

TACAMO Gets New Wings with E-6B *Mercury*



By JO1 Robert Pailthorpe

Gray skies and gusty winds did not dampen the excitement during the recent rollout of the Navy's E-6B *Mercury* TACAMO (take charge and move out) aircraft. General Eugene Habiger, Commander in Chief, U.S. Strategic Command, and Captain Vern Lochausen, Commander, Task Force 124, were the honored guests and keynote speakers at the ceremony in Waco, Texas.

The primary mission of TACAMO is to provide a war- or conflict-survivable communications link between the president and the country's arsenal of nuclear weapons.

The current version of the *Mercury* permits communications between decision makers and ballistic missile submarines. The modified E-6 adds a strategic command module that will allow key person-

nel to communicate directly with nuclear bombers and intercontinental ballistic missile silo controllers.

In October 1998, the Navy is scheduled to assume the U.S. Strategic Airborne Command Post mission, which will be staged from Offutt AFB, Nebr. In the following months, the remaining

15 *Mercury* aircraft will be modified and stationed at Travis AFB, Calif.; NAS Patuxent River, Md.; and at TACAMO headquarters aboard Tinker AFB, Okla. Full modification is planned for completion in 2001. ✈



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Top, the new E-6B *Mercury*. Above, Capt. Vern Lochausen, Commander, Task Force 124. Left, the E-6B's communications central. Right, the aft crew rest area, with the computer control panel for the plane's reel-out antenna visible at right.