

X-RAY BRAVO ALPHA

The Fin Installation

The inspection of the vertical stabilizer, or fin, showed that corrosion had been at work on a main rudder hinge bracket. There was no way to remove and replace this vital fitting with the fin in place. The only option was to remove the 1 tonne surface and do it on the ground.

After rectification of the hinge fitting, the fin was re-installed. An extract from the Diary note of 30 October 2006 continues the story:

"It is now about 0810 as the fin approaches the height where mount forks and lugs must meet exactly in order for the pins to slip into the holes that marry the fuselage and vertical stabiliser to form one unit. We heard the satisfying clunk of the first pin sliding into place only 5 minutes after the two pieces gently came into contact.

At this point, attached by the right side pins but still horizontal, our fin is held level by the crane but a jury strut has to be installed to hold it so, while the crane is disconnected.

Again, a few deft movements with the required links and the strut is in place and we hold our breath while the crane jib is lowered and the cables go slack, the strain now taken by the bright red strut. Next, the fin has to be raised through 90 degrees to the vertical position and the left mounting pins installed.

...the smiles are back on many peoples' faces, the biggest of which belongs to Peter.

An A frame is erected that will add the mechanism to allow a cable to be connected to the tow bar that will pull the fin up to vertical.

Another pause for breath as a tractor pulls on the cable which tensions up under the weight of the fin as it slowly transfers the strain from the jury strut. When exactly the right force is applied, the strut can now retire.

The tractor creeps backwards and the fin now starts its upwards arc and the gentlest of clunks announces the meeting of the left side lugs. It's up.

The final bolt installation is mere routine and at 0940 the fin is declared bolted in place.

The statement this makes is enormous. A sense of real achievement settled on us and the smiles are back on many peoples' faces, the biggest of which belongs to Peter."

6 September 2006 The Vertical Stabiliser is removed
30 October 2006 The vertical Stabiliser is re-installed.

