



their revenge on 75 Squadron with an overnight raid on the aircrew crewroom. A large green Army tent was assembled inside the crewroom and the various laced sections of the tent were super glued together. To add insult to injury they also kidnapped 75's mascot, Henry Fanshaw, leaving a cryptic note: 'We have your bear, don't try any rescue attempts. Await further instructions. KGB'

This required an immediate response so a dawn strike was planned for the next morning on the 3 Squadron tented camp. Operation *Payback* had its own Operation Order, which outlined in much detail the planned response to the '...vicious attack by 3 Squadron aircrew on 75 Squadron property'. As 3 Squadron personnel staggered out of their tents early the next morning to watch the Skyhawk display, a civilian helicopter (which had been hired by 75 Squadron's pilots) sneaked up from behind and unloaded the contents of a monsoon bucket all over them. CO3 immediately sent a signal to CO75: 'Well done 75. We appreciate your early morning rises, however, for this we will tear fingernails from the bear.'

3 Squadron then sent an Iroquois to Ohakea, which hovered just outside



Above: *Kiwi Red* aerobatic team pilots, 1988.

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Above left: A young looking Henry Fanshaw and his equally young looking 'minder' (not sure who is looking after whom here!).

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CO75's office and teasingly dangled Henry Fanshaw on the end of the winch. The 75 aircrew, not brave enough to attempt a rescue of their own, heroically rang up the maintenance flight line and asked if someone there could run out and grab Fanshaw. Alas it was too late, as Fanshaw was winched up and away and taken back to captivity at Waiouru.

On 1 June, Frank Sharp named Peter King, Nigel Milne, Don Laming, Craig Tanner and Gavin Howse as members of the newly named *Kiwi Red* aerobatic team (which made its public debut at Wanganui on 28 September).

Appropriate speeches were made and photographs taken at the unveiling of the prototype *Kahu* Skyhawk, NZ6254, at Woodbourne on 2 June 1988. Its first flight took place at Woodbourne on 6 June, flown by Steve Moore and Stu Mackenzie.

In mid-June the remaining time-expired AIM-9G Sidewinders were fired – one of them detonated before reaching its target. Gavin Howse had some anxious moments in July when his starboard main gear failed to retract; fortunately it remained locked down and he was able to land safely.

Kiwi Red logo.

Don Simms Collection





Above and right: *Kiwi Red* practising near Ohakea 1988.

RNZAF Museum Photos

Below: RNZAF Australian Bicentennial Airshow sticker.

Don Simms Collection



Steve Moore test flew the second *Kahu* prototype, NZ6205, at the beginning of August and a week later both *Kahu* prototypes arrived at Ohakea, where 2 Squadron continued the flight test programme, including the integration of the AGM-65B Maverick and AIM-9L Sidewinder with the Nav/Attack System, a task which took many months to complete.

On Friday 7 October NZ6254 made its first post-*Kahu* overseas flight (and 2 Squadron its first overseas deployment since being reformed) when it accompanied *Kiwi Red* to Australia for the Bicentennial Airshow at RAAF Richmond, near Sydney. The ring laser gyro on '54 had only a 0.2nm error after the 3.5hr flight and was better than the escorting Orion's INU! 75 Squadron based themselves out of Nowra for the airshow so it was left to NZ6254 to provide the static display at Richmond. NZ6254 didn't fly during the show but was the subject of much interest on the ground, with many people queuing for hours to have a look in the 'new' *Kahu* cockpit.

Kiwi Red practised their display at Richmond on 10 October and then flew in formation over Sydney Harbour. During another practice the next day at Nowra, the wing tips of Peter King and Nigel Milne's aircraft touched lightly, causing minor damage to both aircraft. On the 15th *Kiwi Red's* debut public display at Richmond was superb. 'The gasps were deeper and the applause more enthusiastic than for any other display,' noted the Squadron diary.

There were gasps for different reasons on the second day of the airshow when Craig Tanner's aircraft became unserviceable shortly after takeoff from Nowra. He managed to land and take-off again,



in a spare Skyhawk, in record time, allowing *Kiwi Red* to run in exactly on time at Richmond; fortuitously, the airshow's programme was running five minutes late! The aerobatic team also performed

over Wellington and Palmerston North later in the month.

On 19 October 100hrs of *Kabu* test flying and completion of Phase One of the system integration testing was

Above: Kiwi Red practising near Ohakea 1988.

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Left: The last of the time expired AIM-9G Sidewinders being fired in June 1988.

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Far left: NZ6254 on display at the Australian Bicentennial Airshow at RAAF Richmond in October 1988.

Right: *Kiwi Red* flying over the Sydney Harbour Bridge during the Australian Bicentennial Airshow in 1988.

RNZAF Museum Photo



Far right: Ian Gore, CO No 2 Squadron being presented with a crystal Skyhawk by Smiths Industries, October 1988.

RNZAF Museum Photo



Above: *Kiwi Red* 'Prince of Wales Feathers', Australian Bicentennial Airshow.

Don Simms Photo

celebrated at Ohakea with the presentation of a crystal Skyhawk (of the bird variety) to 2 Squadron CO Ian Gore, by Smiths Industries.

High winds in early November delayed the continuing *Kabu* flight test

programme. Continuously Computer Impact Point (CCIP) weapons were still falling short although dive/toss ordnance was on target and air-to-air gunnery accuracy was steadily improving.

The RNZAF was able to celebrate having achieved 60,000 Skyhawk flying hours, a milestone the aircraft's manufacturers acknowledged by presenting a silver plated model Skyhawk to Frank Sharp – and a full-sized Skyhawk to the RNZAF museum (actually an A-4L which was itself a modified A-4C).

1989

In early January, Instrument Landing System (ILS) approaches were made by the *Kabu* prototypes at Auckland, Christchurch and Wellington airports (Ohakea and Whenuapai did not yet have their own ILS).

On Friday the 13th severe turbulence was encountered by NZ6212, stressing the aircraft to +9/-1.5 G (the normal maximum G limits for the Skyhawk were +7/-2 G). Despite the overstress no damage was found.

In somewhat calmer airs the look-down/shoot-down capabilities of the new APG-66(NZ) radar were tested on low-flying Skyhawks and experimentation began to find a modern substitute for dropping a reconnaissance film canister to Army units. As the First World



Far left: A very low RNZAF Skyhawk as seen from the deck of HMS Invincible during Exercise Vanguard 89!

Source Unknown



Left: Kahu prototype NZ6254 carrying two TGM-65B Mavericks and two CATM-9L Sidewinders over Ohakea 1989.

RNZAF Museum Photo



War practice of simply dropping objects out of the cockpit was impractical it was decided to use the relatively slow falling Mk 106 5lb practice bomb instead and Don Laming successfully demonstrated this on the 19th.

In February Greg Elliott tested the new *Kahu* chaff/flare dispenser system at low level over Ohakea to qualify it for operational use and it was discovered that when the 400gal drop tank was fitted, the ejecting flare and chaff packages struck

Canard-equipped *Kahu* prototype NZ6254 – fitted to fool the visiting Aussie F-18 pilots!

RNZAF Museum Photo



Above: NZ6254 firing a live AGM-65B Maverick missile at Waiouru, 13 April 1989.

RNZAF Museum Photo

Above far right: Ian Gore demonstrates the *Kahu* Skyhawk's 'Salvo Flare' capability to the public for the first time at the Ohakea 50th Anniversary Airshow, 26 September 1989.

Don Simms Photo

Right: A pre-*Kahu* Skyhawk seen carrying empty 2.75in CRV-7 rocket pods 1989.

RNZAF Museum Photo

the rear bobtail of the tank, causing large dents. The 400gal tank bobtails were subsequently removed, which solved the problem. (For similar reasons chaff/flares could not be used when a buddy store was fitted.)

Wing Commander John Bates became 75 Squadron's new CO in February.

Ian Gore and Greg Elliott visited the F-18 Hornet Operational Conversion Unit (OCU) at Williamtown to study



the Australian experience of introducing a complex new aircraft, especially the use of HUD, HOTAS and the application of other digital technology.

Deploying for *Vanguard 89* with the pre-*Kahu* Skyhawk for the last time in March, 75 Squadron found themselves flying against Singapore's so-called 'Super Skyhawk'. These aircraft enjoyed a significant thrust increase from their F-404 turbofans (a non-afterburning version of the F-18 Hornet engine) which provided the A-4SU with greater acceleration and a much faster rate of climb than the Kiwi Skyhawks. The re-engining project had commenced in May 1985 with the first of two prototypes flying in September 1986. An avionics and weapon system upgrade similar to *Kahu* was also carried out, using the same Head Up Display, Inertial Navigation Unit and Digital Air Data Computer as the *Kahu* upgrade. However, the upgraded A-4SU lacked a radar, which significantly disadvantaged them compared to the *Kahu* Skyhawk.

In March, when eight Hornets of 77



Squadron RAAF arrived at Ohakea for another *Willob* exercise, the Australians were astonished to see a canard-equipped *Kahu* Skyhawk, bristling with AIM-9L Sidewinders and AGM-65B Maverick missiles on the 2 Squadron flight line as they taxied past. Some time passed before they were told the canards were fake – they had been made by 2 Squadron’s ground crew to fool the Aussies. Although there was nothing fanciful about the kills claimed in subsequent days by the *Kahu* Skyhawks against the Aussie F-18s. For the first time confirmation of the kills was made possible by analysis of the updated Skyhawks’ HUD video footage.

At the end of the exercise a 10-ship combined Skyhawk and F-18 formation gave Ohakea one of the best beat-ups ever seen. Uncharacteristically the F-18’s were lower than the Skyhawks, flying down the flight line well below the level of the hangars and control tower. Unfortunately word of the beat-up soon got back to Australia and never again were



RAAF F-18’s seen to fly so low in New Zealand...

An Australian Channel Nine film crew accompanied the RAAF F-18’s to Ohakea and filmed a story for *60 Minutes* about their old former RAN Skyhawks taking on the new Aussie F-18s. It included some revealing HUD footage of F-18s being ‘shot down’ by the *Kahu* jets. When shown on Australian TV in October it caused quite a stir. It was titled ‘Skyhawk Sell Out’ and went something like... ‘Four years ago we sold them to New Zealand for a song... now we are going to have to pay millions to get them back...’ The reference to ‘getting them back’ got the attention of everyone at Ohakea, because for some time there had been rumours circulating that 2 Squadron was going to be relocating to Nowra to fly fleet support for the Australian Navy. The *60 Minutes* programme seemed to confirm this. However, it was to be another two and a half years before this particular rumor turned into reality. In the meantime there was a *Kahu* test flight programme

Above and above far left: Kiwi Red seen practising near Ohakea in 1989.

RNZAF Museum Photos