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- [Paranormal](#)
- [People](#)
- [Places](#)
- [Area 51](#)
- [Random](#)
- [Top 100](#)
- [Catalog](#)
- [What's New](#)

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- Page Contents
- Book
- Title/Author
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### Skunk Works Mailing List

## Re: THAAD

From: betnal@ns.net  
 Subject: Re: THAAD  
 Date: Fri, 18 Jun 99 17:56:55 GMT

On 6/17/99 11:14PM, in message <Pine.GSO.4.05.9906172305130.5279-100000@stucco>, Wei-Jen Su <wsu@its.caltech.edu> wrote:

>  
 > About the F-14 story, I thought it crashed on the first flight  
 > test. I heard from guys at Grumman saying that they knew the airplane is  
 > going to crash because she has a lot of hydraulic, mechanic, etc.  
 > problems, but they flew anyway so they can catch the dateline set by the  
 > goverment. Because if the airplane flew before the dateline, they  
 > will get more money and the program will continue. Will you confirm this  
 > story? Thanks.  
 >

This is kind of out of the Skunk Works charters, so I'll be brief.

The above story is not true. The Tomcat had an uneventful first flight. On its second flight there was an undetected before takeoff weakness in one of the primary hydraulic feed lines. During the test flight the line started leaking and there was an indication in the cockpit, so the declared an emergency and returned to base (in those days they tested a/c more aggressively than the stretched-out wimpy way they do today so it was not at all unusual to be doing a full scale test program on only the second flight).

The aircraft safely made it back and was on final when the gear was lowered. On the F-14 gear down signaled low speed and hydraulic boost was automatically increased to provide more control deflection and power since the control surfaces would be providing less force at any given deflection due to the lower speed. This increased flow increased the rupture and all the remaining fluid then bled out in one burst. You can see this on films from the chase plane. With no control, the crew ejected and the Tomcat nosed in on short final just beyond the tree line.

Art

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