



F-16 fires AIM-7

An F-16 Fighting Falcon fires a General Dynamics/Raytheon AIM-7 Sparrow for the first time. The launch, at the Pacific Missile Test Centre, Point Mugu, California, was made at Mach 0.9 and 39,500ft. The first guided AIM-7 launch from an F-16 is due later this year.

USAF evaluates F-16 CAS

The United States Air Force is evaluating the results of a seven-week trial in which Tactical Air Command (TAC) General Dynamics F-16 Fighting Falcons demonstrated their potential to provide close-air support (CAS) to ground forces. The exercises, which took place at Nellis AFB, Nevada, and Fort Hood, Texas, were part of the continuing study of potential replacements for the Fairchild A-10 Thunderbolt as the TAC's dedicated CAS aircraft.

The Air Force evaluation used seven F-16Cs from various TAC squadrons, camouflaged green and equipped with 30mm gun pods and Pave Penny laser tracking pods. Pave Penny is standard on the current A-10 CAS configuration. The aircraft also carried AGM-65 Maverick air-to-ground missiles.

USAF CAS pilots also flew General Dynamics' own F-16B technology demonstrator, which was equipped with a Collins automatic target hand-off system (ATHS), a British Aerospace digital terrain profile mapping system, and two night forward-looking infrared (Flir) systems, Falcon Eye and Pathfinder.

Under simulated battlefield conditions, the F-16s were deployed in conjunction with a Rockwell OV-10 Bronco forward air controller (FAC), a Bell OH-58 Kiowa helicopter, and an Army mobile ground control unit. Target co-ordinates were transmitted to the F-16Cs by voice after desig-

nation by the airborne controllers, but the F-16B received its target co-ordinates in digital data bursts, via the ATHS.

The ATHS is a battlefield mission computer which is used in conjunction with a control-display unit and standard communication transceivers. Once target co-ordinates have been determined by the FAC, either on the ground or airborne, they are transmitted to the airborne digital target data receiver in high-energy data bursts, which minimises the possibility of either detection or enemy jamming.

The data appears as a target designator box on the head-up display (Hud), and a confirming worded description of the target is also provided. ATHS allows the FAC to co-ordinate up to eight airborne fire missions, two active artillery fire missions, and two pre-planned artillery fire missions. It will also allow the aircraft to transmit data on position, weapons status, fuel remaining, and battle damage, and to receive new commands to proceed to new targets. ATHS has previously been demonstrated in a series of flights on the Advanced Fighter Technology Integration F-16 at Edwards AFB, California.

The first five weeks of the evaluation over the desert ranges at Nellis included the presence of radar threats from simulated Soviet radar systems. The evaluation was completed at Fort Hood, in an area which resembles Western Europe.

China and West Germany collaborate

MBB of West Germany and the China National Aero-Technology Import and Export Corporation (Catic) have signed an agreement in Beijing founding a German-Chinese company, MPC 75 GmbH.

Headquartered in Hamburg, the joint company will be responsible for all planning and control activities connected with the MPC 75 mid-range passenger aircraft project.

MBB and Catic have been working on the MPC 75 since 1985 and are now involved in the predevelopment phase, which will continue until 1990. First flight is scheduled for mid-1994. The agreement between the two countries includes a clause allowing technology transfer worth £8.3 million from MBB to Catic.

The MPC 75 is designed for 80 passengers and will be capable of a 2,800km range and a speed of more than 700km/hr. • Shanghai-based East China Airways plans to open eight new routes, and expand its fleet during the next two years.

The new services are mainly internal, and include Nanjing-Guangzhou (Canton) and Nanjing-Hong Kong, using British Aerospace 146s; Yantai-Beijing and Fuzhou-Zi, using Tridents; Shanghai-Xiamen (Amoy) using Airbus A310s; and Jinan-Hangzhou, using Snorts 360s.

The carrier, formed last June as part of the decentralisation of CAAC, intends to buy five McDonnell-Douglas MD-82s and "a number" of other aircraft in the next two years.

Bonn halts Jordanian Tornado cash

The West German Government-owned bank, Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW), will no longer help finance Jordan's purchase of eight Panavia Tornados, despite US support for the deal. Four independent banks which were to have provided the bulk of the DM370 million (\$20-77 million) German contribution have also withdrawn their offer.

During parliamentary uproar the Government was accused of aggression against Israel by using KfW, which supplies reconstruction loans, to fund the transaction. It then transpired that the USA had been encouraging the purchase for several months, to ensure that the USSR did not supply aircraft instead. But the KfW has now effectively withdrawn its DM48 million (\$26.9 million) contribution, and it is thought unlikely that any other institution will dare step in.

US Navy to test Hellfire

The United States Navy is to conduct a series of test launches of the Rockwell AGM-114A Hellfire laser-homing tactical air-to-surface missile.

The Navy has exercised two options with Rockwell, valued at approximately \$500,000, via the US Army, which handles Hellfire procurement. The first option procures anti-ship blast/fragmentation warheads originally developed under the Swedish Hellfire Shore Defence System programme. The Navy will test and integrate the warheads with Hellfire missiles for use under the second option.

The second option calls for integrating the missile on a stabilised platform for installation on a US Navy Surface Effect Ship. Four ship launches and one shore-based launch will be made in mid-to-late 1989, to demonstrate the weapon's coastal, harbour, and ship-lane defence capabilities.