The Shared Reconnaissance Pod (SHARP) has entered low-rate initial production (LRIP), with the first

PH2 Larry Carlson

The six amphibious assault ships of Task Force 51 steam together in the Arabian Gulf on 20 April, illustrating the first deployment of six large-deck amphibious ships from both the East and West coasts to the same area of operations. Led by the flagship *Tarawa* (LHA 1), the ships are, left to right, *Bonhomme Richard* (LHD 6), *Kearsarge* (LHD 3), *Bataan* (LHD 5), *Saipan* (LHA 2) and *Boxer* (LHD 4).

LRIP pod delivered to the Navy on 2 April. The SHARP pod on board the F/A-18 Hornet will replace the current carrier air wing tactical reconnaissance capability provided by the F-14 Tomcat's Tactical Air Reconnaissance Pod System. An initial contract for eight pods will provide two additional squadrons with SHARP capability. As F-14 squadrons are transitioned to the F/A-18F Super Hornet, each squadron will be outfitted with four SHARP pods.

For the Record

In February, a Naval Air Systems Command team modified all forward-deployed F-14 Tomcats to carry the **Joint Direct Attack Munition.**

On 27 March, the Navy ordered a seventh Boeing **C-40A Clipper.**

Flight testing of the **X-31 thrust-vectoring aircraft** at NAS Patuxent River, Md., was completed on 29 April. The final testing phase demonstrated the aircraft's ability to conduct thrust-vectored landings at up to 24 degrees angle of attack using a computer-controlled automatic pilot system and giving

James Darcy

The X-31 thrust-vectoring experimental aircraft approaches the ground at a 24-degree angle of attack during an automated extremely short takeoff and landing approach at NAS Patuxent River, Md., on 29 March. This concluded the flight testing program.

Brian Seraile

significant reductions in touchdown speeds.

On 6 May, the **H-1 upgrade** program surpassed its 1,000th flight hour.

When ***Bataan* (LHD 5)** deployed with Amphibious Task Force East to the Arabian Gulf in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, her aircraft complement consisted entirely of AV-8B Harrier IIs. This marked her first deployment as a designated "Harrier carrier."

Developmental testing of the **Improved Capability Modification III** upgrade for the EA-6B Prowler concluded in April. Fleet introduction of the upgraded weapon system is planned for early 2005.

Mishaps

On 21 March, a CH-46E Sea Knight of Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 268 crashed in Kuwait, killing 4 aircrew members and 8 passengers.

Above, a Royal Air Force Nimrod R1 lands at NAS Patuxent River, Md. Air Test and Evaluation Squadron 23 hosted the aircraft and provided maintenance support during two weeks of testing of an automated electronic warfare collection system, which concluded on 4 May. Right, PCU *Ronald Reagan* (CVN 76) conducts high-speed maneuvering tests in the Virginia Capes in May.

A UH-1N "Huey" of Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 169 crashed in Iraq on 30 March, with three fatalities.

The aircrew of an S-3B Viking of Sea Control Squadron 38 was recovered after the plane went over the edge following landing on board *Constellation* (CV 64) in the Arabian Gulf on 1 April.

The pilot of an AV-8B Harrier II assigned to Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 263 was recovered after crashing in the Arabian Gulf during operations from *Nassau* (LHA 4) on 1 April.

The aircrew of an F-14A Tomcat of Fighter Squadron 154 ejected and was rescued following in-flight mechanical problems over Iraq on 1 April.

On 8 April, an HH-60H and UH-60A of Helicopter Combat Support Squadron 5 suffered Class A damage when one helo struck the ground where the other was parked during operations at an undisclosed location.

The pilot of an F-5E Tiger II of Fighter Squadron Composite 13 was killed in a crash at NAS Fallon, Nev., on 18 April.

On 29 April, an E-2C Hawkeye of Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron 112 was damaged when its starboard main mount collapsed following an arrested landing at Andersen AFB, Guam.

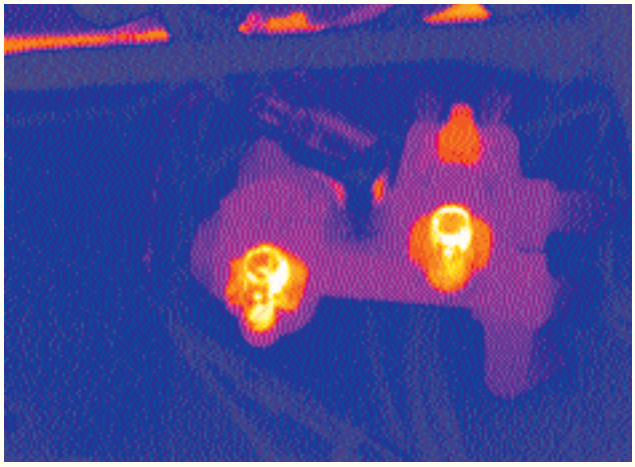
An HH-1N "Huey" assigned to NAS Fallon, Nev., was damaged in a crash landing there on 1 May.

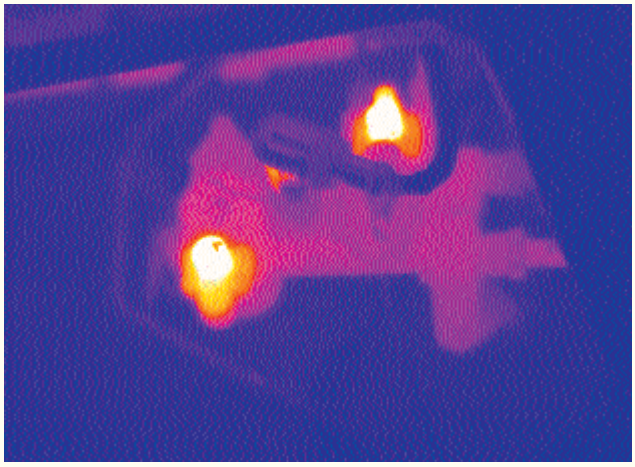
Last Active Skyhawk Takes Off

PH3 Landon Mason

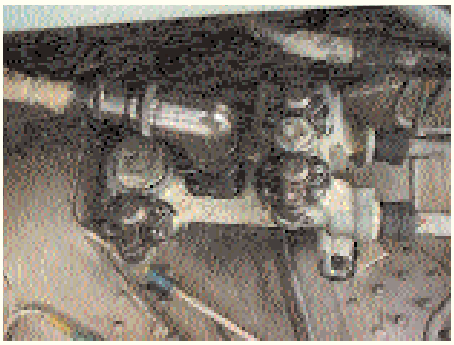
Left, Airman Carrie Bradshaw exchanges salutes with Cdr. Tom McDonough, CO of Fleet Composite Squadron 8, as the last active Navy TA-4 Skyhawk prepares to depart from NS Roosevelt Roads, P.R., on 30 April. The jet was donated to the Glen Martin Aviation Museum in Baltimore, Md.

Thermography Brings Gripes to Light



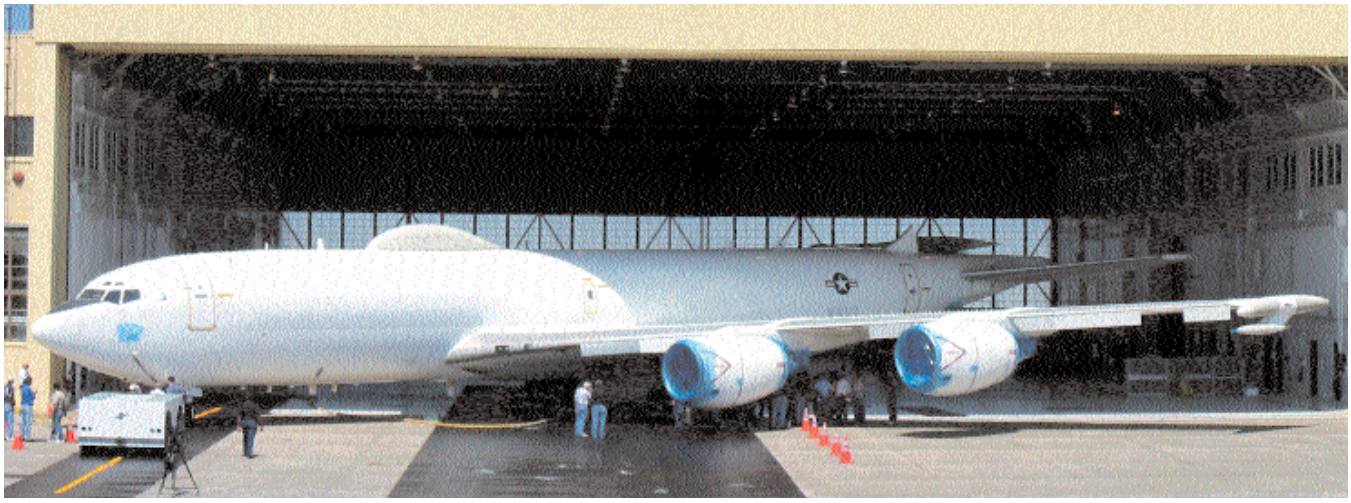


A technical team formed by the Naval Air Technical Data and Engineering Service Command's North Island, Calif., detachment is applying infrared thermography to detect and predict component failures on aircraft systems. NATEC detachments at NAS Jacksonville, Fla., and NAF Atsugi, Japan, utilize a high-resolution thermal camera, about the size of a camcorder, to videotape, photograph and store thermal images that can be analyzed on a PC or laptop computer. Using this technology to troubleshoot naval aircraft can help identify hydraulic, electrical, structural or engine components that have failed or are about to fail.



These images illustrate the concept. At left is an electro-hydraulic flight control shutoff valve as seen by the naked eye. Above are two valves tested under identical flight configurations, as seen by the thermal imaging camera. The image at top left shows proper operation, with three solenoids radiating heat. The infrared view of the valve at top right reveals that only two solenoids are operational.

For more information about infrared thermography, contact Jed Figg at NATEC, 619-545-7095, DSN 735-7095, email jed.figg@navy.mil.



The first E-6B Mercury began an upgrade program at Boeing's Cecil Field, Fla., facilities in April, above. The mission system and cockpit display upgrades will provide improved avionics, data processing capabilities and increased maintainability.