

**YF-16 Vs. YF-17**

I really enjoyed your article on the 16/17 fly-off, but there are a couple of things you may not know about ["Legacy of the Lightweight Fighter Competition," February, p. 59]:

The fighter mafia was led by Col. John Boyd, who originated the whole concept of energy maneuverability focusing fighter design concepts to higher thrust and greater wing area to assure they could take on all comers and not have to face the issues F-4 drivers faced in Vietnam. Harry [Hillaker] was a dues paying member—but a contractor (General Dynamics).

It was not originally a fly-off. It was originally intended to be a technology demonstration. It was called the Lightweight Fighter (LWF) program without necessarily having an ending. It was only during the actual flying that the powers that be suggested the high/low mix—and that the LWF winner would be the low and get a full-scale development contract.

The evaluation team included a Tactical Air Command (TAC) contingent assigned to the 4486th Test Squadron (part of the Fighter Weapons Center at Nellis). Included on this team were Lt. Col. Duke Johnston, Capt. Dean Stickell (YF-16 pilot), Capt. Joe Bill Dryden (YF-17 pilot), and Capt. Hugo Heyns (aircraft maintenance officer), along with three aircraft specialists (avionics, engine, and crew chief).

At the end, the competition was not close. The YF-16 outperformed the YF-17

in just about every measure. I've got a bunch of stories behind that comment. It was really interesting. Everyone (operations, maintenance, logistics, finance, and politics) all agreed: The YF-16 was the right aircraft at the right time.

Following the January 1975 announcement, we conducted another test program (the beyond visual range evaluation) using a variety of aircraft from around the Air Force—all assigned TDY to Edwards. Ultimately this program was directed to define the specs for the F-16 radar—which was not considered as part of the LWF, because it was John Boyd's thought that we needed something that could dogfight during daylight—ultimately to be a day VFR fighter (if it ever went into production).

In January-February 1975, the Navy sent in a team to help it define its next aircraft. The commander in charge came to my office and told me he was there to evaluate the two aircraft and make a recommendation to his bosses. He then asked me to show him where the aircraft with two engines was. He had been told which to pick, clearly knowing that the Navy had made up its mind and was not going to be confused by facts.

You noted the YF-16XL and its competition with what became the F-15E, but you did not address the F-16/79 where General Dynamics installed a J79 engine in a YF-16 in order to have something to offer the Chinese Air Force (CAF) on Taiwan. President Jimmy Carter would not allow CAF to buy the full F-16, at that point. As a General Dynamics employee following my eight-year USAF career, I participated in the F-16/79 program logistics and met with CAF leadership as part of the possible FMS.

I'm sure you won't get a chance to redo this article, but thought you ought to know a little more about the program about which you wrote.

And by the way, if you ever get around to a similar story on the A-12 program that everyone thought was such a disaster, I'll be happy to help you better understand the truth behind all the falsehoods in that program.

Hugo E. Heyns III  
Albuquerque, N.M.

**C&C and Pearl Harbor**

Your article "Command and Control Evolution" [February 2016, p. 64] was a very interesting read. It really hit the nail on the head, so to speak. I was a ground radio operator for most of my 26 years of Active Duty, primarily working long-range communication by either being in SAC or supporting SAC when in AFCS/AFCC. This would include several assignments to the old Alpha/Bravo net, later called Giant Talk. We also broadcast SAC EAMs when at the RAF Croughton aeronautical station. Then there was the PACAF Commando Escort network, when I was based in the Philippines.

I was a small part of the command and control evolution. Something I always told the "new guys" was that without comm, we would just be a bunch of folks running around bumping into each other.

I [also] thoroughly enjoyed the article "Pearl Harbor Rides" again [November/December 2016, p. 22]. It mentions there were 10 reviews after the attack, even as late as 1995. In 2015 the Navy turned down yet another appeal. However, Admiral Kimmel and General Short were never truly absolved of their alleged negligence prior to the attack.

And then there is the Philippines. General MacArthur who had about eight hours' warning still had most of his aircraft on the ground when the Japanese attacked. This effectively eliminated his air force. So what was his punishment? He was praised for his defense of the islands, given the Medal of Honor, and sent

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—The Editors

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to Australia to raise an army to retake the Philippines, among other locations.

So I guess in 1941-42, what America needed was a new hero and two scape-goats. It appears we got both.

SMSGt. David R. Caron,  
USAF (Ret.)  
Las Vegas

### Helicopter Evolution

The UH-1N replaced the HH-1H, not UH-1H for missile site support service. ["Gallery of Weapons," June, p. 95]. The HH-1H replaced the UH-1F. The TH-1H is a modified single-engine variant, not twin engine, used for flight training.

MSgt. Hank Wiswell,  
USAF (Ret.)  
Spokane, Wash.

■ Retired Master Sergeant Wiswell's point about the single engine is correct, and the legacy variant can accurately be referred to as HH-1H (reflecting its original search and rescue role). SAR variants of the N model were similarly designated, though the UH-1N designation more accurately highlights its

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missile field utility role. We will modify the "Gallery of Weapons" UH-1 Huey/Iroquois entry.

—Aaron M. U. Church

### I've Seen This Movie Before ...

Colonel Damm's letter ["Nukes Not for Everyone," June, p. 6] is another example of why I have the greatest respect for missileers. There are no truer patriots. For the record, I was never a member of that elite group.

However, I did spend 38 years acquiring and sustaining military systems, including eight years as the senior industry manager for the integrated sustainment of Minuteman. Thus I have some relevant but pessimistic experience regarding the prospects for a follow-on ICBM and what is likely to be happening to Minuteman today.

I've seen this acquisition scenario play out too many times. In this case, it is about the Minuteman system, an engineering marvel that can continue for decades to be a ready, reliable, and capable deterrent, with overwhelming destructive force. However, like all aging systems it needs



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a continuous flow of modifications and upgrades to stay healthy.

But the narrative goes like this: The Minuteman mods and upgrades are expensive, the Air Force is planning a follow-on ICBM called Ground-Based Strategic Deterrent, dollars are short, and therefore we need to wait for the results of the GBS studies before we sink more money into Minuteman.

However, the studies drag on; problematic political and budgetary issues delay or cancel the GBS.

Meanwhile, Minuteman degrades to such an unsatisfactory condition that deactivation is the only consensus solution. The cry for deactivation is usually fueled by the next accident or management failure, which will come sooner than later if Minuteman mods and upgrades are starved.

For many years, it's been clear to me that those seriously interested in maintaining deterrence should first fund and field the new bomber and the SLBM boats (or whatever the Navy needs) and upgrade the stockpile. Meanwhile, pay the much smaller bills to keep Minuteman healthy. Don't starve this ace-in-the-hole by deferring mods and refurbishments that are necessary to ensure Minuteman remains viable.

Seriously, does anyone think the future political and budgetary environment can possibly support new bombers, boats, stockpile upgrades, and ICBMs? That dog doesn't hunt.

The scenario I fear most: The new bomber and the boats are delayed, the stockpile continues to deteriorate, and Minuteman has been deactivated.

Brig. Gen. John L. Clay,  
USAF (Ret.)  
Las Vegas

## Clearing Up Taranto

In the June issue a critical line was left out of my response to Ray Panko about the British attack on the Italian battleships at Taranto. After citing the numerous operational accounts that report the average depth of the harbor at 39 to 49 feet, I further said that "Mr. Panko's data calls this into doubt, particularly in the area where the battleships were moored," acknowledging the new information he had provided. Other factors—such as the two battleships left with their decks awash but not completely submerged after the attack—complicate the question, but Mr. Panko's depth chart of the harbor has to be recognized and considered as well.

John T. Correll  
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