

Part 3

The 1970s: Emerging from a dark period

Though many programs remained strong in the early 1970s, the Greenville division of then-LTV Electrosystems was experiencing the first real downturn in its business. The division had just experienced its first loss in 1969 and President Nixon was gradually limiting the country's involvement in Vietnam.

Ongoing programs involving installing Gunship modifications on C-130s continued, as did maintenance and modification programs on other C-130s and C-135s. A 1971 Air Force contract had the company developing and producing a military version of its L-450 aircraft. The L-450, which would be designated the XQM-93A by the military, was a high-altitude turbo-prop that could be flown either by a pilot or by remote control.

A C-135 program in 1971 known as TRAP MATS would prove to be a technical achievement for Greenville. The program involved design, installation and testing of an electro-optical sensor system that would take four years of intensive effort to complete.

Greenville reached one of its darkest points in early 1972 when it suffered a labor strike that lasted from February to August. The company and the union eventually resolved the strike with an agreement that former company executive the late E. Fred Buehring would describe in his book, *How E-Systems Came to Be E-Systems*, as having a "positive, long-term effect on our competitive position." This would lead, according to Buehring, to future successes for all of Greenville and its employees.

Work continued through these troubled times and change was ever present. In May of 1972, LTV divested itself from many of its holdings, including LTV Electrosystems. The new, independent company would include the Greenville division and, in order to separate the new company from LTV, it changed its name to "E-Systems," which was simply an abbreviated "Electrosystems."

Employment declined to about 1,470 during 1972, though new business that year helped those numbers begin to rebound.

One significant program award in 1972 did much to raise the pride of the E-Systems workforce. The award of a program to design, develop and fabricate interior modification kits for five VC-135 aircraft in the U.S. Air Force's Special Air Mission (SAM) fleet was the beginning of a long-term relationship with another great customer.

A new program in 1973 involved the Advanced Airborne Command Post program, which called for the demodification of EC-135 aircraft and re-installation of removed equipment into Boeing 747 aircraft designated E-4As.

As the final C-130 in the Air Force's special Big Safari Program was retired in 1975, the C-135 jet continued to thrive.

An incredible quick-reaction program in 1976 had Greenville planning, shipping and building an entire facility for an electronic peace-monitoring system to help maintain peace between Egypt and Israel. This program, known as the Sinai Field Mission, would see a permanent facility for the almost 200 personnel constructed within 6 months of contract signing. The Greenville facility was abuzz in the first half of 1976 with load-after-load of cargo 747s taking everything from building materials to jeeps to a remote area of the Sinai Desert.

In the mid-1970s, E-Systems Greenville had been involved with head-of-state aircraft for countries throughout the world and did several interior modifications for these aircraft. The reputation for Greenville's excellence extended from military to commercial customers, including several airlines that had the company performing aircraft interior modifications.

By the late 1970s, continued performance and many follow-on contracts had helped the division grow its employment level to more than 2,500 employees.

The information in this series of essays was compiled by L-3/IS employee Lance Martin from several sources, including numerous company histories and the E. Fred Buehring book, How E-Systems Came to Be E-Systems.