



To launch and recover the QF-4s Det 1 has a mobile control vehicle that contains the necessary monitoring and flying controls. Take-off and landing is normally performed automatically, but the controllers have the ability to hand-fly the aircraft in an emergency and regularly practise the art.

The contract also defines the criteria for awards and bonuses. A good or bad critique form is also in place that the unit can write at any time. This is not necessarily for disciplinary reasons but mistakes, big or small, can always happen and people must be accountable for them.

These criteria and reward systems are also part of the corporate contract between Air

A pair of QF-4Es lines up for launch. As at Tyndall, the unmanned operations use a dedicated 'droneway' to separate them from the base's regular operations. The nearest aircraft is an 'escapee' from Tyndall, wearing the 'TD' ('Tyndall Drone') tailcode.

Force and Lockheed Martin. Another contract is in place with BAE Systems overseeing the performance of the conversion, which is monitored by the Special Programs Officer at Hill AFB.

Drone operations

Contrary to popular belief, most FSAT missions are flown manned. This is either for the pilots to stay proficient on the aircraft or to develop certain test profiles. Also, many flights are categorised as so-called 'engineering tests', in which an actual test is performed as part of a test and evaluation development programme of a weapon, albeit without the necessity to actually fire a weapon on the drone. The FSAT then acts as decoy with or without any measures to counter the threat, like ECM or flares. This depends on the customer's require-



ments. Furthermore, manned flights are undertaken when the QF-4 is used as chase plane.

In addition, the drone aircraft regularly need to be flown to maintain the proficiency of the team of controllers of Det 1. Det 1 has five controllers, all civilians and rated pilots under contract to Lockheed Martin, and they are the ones who fly the drone by remote control during a real live-firing test. In all the above cases, the QF-4 that is used is manned by a pilot, but not in all cases is it actually flown by the onboard pilot.

Jeff Ault, one of the two civilian pilots and controller from Lockheed Martin explains: "A typical manned [captive] mission is briefed two hours prior to the scheduled take-off time. This type of mission is flown either for controller proficiency or to practise for future unmanned live-firing missions, and we are all scheduled to

