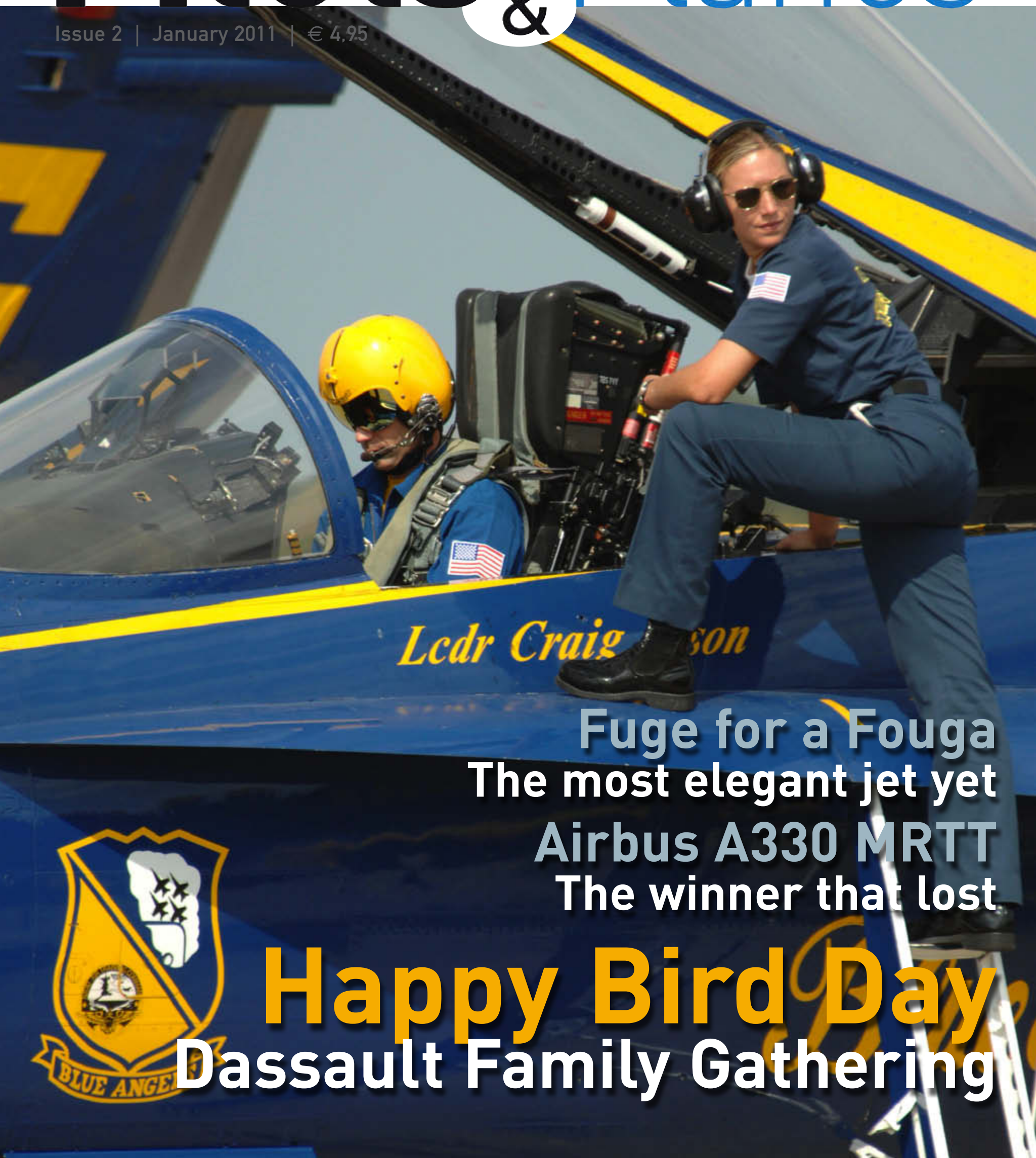




Pilots & Planes

Issue 2 | January 2011 | € 4,95



Lcdr Craig

Fuge for a Fouga
The most elegant jet yet
Airbus A330 MRTT
The winner that lost



Happy Bird Day
Dassault Family Gathering

Colophon

Pilots & Planes Military is an independent military aviation magazine which is distributed via the internet for new reading devices like e-readers and the Apple iPad. It also can be obtained on line in pdf format for print on demand purposes.

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Coverphoto: Volunteer! US Navy Blue Angels flight demonstration team exists since 1946. At first flying the F8F Bearcat, the master piece since 1986 is the F/A-18 Hornet. Selected enlisted personnel volunteer for a three-year tour. Each of them is not only a specialist, but is also expected to work beyond that specialty, contributing to the overall effectiveness of the squadron. No matter if they are male or female! (Image via www.blueangels.navy.mil)



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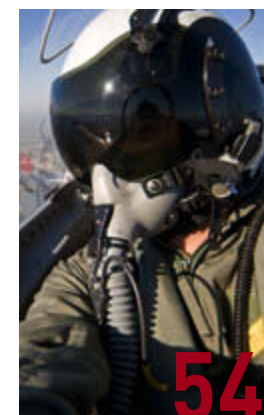
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AT-6B mission ready

Capable, affordable, sustainable

"Capable, affordable, sustainable. Those are the keywords for the development of the AT-6B", says Derek 'Turk' Hess, director of the AT-6B test program of Hawker Beechcraft. The new light attack airplane is based on the T-6B/C trainer. With its first flight in September 2009, in just four years, and exactly as planned, an initial idea was transformed into a flying prototype.

With the addition of high quality mission equipment to a proven platform (so far over 650 T-6 trainers have been built) Hawker Beechcraft Company (HBC) hopes to enter a new market. The aircraft is initially designed for the battlefield, where it can both be used in an attacking role and act as 'eyes and ears' for different parties on the ground and in the air. Next to this it can be used for (combat) search and rescue, law enforcement, anti drugs missions, border patrol and even fire patrol and fishery control duties.

TASKS

For all those different tasks the aero plane has been issued with a whole range of equipment, including an L-3 Wescam MX-15Di camera, LINK-16 datalink, ROVER-compatible video (for passing on real time images to ground troops) and ACR-210 radios. The fact that existing and proven equipment is used, is well illustrated by the choices of the HUD of the F-14B, the stick of the F-16 and the CICU mission computer of the A-10C! Or, like Hess puts it: "It's not a lot of invention, it's more pretty simple integration". The aircraft can be flown from

both cockpits, with a single or a dual crew. Both the data regarding avionics and those of the weapon sensors can be projected simultaneously on the CMC 4000 cockpit displays.

Under the wings six *hard points* are present. Those can be used in different combinations of for example drop tanks, rocket pods and guided and unguided missiles. Compared to the original T-6B trainer the airframe has been strengthened, which resulted in a considerable increase in maximum empty weight.

For self defense the AT-6B has light armoring around the cockpits and engine, multiple missile/laser warning systems, self healing fuel tanks and Martin Baker mk. 16 zero/zero ejection seats. Next to this chaff and flare dispensers can be added, just like a 25 mm canon. Furthermore it currently is examined whether the aircraft can also be equipped with the AIM-9X sidewinder.

EVALUATION

The second, improved prototype made its public debut during UK Farnborough 2010, together with prototype number one. Shortly after Farnborough both aircraft flew back to Wichita for further upgrades. For 35 days 'they looked like an ant hill, with all those people crawling over them', but after this amongst others a stronger engine, extra hard points and a helmet-mounted cueing system had been installed. After these upgrades an operational evaluation was done in cooperation with the Air National Guard. During this evaluation period, lasting 13 flying days, no less than 82 very diverse missions (of the 82 that had been planned!) were flown, with only two ground crew for support.



CANDIDATE

The AT-6B is one of the main candidates for the LAS-programme (Light Air Support aircraft, the successor of the U.S. Air Forces Light Attack/ Armed Reconnaissance (LAAR)-programme). During the JEFX 10-3 exercise, which was held at Nellis AFB April 2010, the AT-6B got the opportunity to prove itself.

Although the exact details remain a secret, the AT-6B made a very good impression according to Hawker Beechcraft. All planned missions were flown, including simulated attacks on both static and moving targets. Extensive use was also made of the C2ISR capacities of the aero plane, allowing different parties on the ground and in the air to be kept up to date using all kinds of data transport. The AT-6B operated from an improvised strip on a dry lake bed while refueling happened at a so-called forward area refueling point (FARP), amongst others by an MC-130.

Next to this potential customer, Hawker Beechcraft is especially aiming at smaller air forces with low budgets. Countries like Afghanistan and Iraq are interested, where the latter is extra promising because of their already ordered fifteen T-6C trainers. But also the U.S. Navy is interested for their special operations program Imminent Fury.

At HBC they are looking forward to the first actual

order, so the production line can be started up. And when a customer is not only interested in the purchase of aero planes, but also in support for training of pilots and/or ground crew, then this will be arranged in close cooperation with CAE.

DEREK 'TURK' HESS

Derek 'Turk' Hess (1957) was sent to Europe for his first operational assignment, directly after completing his initial flying training in the United States. And not with just any squadron: he was assigned to the 32nd TFS *Wolfhounds* at our own Soesterberg AB! He did fly here between 1985 and 1988, during which years he also took part in many *alpha scrambles*. After all the Cold War was still raging back then! His two kids were born in Utrecht and Amersfoort, and the family very much enjoyed living in De Meern first and Zeist later on. After his time at Soesterberg he flew many different types of aircraft, amongst others during F-15 test programs at both Nellis AFB and Eglin AFB. After serving in the U.S. Air Force for 27 years he retired in 2006, after which he became chief test pilot and director of the AT-6 program at Hawker Beechcraft. In this function he currently travels the whole world to demonstrate the AT-6B to both potential customers and the public. Directly after retiring from the USAF in 2006 the family returned to The Netherlands. During this well earned holi-



day the children amongst others very much enjoyed a visit to the Militair Luchtvaart Museum at Kamp Zeist. And while back here Hess relived happy memories of the many aviation enthusiasts he always saw outside the fence in the eighties, watching the F-15's taking off and landing. ♦

Text **Frank Mink** and **Patrick Derksen**
Photography **HBC, Frank Mink** and **Patrick Derksen**

