

X-RAY BRAVO ALPHA

The Flight Home

The final Diary entry documenting the trip home reads: "A rambling, spread-eagled resort, the Sheraton Denarau Villas in Nadi, Fiji had the honour of accommodating the crew of the 707 for their last night together with the wake up time set for 0200 on Saturday, 16 December 2006. Murray briefed the Team on Friday night about the arrival procedures and the plan on Saturday to land at 0900 precisely, in order to fit with the arrangements made for the official welcome at the Qantas Jet Base at Mascot. The bedside alarm clock confirmed the time, so for the last occasion on this journey of discovery, the phone rang to spoil yet another good night's sleep and we assembled in the foyer, this time with two extra members to help us to SYD. **John Seccombe**, the Deputy Chairman of QFM Ltd and Richard Burn, our legal advisor and aviation law expert were to be our honoured guests on the NAN-SYD sector, the 707's first "passengers" for over 6 years. John's delight at seeing QFM's acquisition for the first time on Saturday was clear. The livery was completed on Friday afternoon with the addition of the Canberra coat of arms and the aircraft name "City of Canberra". XBA was now ready to be put on show. On show for our passengers meant a tidy cabin was essential, and Karen stayed back with the engineers on Friday night to vacuum, polish, scrub, window clean and fold the first sheet of toilet paper to form that cute little point. Karen's attention to the appearance of the interior has been outstanding and she gets the MVP award for this Team. First though, get her to Sydney and once again we start the dragon and fire up those Pratt and Whitney Dependables. She must have done this trip hundreds of times but after today she was never coming back to the sticky humidity of these troubled tropical islands. The mood on board today was one befitting the occasion - happiness that we were going home, sadness that we would be leaving friends behind, relief that the reliability meant that we never had to do an all-nighter to fix anything, anticipation that we were going to meet up with colleagues, and more. After just four hours of cruise, the descent starts and we are told that we can expect the fly-past of Barrenjoey as requested. Pleased with ourselves, the 707 is flown up the harbour and turns North to cover the Northern beaches then backtracks to have a second look. After 5 or 6 minutes of this, we are cleared for the approach onto 16R and we land in Sydney."



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*They said it couldn't be done.
We'd just done it. We are home.*



PHOTOS & TEXT: Norman King, unless otherwise credited, with special thanks to Keith Burton, Karen Glass, Robert Phillips, Peter Elliott

DESIGN: Veronica King

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PRODUCTION: DIGITAL

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