board. As Chinook pilots say, “The only replacement for a Chinook is another Chinook.”

**Grumman E-2 Hawkeye** (First flight 1960, operational 1964) A carrier-based early warning and control aircraft, the Hawkeye appears to have an open-ended lease on life. Its distinctive feature is the rotating radar dome that provides a huge view of sea and sky, capable of detecting and sorting friendly, unknown and hostile targets to hundreds of miles. Perhaps most remarkably, the Hawkeye’s foreign users include both Israel and Egypt.

**Cessna T-37 “Tweet”** (First flight 1954, operational 1957) Almost 1,300 Tweeties were produced in a 20-year production run, serving as jet trainers in 18 countries. Its 52-year USAF career ended in 2009 while the ground-attack variant AT-37 Dragonfly featured a 7.62 minigun in the nose. Reportedly, armed Tweets continue hosing drug runners in Columbia and Peru.

**Douglas A-4 Skyhawk** (First flight 1954, operational 1956) The Navy’s first jet light attack aircraft was intended as an interim design but remained in front-line Marine service until 1979. It’s still flying support sorties in the U.S. and Israel, and in operational squadrons with Argentina and Brazil.

**F-4 Phantom** (First flight 1957, operational 1960) A hugely successful and versatile aircraft, the mighty Phantom debuted with the Navy and was retired by the Air Force in 1996. But it’s still flown by Japan, South Korea, Turkey…and Iran. Those nations will remain Phantom flyers for a while, as it’s now 52 years in service and counting.

Other 50-year aircraft include and the English Electric Canberra (in service 1951-2006); the huge swept-wing turboprop Tupelov 95 “Bear” (1956 to today); and the prolific MiG-21 (in service 1959 to today).

**Browning M2 .50 HB** (1938 to today) Besides the 1911, another long-lived Browning design is the ageless M2 .50 caliber. Designed as a water-cooled gun during WWI, “Ma Deuce” in its current air-cooled form was adopted by the U.S. Army in 1938 and has served in perhaps 90 nations covering dozens of wars and conflicts. Powerful and potent, at 74 years and counting, the M2 is a strong contender for another centennial weapon.

**Armalite AR-15/Colt M16** (1962 to today) “The black rifle” entered military service as the Air Force’s AR-15 in 1962. It’ll be interesting to see what sort of semi-centennial the controversial weapon receives this year. To put that record in perspective, the M1 Garand lasted 21 years (1936-57) while the classic ‘03 Springfield remained in limited inventory until about 1957.

Joe Taxpayer has received more than his money’s worth from the foregoing products. Heaven knows that’s a rare situation amid the perpetual fraud, waste and abuse that characterizes so many government programs.

It’s also a reminder that frequently “The Latest” is not “The Greatest.”