

**Delay
fatal'
for bite
victim**

• See Page 3.

WEATHER. — Bureau City
forecast: Humid. Thundery
rain. Expected top, 27. Yester-
day, 30. • Details, Page 24.

643,550
Average daily sale

F-111 DOWN IN FLAMES

TWO Australian fliers from a ditched F-111 fighter-bomber whooped with delight as they were winched into a rescue helicopter off Auckland yesterday.

Wing-Cdr. David Rogers and Flight-Lt. Peter Growder knew they had baled out only seconds from disaster.

As their ejector capsule rocketed up away from the plane, flames began streaking from its wings.

The pair, reported to be "calm and cool" after the ditching, bent down to kiss the ground as the RNZAF Iroquois helicopter landed them at Whenuapai air base, near Auckland.

Last night as they slept at a RNZAF base hospital, under sedation, a NZ Navy survey ship, Monowai, was trying to pinpoint the wreckage with sonar in 20 fathoms of water.

Today a team of RAAF crash experts will fly to NZ to try to piece together the final minutes of the flight.

From what was known last night from official sources and several eyewitness accounts, the last moments of the jet's Anzus exercise flight across the Hauraki Gulf went like this:

About 10.45 a.m., pilot Wing-Cdr. Rogers radioed that he was in trouble and was heading for Whenuapai base.

Defence Department sources in Canberra said yesterday the trouble was severe overheating in a wheel well, probably caused by failure of an engine duct.

The last message from the plane was that it could not make land and was about to ditch.

From boats below, scallop fishermen Mr Lindsay Subritzky, 34, and Mr Denis Henson were watching.

They say the lame F111 was escorted by another jet.

There was a sudden loud bang and the crew's

Helicopter lifts two from sea

By ANDREW WOODLEY

escape capsule shot from the cockpit. The jet went silent. A red, green and white parachute attached to the capsule billowed open.

At that moment, fire broke out in the plane.

Mr Henson said: "The fire seemed to start around the wings and spread right back to the tail. There was no smoke — just bright flame."

The F-111, with its folding wings spread out, went into a long, shallow dive, maintaining speed and curving to the fishermen's left. About 150 metres from the water, its nose reared, then it side-slipped, and flopped into the sea.

As it disappeared in a

cloud of spray, small pieces of the plane broke away.

Fishermen began racing towards the spot where the escape capsule splashed down.

The rescue helicopter guided a 4-metre fibre-glass runabout nearby to the capsule.

The Iroquois then winched them up from the boat.

Helicopter pilot Flight-Lt D. V. Hamilton said: "Once they hit the deck of the helicopter they let out yelps of delight, and apart from the odd hand tremble seemed none the worse for wear."

• Continued Page 2



• ABOVE: Wing-Cdr. Dave Rogers arrives in Auckland after a helicopter plucked him and Flight-Lt. Peter Growder (left) from a fishing boat which rescued them from their escape capsule.

BELOW: A scallop boat tows the escape capsule off Auckland.



GOOD SHOT! TWO FLATTIES AND A SNAPPER

GMH takes a gamble

CANBERRA. — General Motors-Holden's yesterday launched a \$110 million gamble it believes will reshape the Australian car market — the Commodore medium sedan.

And it will stage a multi-million-dollar promotion scheme — the largest and most expensive by an Australian car company — for the Commodore.

The company plans to mail

From PETER GAVAGHAN

a catalogue to nearly all of Australia's 4 million homes. It predicts sales of 65,000 models a year.

The Commodore doesn't look, feel or drive like the traditional Holden.

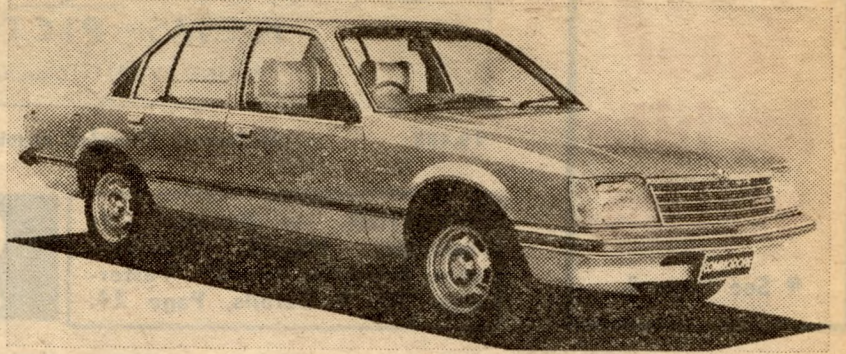
It is based on a design by General Motors' German subsidiary, Opel, but has been re-engineered, particularly in suspension and dust-proofing, for Australian conditions.

The base model costs \$6513

— \$50 below the Kingswood SL. It is powered by a 2850cc six-cylinder engine coupled to a four-speed manual gearbox.

The Commodore SL at \$8558 will have a three-speed automatic transmission and a 3300 cc six-cylinder engine, corduroy seats, extra instruments and tinted windows.

The top of the line SLE will cost \$10,513 and will have a 4200 V8 engine, three-speed automatic transmission, power steering, velour seat trim and headlining, air-conditioning and a stereo cassette-radio.



• THE new Holden Commodore sedan.

Bush 3 were shot dead

From BRIAN BURKE

BRISBANE. — Two unidentified men and a woman whose bodies were found at a creek near Mt. Isa had been shot dead, police said yesterday.

The officer in charge of the Mt. Isa district, Insp. Bill McArthur, said yesterday they had gunshot wounds to the head and police were treating the deaths as murder.

The body of one man was found late on Tuesday by a man and his girlfriend. Police found the bodies of another man and the woman nearby early yesterday.

Insp. McArthur said the bodies, all decomposed, were of whites.

He said the body of a man said to be in his 40s was found on Tuesday in a dry creek bed, about 15 km north-west of Mt. Isa.

Insp. McArthur said a police guard was placed on the body and a search was started early yesterday.

"We found the other bodies about 100 metres away on a high bank in a spinifex patch, as though they were dumped," he said.

"A shoulder-to-shoulder search was made of the area but nothing else was found."

Insp. McArthur said

another search would be made today.

He said the area, about 3 km west of the Barkly Highway, was a lonely spot sometimes used by greyhound trainers.

"We believe that the bodies have been here some time, but the doctor cannot hazard a guess as yet," he said.

He said no wallets, rings, letters or other things that could identify the people had been found.

Two homicide squad detectives, a pathologist and another police expert flew from Brisbane to Mt. Isa yesterday to help with investigations.

Insp. McArthur said no projectiles from the weapon used had been found.

The woman is said to be in her early 20s. Her height is unknown. She has brown hair, possibly

long. She was wearing a green cotton T-shirt, size 14, and blue denim shorts. She had a floral handkerchief.

The man she was near was also in his early 20s and about 170 cm. with brown hair, possibly long, and a reddish brown beard, he was wearing a white T-shirt with "Finke Desert Races, Alice Springs, June 1978" written on it. He was wearing blue jeans, jockey shorts and ankle high brown boots.

The man whose body was found in the creek bed was about 175 cm with brown hair. He was wearing blue shorts, possibly football shorts, red underpants and a yellow T-shirt.

His body was found by greyhound trainer Stan Harris and his girlfriend Kirsten Streicher.



• DR HARRISON holds one of the cans of contaminated fish.

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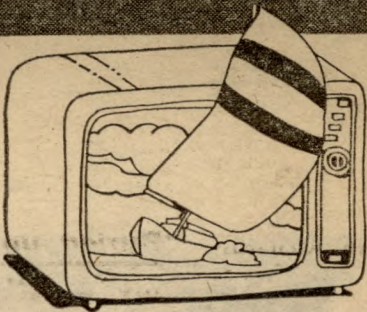
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HEALTH DEPARTMENT officials searched supermarket shelves yesterday for contaminated tins of salmon and fish cutlets.

The search follows the discovery of 48 "blown" cans of Australian Salmon and snook (barra-couta) at Royal Park Hospital this week.

The cans were "loaded with bacteria," senior Health Department officers said.

Health officials throughout Australia were immediately warned.

The cans came from the Safcol cannery at Margate, southern Tasmania.

They came from three batches — C5 F6018, C5

'Blown' fish cans: shop hunt

By REX GARDNER

F6138 and C5 G5258, Safcol said yesterday all its 455-gram cans with gold lids and the C5 prefix were "under suspicion."

It had ordered the withdrawal of all Australian salmon and snook cutlets produced by the Margate cannery.

"Safcol believes the vast majority of these have been recovered," a spokesman said in Adelaide. "But in case some have found their way into homes or small stores, it is issuing a warning to people to

check their stocks."

Any suspect cans should be returned to the shop they were bought from. The shop would refund the purchase price.

Melbourne's senior district health officer, Dr John Harrison said yesterday that no sickness had been reported. But eating the "blown" canned fish could be dangerous.

"The contents of the Royal Park cans are contaminated and are quite unsuitable for human consumption," Dr Harrison said.

Dr Harrison said the suspect batches had been produced over three weeks.

Laboratory tests were being made in Melbourne to identify the bacteria — but reports from Tasmania said it was from the Clostridium species. There was no evidence to indicate the bacteria was Clostridium botulinum, which caused fatalities in Britain this year. Dr Harrison said. It was found in tins of salmon.

F-111 goes in

• From Page 1

Ten seconds after the F-111 ditched, the jet's nose cone rose to the surface, with other wreckage. Kerosene bubbled to the surface, too, and there was a growing oil slick, Mr Subritzky said.

As the chopper commander said later: "It looked pretty expensive down there."

It was \$13 million of plane — at 1972 prices — was on its way to the seabed.

It is the third F-111C Australia has lost in five years of operations.

Navy divers will go down from the NZ survey ship at dawn today.

Other navy boats with nets and grappling equip-

ment will help in the search.

Wing-Cdr. Rogers is commanding officer of No. 6 RAAF Squadron, Amberley, Qld. Flight-Lt. Growder was his navigator.

• Jeff's view — P. 8.

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THE SUN 26 OCT 78.



CRASHED AIRCRAFT DETAILS

A8-137

PILOT: FLGOFF Mark KELLY

☐ Killed

NAVIGATOR: FLTLT Alan CURR

☐ Killed

MODEL-TYPE: D1

TYPE VERSION: F-111C

ROLLOUT DATE:

ACCEPTANCE DATE:

TRANSFER DATE:

DATE CRASHED: 24/08/1979

CRASH LOCATION: Ohakea, NZ

GD S/N: 13

USAF SERIAL NUMBER: A8-137

LH Wing Sn:

LH Eng Sn:

RH Wing Sn:

RH Eng Sn:

NOTES: *RAAF AIRCRAFT. Aircraft no longer in the RAAF inventory -
Crashed at RNZAF Base, Ohakea on 24 August, 1979.
Crash was due to water ingestion from a wet runway on take
off, which caused a double compression stall.
FLGOFF Mark Kelly aged 22
FLTLT Alan Curr aged 30*

RAAF PAIR SECONDS FROM DEATH

The DAILY AT DAWN *Sun*
NEWS-PICTORIAL
PHONE 63-0211 (Classified 63-0351) 10c

100 Pages — Including 4-Page Turf Guide plus 32-Page Property Guide
Melbourne, Saturday, August 25, 1979 64 Pages

646,366
Average daily sale

WEATHER — Bureau City forecast: Fine, mild and sunny. Expected top 19. Yesterday 14.
• Details, Page 24.

By STEPHEN FOLEY

TWO RAAF fliers escaped death by seconds when they ejected from their exploding F-111 fighter-bomber in New Zealand yesterday.

Both were shot hundreds of feet into the air in an escape capsule which parachuted down only six metres from the flaming wreckage.

As burning fuel licked around them, the navigator, Flight-Lt. Alan Curr, pulled his pilot free and carried him fireman-fashion to safety.

The pilot, Flying-Officer Mark Kelly, 22, of Armadale, Victoria, was in a New Zealand hospital last night with back injuries. His condition was satisfactory.

Flight-Lt. Curr, 30, of Ballandean, Queensland, was discharged from Palmerston North hospital last night.

The Australians had been taking part in a mock-war alert when their \$13 million swing-wing fighter crashed on take-off at New Zealand's Ohakea air base.

A witness said the jet "burst into flame" as it hurtled down the runway.

It continued to career out of control, before diving down a steep bank and into a field.

According to Wing-Cdr Errol McCormack, commander of the RAAF's No. 1 squadron, the men ejected with only seconds to spare.

"Had they not done so then, they would have both been killed," Wing-Cdr. McCormack said by telephone from NZ.

He said the fighter, one of four F-111s taking part in the four-nation operation Tasmanex, was not armed.

Wing-Cdr. McCormack, who said he was on the scene with rescuers within a minute, estimated the capsule had floated down only six metres from the wreckage.

Both men had got out unaided, he said.

"There were no ex-

plosions, just burning fuel all around.

"The navigator was able to get out first, but he had to carry the pilot to safety. They were pretty shaken."

The jet was the third in a deployment of four planes taking off on the last sortie in the exercise.

• Continued Page 2



F-111 in flames

• From Page 1

The first two took off without incident.

After the accident, the runway was closed and the fourth plane did not take off.

Wing-Cdr. McCormack said he was not sure what happened, but the engines seemed to fail. An inquiry would begin today.

Wing-Cdr. McCormack said the plane aborted the take-off roll and tried to stop but it was not until it went off the runway that it caught fire.

Wing-Cdr. McCormack said it was the first time the crew had been in an accident — "Al had been flying for quite a while, but Mark was fairly new to it."

He said the escape canopy "worked as advertised."

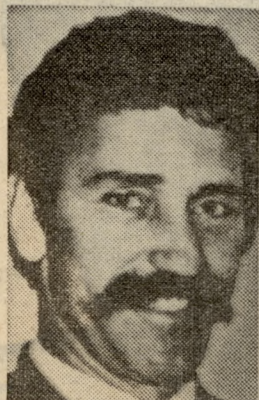
Built in 1968, the F-111 was one of 24 aircraft bought by the RAAF for \$300 million in 1973.

There are 20 left after accidents. One went down in the Hauraki Gulf, south-east of Auckland, about 10 months ago. Both the crew ejected.

In the first crash at Armidale, NSW, the pilot and navigator also ejected safely after a fire warning light came on.

The next was at Evans Head, NSW, and followed a multiple bird strike during a bombing exercise. Both crew were killed.

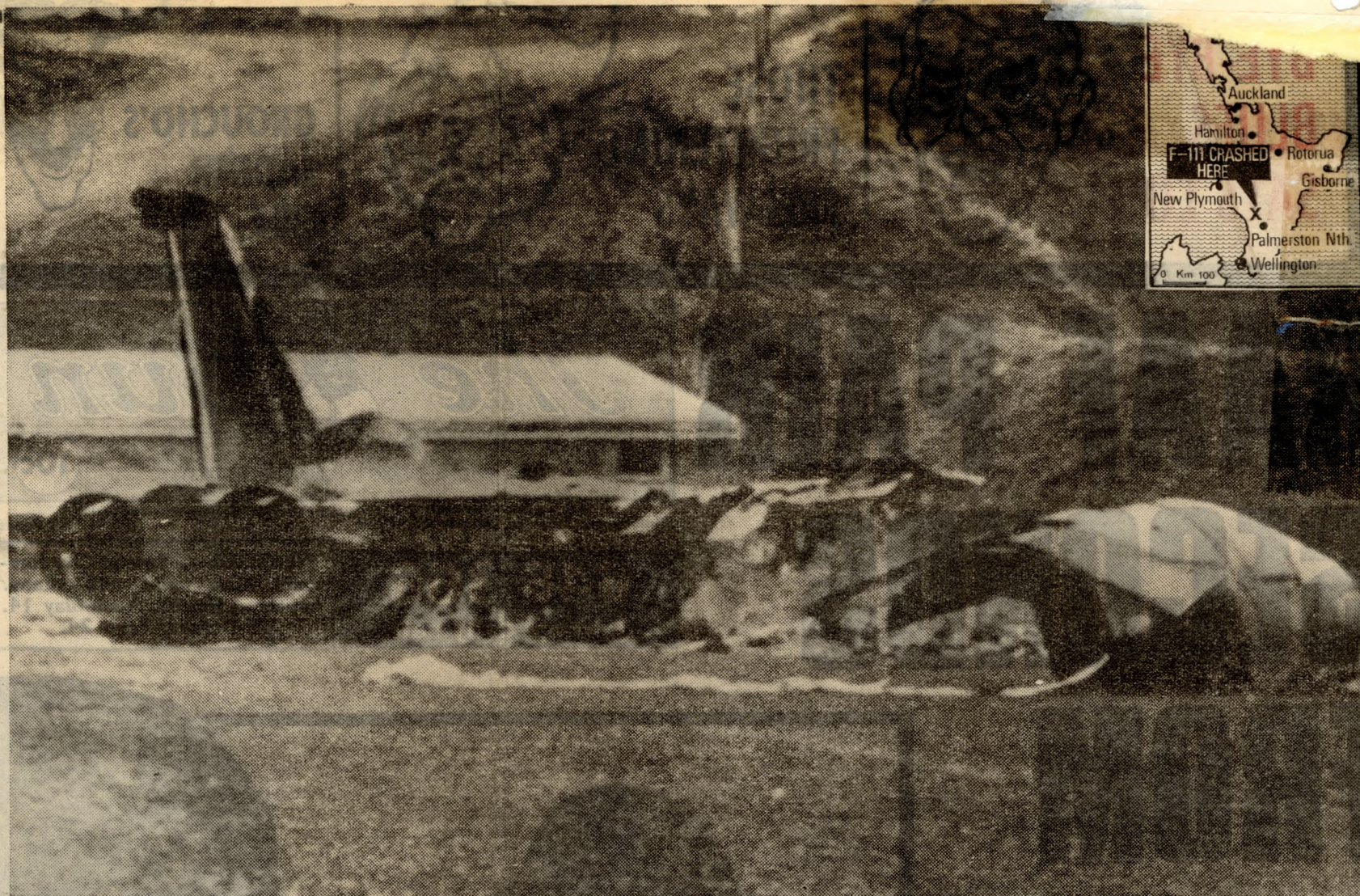
• THE ejection capsule with the parachute six metres from the burnt-out wreckage.



• Flight-Lt. Curr



• Flying-Officer Kelly



on the

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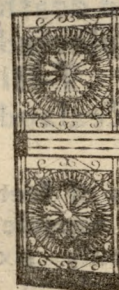
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Crash pilot tests nerve

WELLINGTON, Sun. — F-111 fighter crash survivor Flight-Lt. Alan Curr was up early this morning to test his courage.

The 30-year-old RAAF pilot quietly left the barracks at Ohakea airbase before most others were awake and climbed alone into the cockpit of another F-111.

"I wanted to be sure it wasn't going to be an effort to get back inside," he said.

"I just sat and mused on how lucky we were. It's like getting back on a horse after falling off."

On Friday he and co-pilot Flying-Officer Mark Kelly, 22, escaped from a fiery crash by ejecting from their runaway F-111.

Flight-Lt. Curr said tonight that rainwater

Sun Service

sucked into the plane's engines during take-off may have caused the engine failure.

Speaking after a day-long court of inquiry into the crash, Flight-Lt. Curr said he could not have left the decision to eject a moment longer.

"In fact I probably waited too long—I wanted to save the plane. We were accelerating for take-off, doing about 90 knots, when suddenly we lost all power.

"The after-burners had gone out. I tried to abort the take-off but we were just aqua-planing down the wet runway like a duck on ice."

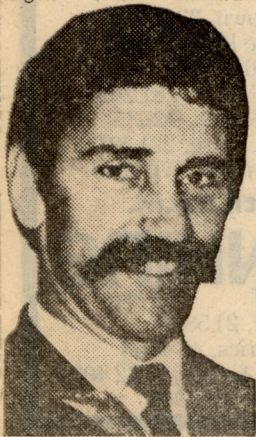
Flight-Lieut. Curr said that after the parachute on the escape module opened, and they were descending he could see the burning wreck of his plane below.

"There was a big black cloud of smoke and I was petrified that we were going to land in the middle of it all."

The module landed only 40 metres from the wreck.

In the landing Flying Officer Kelly fractured a lower back bone. He was still in Palmerston North hospital last night.

The first day of the RAAF inquiry into the crash adjourned about 7 p.m.



● FLIGHT-LT. CURR

Water link on crash

CANBERRA. — First investigations into the crash of a RAAF F-111 in New Zealand two weeks ago are believed to indicate that water ingestion in the engines was the probable cause.

Big amounts of water are believed to have been sucked into the air intakes of the jet as it tried to take off from the RNZAF base at Ohakea.

A heavy thunderstorm was passing over the air base.

Ohakea's runway has a dip in the middle, and investigators believe water built up in the area and could not drain away quickly enough.

Sources said two other planes became airborne before the worst of the water build-up but added to the problem by blow-

ing water vapor into the air over the runway.

"By the time the third aircraft reached the spot there was water everywhere and the jets just sucked it in from the air and from the ground," one source said.

"It was a freak circumstance which probably would not happen again in a dozen years."

The F-111's crew, Flying Officer Mark Kelly, 22, of Armadale, Victoria, and Flight-Lt. Alan Curr, 30, of Ballandean, Queensland, escaped in their ejection capsule with minor injuries. The jet was destroyed.

Sun. Sep 6

Work on F-111s

CANBERRA.—Modification work will begin soon on the RAAF's F-111C strike aircraft to prevent accidents similar to one in New Zealand last month.

Modifications have already been made to the F-111 models used by the U.S. Air Force to overcome water ingestion problems on take-off.

An F-111C crashed on take off at Ohakea in NZ when runway water was sucked into the plane's jet engines.

A RAAF spokesman said yesterday the RAAF and the USAF had worked closely to solve the problem.

He said Australian Wing-Cdr. Gil Moore had made test flights in America on the F-111 fitted with modified tyres.

But the spokesman said the modifications did not suit the F-111C. They prevented the proper retraction of the dual nose wheel.

Australia was the only country with F-111Cs.

He said the USAF was working on designs to improve the F-111C, but they would not be ready until October.

He said it would then take a year before the


RAAF's 20 F-111Cs could be converted.

The RAAF has lost four of the planes since they were brought into service in 1973 at a total cost of \$312 million.

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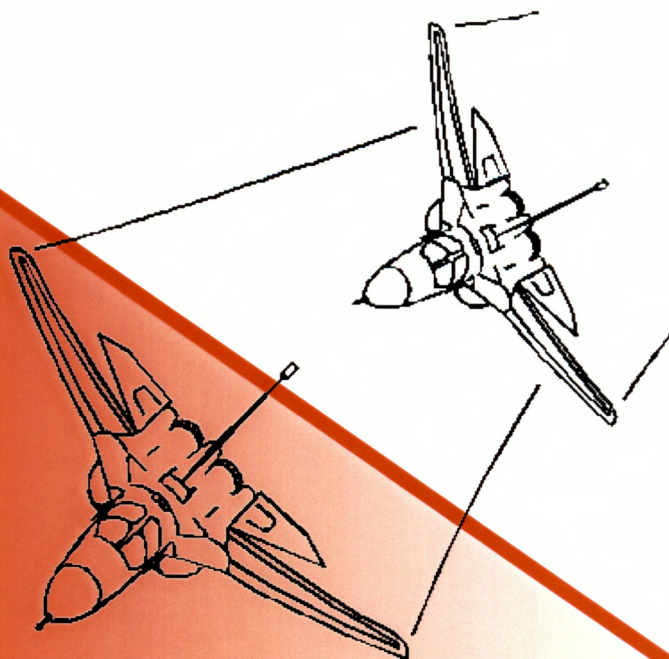
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