

Kill urge studied

WASHINGTON — Anthropologist Richard Leakey, and Dr. Roger Lewin biochemist and science editor of the British journal "New Scientist," dispute the oft-proposed idea that humans are born with an innate drive to kill each other.

On the contrary, Leakey and Lewin contend that the evidence suggests that we are more cooperative than aggressive.

Leakey and Lewin, writing in their just-published book "Origins," said there is no doubt that aggression and territorial struggles are part of modern life but they argue that this behavior is the product of our environment, not our genes.

"Anyone who argues for inbuilt aggression in homo sapiens must see aggression as a universal instinct in the animal kingdom," they wrote. "It is no such thing."

But Leakey, son of famed anthropologist Louis Leakey and director of the National Museums of Kenya, and his co-author do not claim that humans are naturally good natured toward one another.

"It is culture that largely weaves the patterns in human societies," they wrote.

Looking at lower animals to explain the behavior of humans, Leakey and Lewin note that territorial claims are widespread among different species, but not all animals are territorial.

"That territoriality is flexible should not be surprising," they said. "It is, after all, a biological adaption to environmental conditions so that the species may survive through sufficient access to food supplies and by unhampered reproduction."

"If food resources and space are scarce, then almost certainly there will be conspicuous territorial behavior. It is likewise inevitable that some individuals will fail to secure sufficient food or a place in which to rear a brood. These individuals are, of course, the weakest, and this is what survival of the fittest through natural selection really means."

"Territorial behavior is therefore triggered when it is required and remains dormant when it is not," they wrote.

"We can say therefore that territoriality and aggression are not universal instincts as such. Rather they are pieces of behavior that are tuned to particular life styles and to changes in the availability of impor-

tant resources in the environment." As far as war is concerned, Leakey and Lewin contend that wars are planned and organized by leaders intent on increasing their power over people and resources, and that it takes cooperation among people to wage war.

"Powerful leaders have found more and more to fight about and increasingly effective ways of achieving their ends," they wrote.

"We should not look to our genes for the seeds of war; those seeds were planted when, 10,000 years ago, our ancestors for the first time planted crops and began to be farmers. The transition from the nomadic hunting way of life to the sedentary one of farmers and industrialists made war possible and potentially profitable."

Leakey and Lewin said what has transformed the possible into reality is the same factor that has made human beings special in the animal kingdom — culture.

"It is social and political ideologies, and the tolerance or lack of it between them, that brings human nations to bloody conflict."

"Origins," \$17.95, is published by E. P. Dutton, New York.

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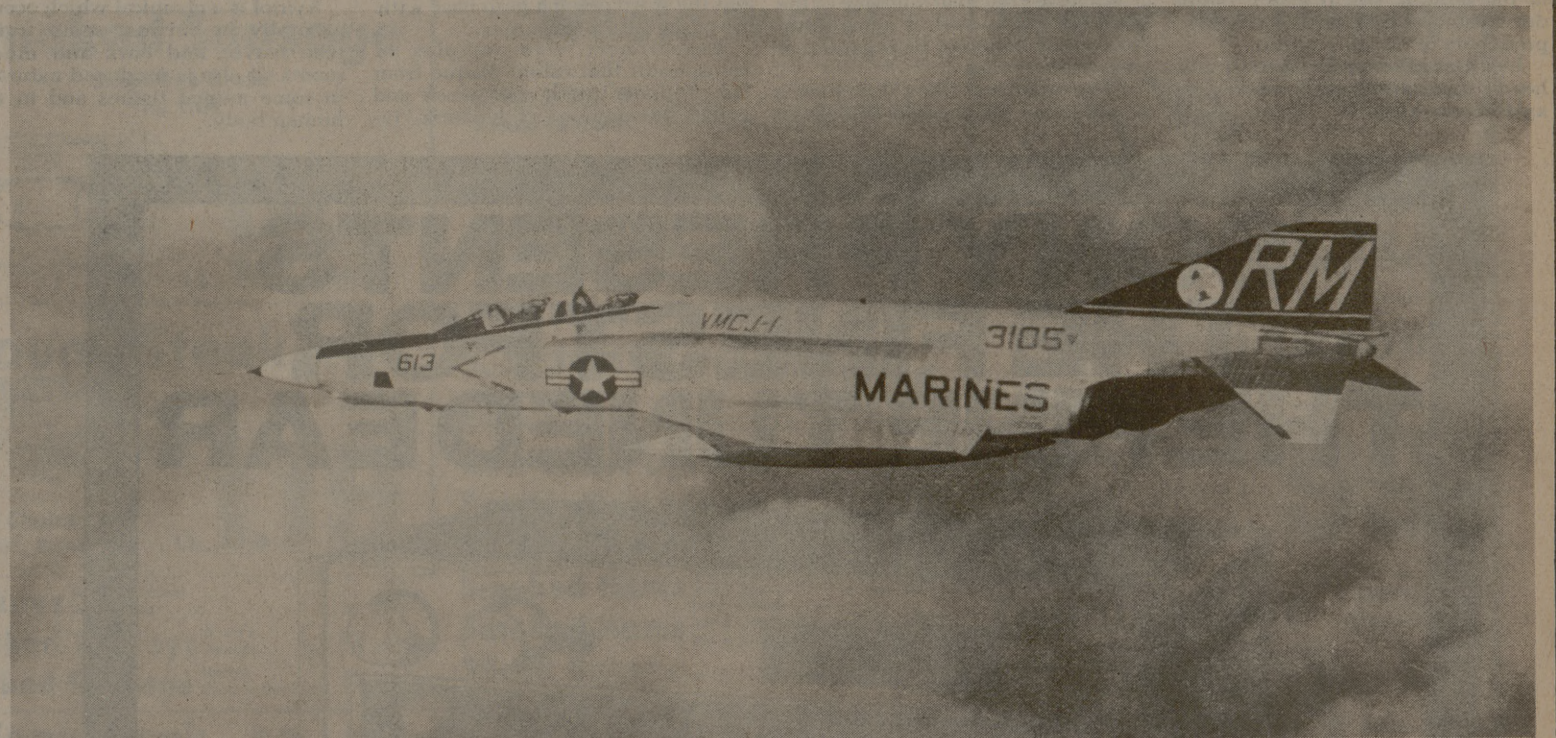
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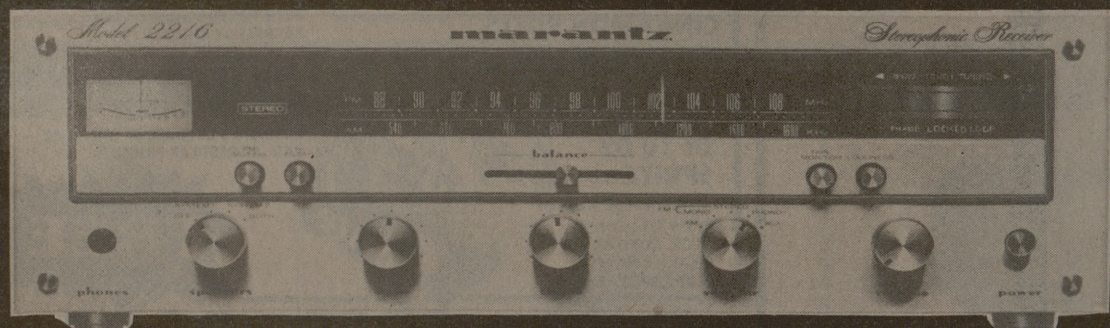
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