

FIRST CH-3C (TWO) AND HH-3Es IN SEA THEATER

AS THE WAR IN SOUTHEAST ASIA BEGAN TO PICK UP IN THE SUMMER OF 1965, IT WAS PARAMOUNT THAT AN UP-GRADED HELICOPTER BE INCORPORATED INTO THE NEWLY FORMED SAR FORCES AS THE HH-43s WERE SEVERELY LIMITED IN RANGE, CAPABILITIES AND PERFORMANCE. ON 6 JULY 1964 TWO SIKORSKY CH-3C TURBINE DRIVEN HELICOPTERS ARRIVED AT NAKHON PHANOM ROYAL THAI AIR FORCE BASE TO INITIATE A NEW ERA FOR SEARCH AND RESCUE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. THE ADDED RANGE, PROTECTIVE ARMOR AND SPEED, MADE THE CH-3C AN ADEQUATE AIRCRAFT RESCUE VEHICLE. ASSIGNED TO THE NEWLY ESTABLISHED DET 1, 38TH ARS (FORMED FROM DET 3, PACIFIC AIR RESCUE CENTER, TAN SON NHUT, EST. ON 1-APRIL-1962) THE TWO HELICOPTERS WERE ON LOAN FROM THE TACTICAL AIR WARFARE CENTER, EGLIN AFB, FLORIDA. THESE HELICOPTERS WERE HASTILY CONVERTED TACTICAL AIR COMMAND CARGO CHOPPERS AND, AS SUCH, WERE ONLY INTERIM AIRCRAFT.

IN AUGUST OF 1965, AS THE TEMPORARY CREWS OF THE SIKORSKY CH-3s WERE SETTLING IN AT NAKHON PHANOM, MAJOR BAYLOR R. HAYNES GATHERED HIS CREWS OF THE NEWLY BUILT HH-3Es (WHICH WERE BUILT ESPECIALLY FOR COMBAT RESCUE) AT STEAD AFB, NEVADA UNDER CODE NAME "LIMELIGHT 36". HAYNES, A RESCUE VETERAN OF KOREA, LED HIS MEN AS THEY PLUNGED INTO THEIR ORIENTATION AND TRAINING PROGRAM.

AFTER COMPLETION OF ORIENTATION IN SEPTEMBER THEY TOOK LEAVE AND REPORTED TO UDORN IN LATE OCTOBER. ON NOVEMBER 3, A PAIR OF HH-3Es ARRIVED AT BIEN HOA AFB, IN A SPECIAL RUSH DELIVERY BY C-133 TRANSPORT. MAJOR HAYNES AND A SELECTED CREW TESTED THE CHOPPERS OVER THE SOUTH CHINA SEA BEFORE FLYING THEM TO UDORN. ON NOVEMBER 10. ONE OF THE CH-3Cs STATIONED AT NAKHON PHANOM HAD BEEN LOST TO ENEMY ACTION ON NOVEMBER 3, BUT THE REMAINING CH-3C MOVED UP TO UDORN. BY THE END OF DECEMBER 1965, THERE WERE SIX HH-3Es AND THE ONE CH-3C OPERATING FROM UDORN. THE CH-3C (ONE OF ONLY TWO TO EVER SERVE IN SEA) WAS RETURNED TO THE TACTICAL AIR COMMANDS IN JANUARY 1966.

TO PROTECT THE CREWS OF THE COMBAT SAR HH-3Es, SIKORSKY DISTRIBUTED 1,000 LBS OF ONE-HALF INCH TITANIUM ARMOR PLATING THROUGHOUT EACH HH-3E. OTHER FEATURES INCLUDED A SHATTER-PROOF ACRYLIC GLASS CANOPY, AN ENGINE ICE AND FOREIGN OBJECT DAMAGE SHIELD, AND 600-POUND CAPACITY, 240-FOOT HOIST WITH JUNGLE PENETRATOR.

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