

# 'Big, Ugly, Friendly Fellows' to the Rescue



Members of the 37th Air Rescue and Recovery Sq. practice lowering themselves into the Vietnam jungle with the "jungle penetrator" on their HH53C BUFF helicopter. (S&S Photos)

## Viet Chopper Pilots Getting U.S. Help

By CPT. YUNG KEUN KIM  
S&S Staff Correspondent  
SOC TRANG, Vietnam — Combat-hardened American chopper pilots here are sharing their skills with 20 members of the first full Vietnamese class from Hunter Airfield Aviation School, Ga.

Fifteen American pilots are running the Vietnamese through a combat training program similar to the one given American pilots when they arrive in Vietnam.

Once they complete the training in the UH1 Huey helicopter, the pilots will join a helicopter squadron scheduled to take over the American airfield here soon, according to officers here.

The American trainers come from the 336th Helicopter Co., 13th Combat Aviation Bn., 1st Aviation Brigade. The training schedule began in mid-July and will continue until October.

Most of the Vietnamese pilots volunteered for this program, and moved into the American pilots' billet to speed up their learning, the officers said.

"I think we can master all combat skills within two months," said 2nd Lt. Le Van Ut. "Flying a chopper is like playing the piano. It needs delicacy," said Capt. Daniel P. Schrage, an instructor pilot, "and Vietnamese are very delicate."

Most Vietnamese fly whenever they have the chance, American trainers say. They fly day and night, and sometimes holidays.

## Aerialist Made Stand for Fighting Men

By SPEC. 5 DON SMITH  
S&S Staff Correspondent

SAIGON — A tightrope walker performed an extra headstand over a Georgia gorge last Saturday in honor of fighting men in Vietnam, and the added stunt almost cost him his life.

As 65-year-old Karl Wallenda calmly crossed the 997-foot cable stretched some 700 feet above sharp, jagged rocks along Georgia's Tallulah Gorge, eight



A BUFF gets a wash at Da Nang where the new chopper is replacing the Jolly Green Giant, one of the most famous rescue helicopters ever built.

By SPEC. 4 CHARLES C. SELF  
S&S Staff Correspondent

DA NANG, Vietnam — One of the most famous rescue helicopters ever built, the Jolly Green Giant HH3E, is being replaced by a bigger, more powerful model, according to Air Force officials here.

"The HH3 has been one of the most outstanding rescue helicopters that has ever been developed, and it has done a tremendous job," said Lt. Col. Albert I. Holcomb, commander of the 37th Air Rescue and Recovery Sq. at Da Nang airfield. "It did the job. But now we have something that does it even better."

The new model, HH53C, called BUFF (Big, Ugly, Friendly Fellow), is faster, more powerful and carries heavier armament, according to Holcomb. The bulbous monster is capable of hauling two jeeps, a 20,000-lb. load sling or 37 troops at 195 m.p.h. for five hours before refueling.

Even when it must refuel, it can take fuel in mid-air. The BUFF can also hover at high altitudes to rescue fliers downed atop mountains.

Holcomb said the BUFF is scheduled to replace all the smaller choppers by the end of 1970.

The 37th ARRS is the only long-range air rescue unit in Vietnam. Its mission is to rescue crewmen from downed aircraft anywhere in Southeast Asia.

"The BUFF gives us the capability of going out of here to anywhere in Vietnam, Cambodia or Laos without having to worry about refueling," said Lt. Col. Royal A. Brown, operations officer of the 37th.

Holcomb explained that when a flier gets in trouble anywhere in Southeast Asia he can send a may-day distress signal which is relayed to a control center at 7th Air Force in Saigon.

"They can scramble the Jolly Green Giants anytime they need them," he said.

The rescue squadron always has a crew on alert, Brown said. "We even carry a communications radio to the mess hall with us when we are on alert," said one pilot.

During the daylight hours a maximum of 15 minutes is allowed to get an aircraft off the

ground, according to Brown. "Right now if the horn were to blow, the crew would be airborne within five minutes," he said.

With cover furnished by other aircraft, the Jolly Green Giants move to the position where the flier is believed down. If he is in heavy jungle, the choppers lower a jungle penetrator and lift the flier out.

The BUFF already is carrying more than its share of the load. Of the 31 "saves" since the BUFF was put into operation in late April, 20 of them have been by the four BUFF ships in the 37th Sq.

The four have been used on half the missions carried out by the unit's 12 choppers.

The BUFF carries a five-man crew, and they seem as happy with it as their commanders. "It's like jumping from a Ford to a Cadillac," said T. Sgt. John F. Heitsch, pararescue jumper with the 37th.

Apparently even the ground maintenance crews, who say it takes about three hours and four or five men just to wash the monster, like it.

"Oh, you'll see some of the guys kidding about it — leaving notes and like that — but even though they are big and ugly and everything, they're good airplanes," said one crew chief as he scrubbed the nose of a BUFF. "I like them, and I like to work on them."

## Tale of 2 Wives And One City

CARSON CITY, Nev. (UPI) — When Richard A. Culpepper left his first wife, Elizabeth, she moved from California to Carson City.

When Culpepper left his second wife, Susan, she also moved to Carson City and decided to look up the first wife. They compared notes and Culpepper, 23, of Hillburg, Calif., was hauled in on bigamy charges.

thing if he had fallen," said Lt. Thomas E. Allen, one of the eight lieutenants who requested the additional headstand. "There are brave men in Vietnam," he added, "but there are also very brave men like Wallenda who make a public stand for their belief in us."

Wallenda agreed to do the extra headstand, which turned out to be his truly shuky moment during the crossing.

"It would have been a terrible