

British F-4 Nearly Shoots Down an ERA-3B

This event occurred off the coast of Puerto Rico during a NATO exercise with the Royal Navy in 1972. A Phantom from the Royal Navy's 892nd squadron fired a Sparrow missile with a dummy warhead up the tailpipe of the starboard engine on a VAQ-33 ERA-3B, BuNo 146447. It of course caused an engine failure but the plane survived as did the crew. Who were they?

FROM JIM VAMBELL

*It was ERA-3B BUNO 146447 side #4
The crew consisted of:*

CDR LOU HETTINGER / PILOT Retired as a Capt

LT JIM VAMBELL / NAVIGATOR " "

LCDR DON GADSBY / EWO " LCDR

AMH1 JOHN HOUCK / THIRD CREWMAN Retired as a Master Chief

March 31, 1972

To the men of Squadron 892,

Sorry it took so long, but here are the pictures I said I'd send to you.

Now that I look at them, I can safely say that my squadron is never going to get me to draw out a pair of flight skins. No, I'm too pegged with the way I'm arranged now, to go flying around and get shot down is not my way of living.

Well, fellas, keep up the good work, it served us as a good lesson. See you the next time we have a NATO operation somewhere.

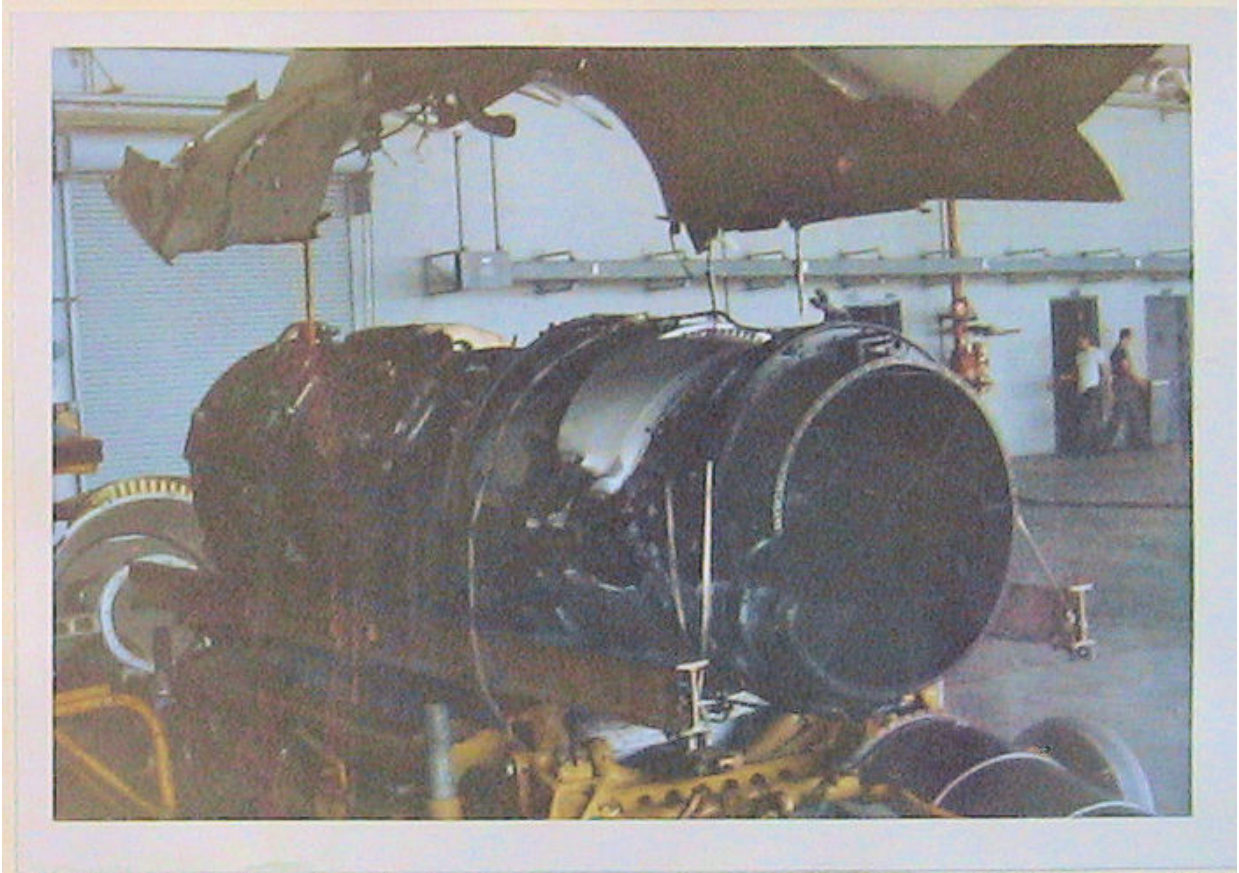
Respectfully Yours

Phillip L. Ottinger, AKA-2
VAQ-33

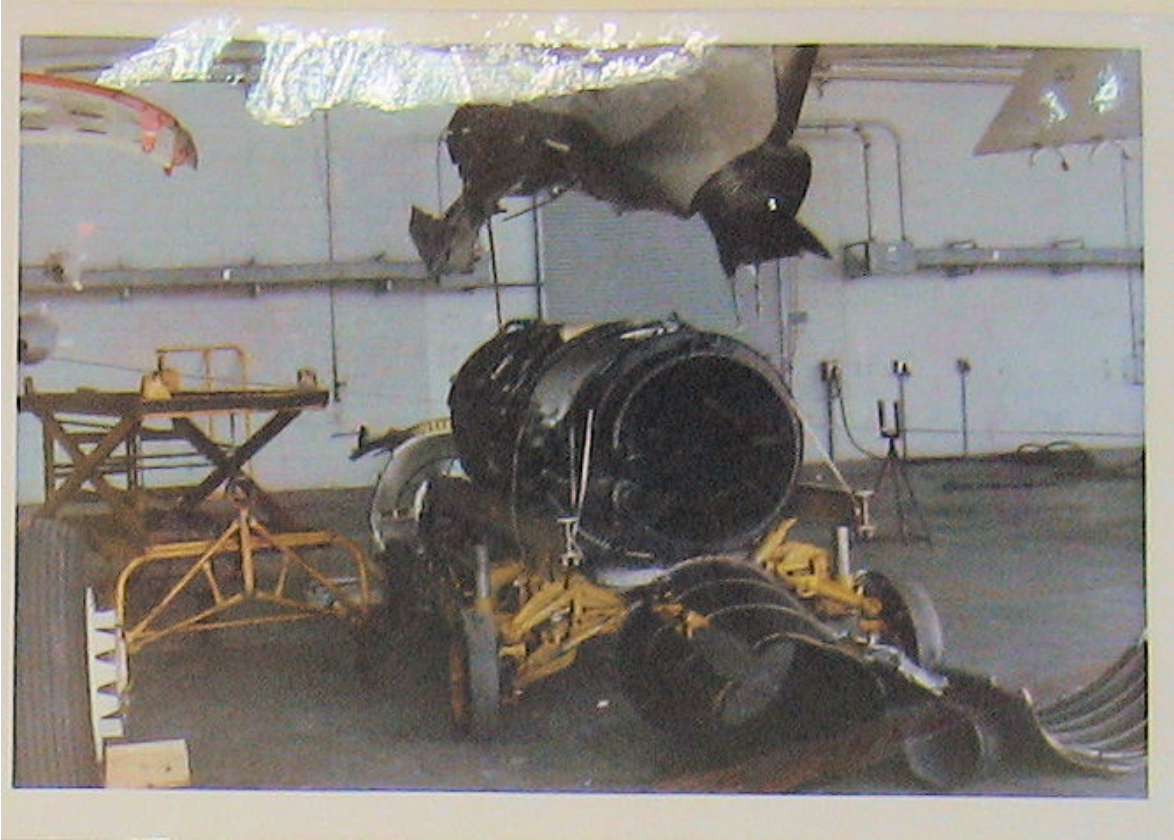
letter from Phillip Ottinger



Engine damage photo #1



Engine damage photo #2



Engine damage photo #3