



SOUTH CAROLINA
CONFEDERATE RELIC ROOM &
MILITARY MUSEUM

RIPCORDER Helicopters



Project RIPCORDER: The Helicopters



History is cool, or so the saying goes

But it can also be very dry, tedious, and ponderous.

Let's dispense with the tedious stuff right away,
shall we?



FSB RIPCORD was isolated and the surrounding terrain was jagged, rough, and uninviting. In order to not only set up the Fire Base, but also to supply it, the 101st Airborne Division relied on several aviation organizations.

We studied many photos of RIPCORD, and were able to identify most of them.

Some of these organizations were:



101st Aviation Group

- Established at Camp Eagle as the 160th Aviation Group
- Subordinate Units:
 - 2nd Squadron, 17th Cavalry
 - 101st Aviation Battalion (Assault)
 - 158th Assault Helicopter Battalion
 - 159th Assault Helicopter Support Battalion



2nd Squadron, 17th Cavalry

- Located at Camp Eagle
- Equipped with:
 - Hughes OH-6A Cayuse (“Loach”)
 - Bell UH-1H Iroquois (“Huey”)
 - Bell AH-1G HueyCobra (“Cobra”/”Snake”)



Subordinate Units

- A Troop (red tail band)
- B Troop “Banshee” (white tail band)
- C Troop “Condors” (blue tail band)



101st Aviation Battalion (Assault)

- Located at Camp Eagle
- Equipped with:
 - UH-1H “Huey”
 - AH-1G “Cobra”



Subordinate units (Type/Markings):

- A Company “Comancheros” (UH-1H, Red diamond on tailboom)
- B Company “Kingsmen” (UH-1H, White diamond on tailboom)
- C Company “Black Widows” (UH-1H, Blue diamond on tailboom)
- D Company “Hawks” (AH-1G Cobras, Yellow diamond on tailboom)



158th Assault Helicopter Battalion

- Located at Camp Evans
- Equipped with UH-1H and AH-1G aircraft



Subordinate Units (Type/Markings)

- A Company “Ghostriders” (UH-1H, Red disc on tailboom, white stripe on roof)
- B Company “Lancers” (UH-1H, White disc on tailboom)
- C Company “Phoenix” (UH-1H, Blue disc on tailboom)
- D Company “Redskins” (AH-1G, Yellow disc on tailboom)



159th Assault Helicopter Support Battalion “Liftmaster”

- Located at Camp Evans
- Equipped with CH-47B, CH-47C, and CH-47 “Super C” Chinook medium lift helicopters



Subordinate Units (Type/Markings)

- A Company “Pachyderms” (CH-47C, Red triangle on sides of forward pylon. Caricatured elephant head on front of forward pylon. Red longitudinal stripe on upper forward doghouse, white longitudinal stripe on driveshaft housing between rotor pylons)
- B Company “Varsity” (CH-47C, White triangle on forward pylon, white “V” on front of forward pylon. White longitudinal stripe on top of forward doghouse and on driveshaft housing between rotor pylons.)
- C Company “Playtex” (CH-47C, Blue triangle on sides of forward pylon. Blue longitudinal stripe on top of forward doghouse, white longitudinal stripe on driveshaft housing between rotor pylons.)



- 326th Medical Battalion “Eagle Dustoff”
 - Equipped with UH-1D and UH-1H
 - Red Cross on white square on cabin doors and nose



The Players

Hughes Helicopters OH-6A Cayuse, aka “Loach”

- Developed to meet Army Technical Specification 153 for a Light Observation Helicopter (LOH)
- First flew on 27 February 1962 (as Hughes Model 396)
- Entered service in 1966 (as the OH-6A)
- “Loach” is a play on the LOH acronym
- The aircraft is still being produced (as the MD-530F and MD-530G) by MD Helicopters in Mesa, Arizona
- 1,422 built for the U.S. Army, 922 were destroyed in Vietnam



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Bell Helicopters UH-1 Iroquois, aka “Huey”

- Initially developed to meet specifications for a new Medevac helicopter for the Army
- Selected by the Army on 23 February 1955 as the XH-40 (Bell Model 204)
- Entered service in 1959
- Initially designated HU-1A, prompting the “Huey” nickname (the designation was changed to UH-1 in 1962)
- Still in service with the U.S. Marine Corps (twin-engine variants)
- Over 16,000 military variants built



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Vertol (now Boeing) CH-47 Chinook

- Developed to meet Army specifications for a turbine-powered medium transport helicopter
- Ordered in 1959 as the YHC-1A (Vertol Model 107)
- Enlarged to the YHC-1B (Vertol Model 117) in 1962
- Redesignated CH-47 under the Tri-Service Aircraft Designation System
- Still in use by the U.S. Army (CH-47D and CH-47E)
- Still in production (CH-47F)
- Over 1,200 airframes constructed



RIPCORD Helicopters





Bell AH-1G HueyCobra

- Bell design for a lightweight “attack” helicopter
- Accepted by the Army (as the Bell Model 209) in April 1966
- Uses drive train of the UH-1
- Used to provide fire to Troops in Contact, as Aerial Rocket Artillery (ARA), and in Scout teams (either alone as a “Red Team” or with OH-6’s as a “Pink Team”)
- Nearly 1,200 single engine Cobras built
- Also operated by the USMC (AH-1G and the twin-engined “Super Cobra”)



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Sikorsky CH-54 Tarhe, aka “Skycrane”

- Developed in 1960 as a turbine-powered heavy lift helicopter (as Sikorsky Model S-64)
- 105 built for the U.S. Army
- Named after Tarhe, an 18th-century chief of the Wayndot Indian tribe whose nickname was "The Crane".
- Eventually supplanted and later replaced by the “Super C” Chinooks in the “Regular Army”
- Remained in National Guard service until 1991
- Some surviving airframes have been converted to aerial firefighting configuration by Erickson Air-Crane



RIPCORD Helicopters





Research Resources

Reference books for Army Aviation in Vietnam aren't exactly thick on the ground. Fortunately, many of the units involved maintain websites. Some of the websites we mined were:

- <https://www.vhpa.org/>
- <https://museum.vhpa.org/defaultmenu.shtml>
- <http://www.chinook-helicopter.com/>
- <http://www.geronimos.org/Liftmaster/Liftmasterx.htm>
- <http://www.ghostriders-online.com>



The Models

**OH-6A, S/N 67-16661,
C Troop, 2nd Squadron, 17th Cavalry
“Condor 661”**

The model was constructed by Tim Darrah from an Italeri kit. He modified the kit by removing the doors and adding details to the cockpit.

We chose these markings simply because they added a splash of color to the scene.



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Hughes OH-6A Cayuse, S/N 67-16661, C/2/17th Cavalry





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UH-1H S/N 67-17658, B/158 AHB “Lancer 658”

This model was constructed by Trevor Edwards from the venerable Hasegawa kit from 1971. We placed this model on the refuel pad to show the field refueling equipment in action.

The crew chief of this ship, Terry Willman, wrote a memoir of his time with the ship. The aircraft crashed in 1969, was repaired, and survived the war only to crash in New Mexico in 2006 and be written off.

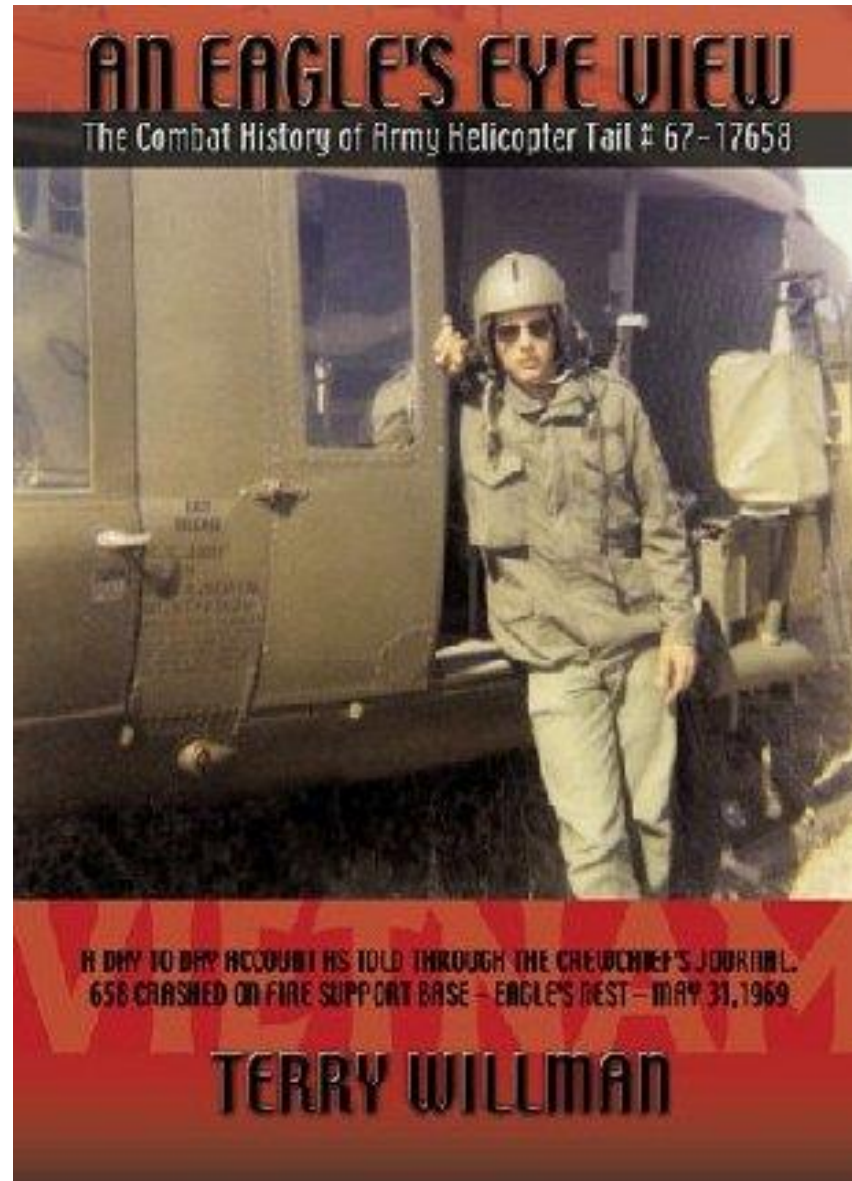


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UH-1H S/N 69-15140, B/158 AHB “Lancer 140”

This model was constructed by Matthew Goodman from the Hasegawa kit. The model illustrates one of the duties of the Huey “Slicks”—daily hot meals and mail delivery.

This aircraft survived the war and was restored. It may be viewed at the Museum of Flight in Seattle, WA.



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Bell UH-1H S/N 69-15140 as it appears today at the Museum of Flight





UH-1H 67-17305 “Eagle Dustoff 305” 326th Medical Detachment

This model was constructed by Keith Frape, again from a Hasegawa kit. We wanted to include this as a nod to the pilots who evacuated the casualties.



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Bell UH-1H S/N 67-17305
326th Medical Detachment





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- Modifications to the Huey kits include:
 - Cabin overhead
 - Collective, cyclic, and anti-torque controls
 - Gunner's positions
 - M23 Weapons Subsystems
 - M60D machine guns



CH-47C S/N 68-15810, A/159 AHB “Pachyderm 810”

This model was constructed by Ralph Nardone from the Italeri kit. It was backdated from the CH-47D configuration, and was built to show it in flight delivering ammunition for the howitzers.

M24 Weapons subsystems and M60D machine guns were installed, and the cargo hook was modified to show it at the point of load release.



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“Pachyderm 810” was shot down over the ammunition bunkers on 18 July 1970. It crashed onto the bunkers, rolled over, and burned. As the ammunition began to cook off, members of the crew and men nearby made a valiant and futile effort to save one of the crew, SGT Michael Allen Walker, who was pinned beneath the fuselage.

The crash of Pachyderm 810 factored heavily into the decision to close and evacuate FSB RIPCORD on 23 July 1970.