

# U.S. ARMY AVIATION MUSEUM



SEE THE LARGEST  
COLLECTION OF HELICOPTERS  
IN THE FREE WORLD



FORT RUCKER, ALABAMA

# HISTORY OF ARMY AVIATION

The official birth date of Army Aviation is 6 June 1942. This date marks the beginning of light aviation as an organic part of the U.S. Army Field Artillery fire direction center. Organic Army light aviation consisted of "Piper Cub" type airplanes. Each artillery battalion was usually authorized two airplanes, two pilots, and one mechanic to be used as an aerial observation post for adjustment of artillery fire.

The Army quickly discovered that not only could the little airplanes provide an unequaled observation post, but that, due to their high maneuverability, losses were almost nonexistent. By the end of the war they were being used in all theaters of operations and were performing several other missions in addition to their original mission of directing artillery fire. The light aircraft were used to evacuate wounded, for courier service, for radio relay stations, and as command liaison vehicles. Thus Army Aviation became a part of the ground forces but not yet a necessity.

Interest in the Army Aviation program decreased following World War II. The absolute necessity of having airborne observers directing artillery fire was not fully realized until the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950. The jagged, hilly terrain of Korea made ground observation almost impossible and presented numerous other problems.

As the war in Korea progressed, Army aircraft were called upon for additional missions such as battlefield illumination and aerial photography. There were never enough Army aircraft or aviation personnel available for the rapidly expanding requirements. A new type of aircraft, the helicopter, had reached a new technical stage of development which made its use by the field forces practical.

The rotary wing aircraft had the capability of an airplane, i.e., relatively high speed and the ability to pass over obstacles encountered by surface vehicles. But most important, it also had the capability to land in an area not much larger than its own dimensions. As quickly as the helicopters could be manufactured and personnel trained, they were sent to Army units in Korea. The first helicopters sent to Korea were the small H-13 and H-23.

As soon as they were available in 1952, larger cargo-type helicopters such as the H-19, were sent into Korea. While they did not carry guns they were a formidable weapon. They provided a means of moving troops and equipment rapidly, and a means of saving thousands of lives in the fast evacuation of wounded from front line positions to rear area hospitals.

In early 1961, the United States Army committed the first helicopter companies to the Republic of Vietnam as a means to improve the mobility of the RVN Army. The increased effectiveness of ground troops was so dramatic that plans for increases in aircraft and aviation organizations were integrated into all levels of US Army planning.

As the conflict in South Vietnam began to escalate, it became more and more evident that sizeable U.S. units must be committed. The 11th Air Assault Division organized as a provisional unit, became a permanent U.S. Army division and was redesignated the 1st Cavalry Division (Air Mobile) and deployed to Vietnam. There it compiled an enviable record which has been branded into the pages of history.

Army Aviation, with its rapidly developing heritage, will continue to provide Army commanders the best possible support. This assures the United States Army that it will continue to be the world's best.



# HOURS OF OPERATION

10AM-5PM MONDAY THRU FRIDAY

1PM-5PM SATURDAY, SUNDAY & HOLIDAYS

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