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A General Dynamics Tomahawk tactical test round has been launched from an A-6 at the Pacific Missile Test Centre (see news item)

Seventh Tornado flies
The seventh prototype Panavia Tornado Multi-Role Combat Aircraft made its maiden flight on March 30 from MBB's flight-test centre at Man-ching in West Germany. Project pilot Nils Meister was in the front seat with MBB's Fritz Eckert in the rear; the flight lasted lh r 15min, and it means that all three of Germany's allocation of prototypes in the pro-gramme are now airborne. A record flight was made on April 1.

Panavia reports that no problems were encountered on the first flight, which was one of 67 achieved by all Tornados during March, by far the highest number in any month to date. Turbo-Union says that total RB.199 flying time is now over 600hr including time in the Vulcan flying test-bed. Tornado P.07 is the second avionics aircraft and will be extending the work already being done by P.04, which is also based at Manching. Main areas of interest are the terrain-follow-ing radar, the navigation system, com-munications and ground mapping, according to Panavia.
• The report on the heavy landing in-volving P.05 at Caselle, Turin, will be complete in the very near future. It has not yet been decided whether to make its findings public, but Flight understands that there was no tech-nical failure in the causal chain. Pilot-ing techniques in relation to "tuning" of the Command Stability Augmenta-tion System (CSAS) are thought to have been at the heart of the problem, although the setting of the system was not a new one and had been used previously in other prototypes with no difficulties reported.

Panavia's recommendation is that the aircraft could and should be re-built but so far there has been no official approval from the tri-national management agency, Namma. Some small repair work has been started but unless a go-ahead is given in the fairly near future there is little chance of P.05, one of only two proto-types due to fly in Italy, getting air-borne again before the end of the year.

Tomahawk launched from Intruder
A tactical version of the General Dynamics Tomahawk cruise missile was launched from under the wing of an A-6 at the Pacific Missile Test Centre on March 28, three weeks ahead of schedule, to evaluate the weapon's structural integrity and flight handling qualities (see photograph). The round was dropped from 31,500ft, made left and right turns and changed altitude. The turbojet engine shut down after little more than a third of the planned flight had been completed, however; fuel contamination was the suspected cause. The 16min mission ended with wing retraction and deploy-ment of the missile's parachutes and flotation bags which allow test rounds to be recovered and used again.

Throughout its flight the weapon

was under the control of its opera-tional autopilot, but a GD engineer in the A-6's right-hand seat could transmit override commands.

Go-ahead for the E-4B
The United States Air Force has instructed Boeing to proceed with the fourth E-4 Advanced Airborne Com-mand Post, which will be the first designated E-4B. Three E-4As (two powered by JT9Ds and one by F103s) are already operational using systems essentially transferred from EC-135s; the fourth aircraft, F103-powered, is currently at Boeing's Seattle plant being fitted with the l,200kVA power system necessary to support the new electronics.

The improvements now planned for the E-4B include substantially in-

Defence marketplace
The increase in front-line strength of Royal Air Force VClOs and Hercules to compensate for the disbandment of the Belfast squadron later this year will be from seven to 11 and from 40 to 45 respectively. The ten-strong Belfast fleet will be put up for sale. The 22 surplus Britannias which have now been sold have gone to customers in the following countries: UK, eight; Belgium, eight; Eire, four; Ruanda, two. The Ministry of Defence says that some may subsequently have been resold or be operating in countries other than those where the original purchasers are based.

Arrangements for the Royal Thai Air Force to buy a 16-aircraft squadron of Northrop F-5s are due to be com-plete by April 15. The cost is expected to be about $50 million, and the sale is partly to compensate for the with-drawal of United States troops from Thailand (see also news story).
"Iran has clearly stated it plans to have F-16s," according to David Lewis, chairman and chief executive officer of General Dynamics, and the F-16 being offered to Japan includes the addition of Sparrow missiles, he says. Announcing the company's 1975 results, Mr Lewis says also, that "strong re-quests" for the F-16 have come from Israel. "We would like broader Euro-

pean activity such as in West Germany and England, but that's a fair time off," he believes.
The Australian Navy has ordered the McDonnell Douglas Harpoon anti-ship missile to arm its two FFG-7 guided-missile frigates, which could cost up to $A500 million (£325 million) including their weapons. The Harpoons will use the same launchers as the Standard surface-to-air missiles, and three existing RAN destroyers will be converted to operate these two new weapons by the early 1980s.
The Egyptian Air Force plans to buy about 20 Hawker Siddeley HS.748 cargo/troop transports fitted with wide freight doors. Egypt additionally has a requirement for two squadrons of maritime-patrol aircraft in the HS Coastguarder/Fokker-VFW F.27 Mari-time class, to be based at Alexandria and Luxor. The Abu Dhabi Air Force is also examining aircraft in both these categories.
Bell Helicopter Textron has been awarded $16-3 million to build a further 24 UH-INs for the VS Navy and Marines. Deliveries will begin next January and continue throughout 1977. The Austrian armed forces are to receive 12 Bell OH-58B light observa-tion helicopters under a contract worth $2-8 million.

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