

Tandem Notes

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— Phrog Phorum —

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Chinooks triumph over Afghan conditions

By Linda D. Kozaryn
American Forces Press Service
July 17, 2002

An Army helicopter pilot told reporters at the Pentagon today, “The Taliban was our greatest threat, but the weather was our greatest challenge and hazard.”

Horrible sandstorms and dense fog plagued elite Army special operations MH-47E Chinook helicopter crews in the early days of Operation Enduring Freedom, said Capt. Kevin Cochie of Ashland, Ohio. But U.S. pilots took advantage of Chinook’s high-tech radar and other features to break through the weather and put special operations forces on the ground, he said.

Cochie is with the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment at Fort Campbell, Ky. Last October, he was with the first wave of U.S. soldiers to go to Afghanistan. Planning and coordinating air missions involving Green Berets, Navy SEALs and other ground forces was his order of the day.

Accompanied by two soldiers from the 5th Special Forces Group, Cochie met reporters today to describe some of the equipment they used in Afghanistan and to talk about some of their personal experiences. The briefing marked the 50th anniversary of Army Special Forces and the 20th anniversary of the aviation regiment.

Prior to operations in Afghanistan, Cochie said, the 160th’s Chinook pilots had never penetrated zero visibility weather at training flight altitudes. “When we started trying to get teams on the ground, we ran into close to zero visibility weather every single night and we ended up turning the aircraft back.”

In the training environment, the pilots observed ceiling and visibility safety minimums. “To go into combat is one thing,” he said. “To penetrate weather that’s almost down to zero visibility without ever having done it in training was a pretty steep learning curve for all of our crews.”

— **Afghanistan** continued, Page 3



An MH-47E from the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment takes off during a rare media demonstration at Fort Campbell, Ky. Similar aircraft have been used extensively in Afghanistan.

Dear Chinook and Sea Knight User

Much has happened since the last issue of *Tandem Notes*. Chinooks and Sea Knights continue to protect our freedom and provide humanitarian relief around the world. Fortunately, details and photographs of their missions are starting to surface, and the crews are getting much deserved credit for their dedicated service and bravery.

Tandem rotor activity likely will increase as we escalate the war against terrorism. They’ve been crucial to the war effort, and I’m sure they will continue to operate with a high success rate.

Also, the Chinook recently celebrated the 40th anniversary of its in-service date. **Forty years.** Just saying those two words make me realize how impressive the Chinook’s service life has been.

Its success can be attributed largely to the design of the aircraft and the people who maintain and operate it on a daily basis. Without their support, the aircraft would not be able to perform any of the missions detailed in the following pages. We have to remember that every time we see the aircraft on TV or in photographs, that maintenance personnel and flight crews have made it all possible.

We’re always looking for customer-related news, “tales from the field” and photographs, so please submit them to: Jack Satterfield, Boeing Philadelphia, P.O. Box 16858, M/S P30-18, Philadelphia, PA 19142-0858. Ph: (610) 591-8399; Fax: (610) 591-2701, e-mail: john.r.satterfield@boeing.com; or Doug Holmes (same mailing address and FAX number), Ph: (610) 591-4901, e-mail: william.d.holmes@boeing.com. Keep the stories coming and God Bless America!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John P. Gilbride". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

John Gilbride
Director, Aerospace Support
Boeing Philadelphia



A freak snowstorm dumped four inches of snow in one hour during the Sugar Bears' annual high altitude rescue training at the base of Mt. McKinley—North America's highest mountain.

From the field: 'Sugar Bears - North' conduct high altitude rescue training

By CW4 Mark S. Morgan
B Company - "Sugar Bears North"
4th Battalion, 123rd Aviation Regiment

Fort Wainwright, Alaska: Warming temperatures in April signals the beginning of the climbing season on North America's highest mountain - 20,320 foot Mt. McKinley. With the forecasted thousands of mountain climbers converging on the mountain, it is expected that there will be at least one rescue required.

To native Alaskans, Mount McKinley is known as Denali, or "The High One."



The Chinook's power and lifting capability make it an invaluable asset for high altitude rescues.

Members of Bravo Company - "Sugar Bears North", 4th Battalion, 123rd Aviation Regiment, commanded by Maj. Lisa V. Young, spent three weeks in April 2002 conducting high altitude training in anticipation of the 2002 climbing season on Denali.

In close proximity to Denali lies the small, charming community of Talkeetna. The Sugar Bears deployed to Talkeetna and utilized the small airfield there as a staging base for their annual training. From May through July each year, the Sugar Bears will remain on standby in the event their services are required.

Just as the annual training was getting underway, the Sugar Bears were called to conduct a rescue on Mount Saint Elias, a few hundred miles east of Denali.

The awesome power and lifting capabilities of the CH-47D Chinook is severely tested at the altitudes where rescues are often performed on Denali.

In recent years, successful rescues have been made at the 19,600 foot level—the highest CH-47 rescue in the world—and several times above the 10,000 foot level.

Aircrews must remain diligent and accurate in their performance planning in order to operate this helicopter at such extreme altitudes. The flight controls tend to get a

News and Notes

Chinook celebrates 40 years of service

In August 1962, the U.S. Army took delivery of its first CH-47 Chinook helicopter. Although the aircraft's configuration and performance capabilities have changed, its utility and importance to Army operations have not. The Chinook saw its first action during the Vietnam War and most recently during Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. "The Chinook is one of the most successful aircraft in military aviation history," said Pete Parsons, Boeing's CH-47 program manager. "From battlefields to backyards, the Chinook has been the helicopter of choice for four decades." Built in Philadelphia, the Chinook soon will begin its F-model remanufacture program, which will extend the Chinook's service life at least another 30 years.



The first Chinook prototype, designated YHC-1B, conducts flight test operations in 1961.

Pa. Nat'l Guard Chinooks assist in Leapfest 2002

Four CH-47D Chinooks from the "Nomads" of Pennsylvania's Army National Guard, Company G, 104th Aviation, recently participated in Leapfest 2002, an International Military Parachuting Competition in South County, R.I. During the event, the Chinooks logged 40 incident-free hours. The rules are simple. Each four-member team jumps three times from 1,500 feet with static lines that pull the chutes open. The parachutists land as close as they can to a large orange X in the middle of a manicured, 218-acre drop zone. They are timed from the moment they touch the ground until they touch the X - while dragging their chutes. The individuals and teams with the lowest total times win. Nearly 500 men and women jumped from the Chinooks.

News and Notes

U.S. Navy fades Phrogs from service

After nearly 40 years of service, the U.S. Navy has begun phasing out H-46D Sea Knights in favor of newer SH-60 helicopters. Helicopter Combat Support Squadron THREE (HC-3), the H-46's lone fleet replacement squadron, recently delivered its last H-46D to Davis Monthan Air Force Base in Tucson, Ariz., where it will be stored in a war reserve.

"The H-46D has been a workhorse of the U.S. Navy for decades," said John Gilbride, director, Aerospace Support. "Although the airframe may not live on, its reputation certainly will."

The Navy has used the Sea Knight, or "Phrog," extensively in carrier battle group logistic support, personnel transport and search and rescue since the 1960s.

The Navy plans to fully retire the H-46D from its fleet replenishment mission by 2004.

During its prime, the H-46D Sea Knight—one of the Navy's largest helicopters—was capable of transporting 20 passengers, lifting three tons and reaching air speeds of up to 145 knots. More than 800 Sea Knights and its variants have been built and fielded worldwide.

Chinooks help rescue trapped miners

CH-47D Chinook helicopters from the Pennsylvania Army National Guard, Company G, 104th Aviation, this summer assisted in the rescue of nine coal miners trapped 240 feet underground in a western Pennsylvania mine shaft.

On short notice, the "Nomads" delivered three high volume water pumps that were used to drain thousands of gallons of water from the mine. The unit later returned to assist in other aspects of the successful rescue mission.

Without the Chinooks' quick action, the miners, who spent three days underground with water rising up to their noses, may have drowned. Chinook helicopters have been used extensively in humanitarian and disaster relief missions for 40 years, including trips to Central America, Europe and the Middle East.

Afghanistan cont. from Page 1

U.S. pilots finally penetrated the weather, he said, using the CH-47E's terrain-following, terrain-avoidance multimode radar, a relatively new piece of equipment. The first night the helicopters got teams on the ground was a tremendous success, he recalled.

"It was euphoria really, because we were there and we were doing what needed to be done," Cochie said. "Once we did it the first time, we did it night after night." Getting Special Forces teams on the ground so they could direct the bombs where they needed to go, he added, was a turning point in the war.

Special operations helicopters generally fly at night about 200 to 300 feet off the ground, maneuvering around towers, over power wires and through mountain ranges, he noted.

When they first started flying into

Afghan airspace, Taliban fighters were everywhere. "When we fly around at 200, 300 feet, you can hit us with a shotgun," he said.

Despite the poor weather, harsh terrain and danger of ground fire, the 160th aircraft crews pushed on. "Our motto is 'On target, plus or minus 30 seconds,' and we live and die by that motto even in the harshest weather and the harshest terrain," Cochie said. "The Echo model Chinook has so many systems that allow the pilots to live by that motto."

The Army has 21 MH-47Es, he said, and the lesson learned in Afghanistan is that more are needed. "We're stretched very thin," Cochie said.

Because of its unique capabilities, the MH-47E has been incredibly successful in the Afghanistan theater, he stressed. "The return on investment ... for what it can do for us, the special operations ground force, is so incredible," he said.

The aircraft has a digital cockpit with redundant navigational systems. Flight routes are planned on a laptop computer at the tactical operations center, put on a card and uploaded into the aircraft. A moving digital map display supplements standard maps.

"It's a great process and a great airframe to maintain situational awareness," Cochie said.

The special operations chopper looks a

little bit fatter than conventional CH-47s the Army uses because it has bigger fuel tanks on both sides and an aerial refueling probe extends from the front. The 160th is the only unit in the Army that refuels its helicopters in the air, Cochie asserted.

"It basically gives us an indefinite range on the aircraft," he said. The aerial refueling capability, he added, also cuts out the risk of trying to refuel on the ground in hostile environments.

"We were conducting missions that exceeded 600 to 800 miles," he said. "The tanker support was incredible. These guys were flexible. They were always there with the gas—very dependable."

In Afghanistan, the Chinooks often flew at the maximum gross weight of 54,000 pounds at extreme altitudes. "We were crest-

"Our motto is 'On target, plus or minus 30 seconds,' and we live and die by that motto even in the harshest weather and the harshest terrain. The Echo model Chinook has so many systems that allow the pilots to live by that motto." — Capt. Kevin Cochie

ing 16,000 and 17,000-foot ridge lines in Afghanistan, while sacrificing very little

gross weight," Cochie recalled.

The 200-plus members of the 160th's maintenance company had their work cut out for them because of the harsh, dusty Afghan environment and crews routinely having to fly at high altitudes and with maximum loads.

"It was very hard on the airframes, but the maintenance guys have done an impeccable job at keeping them flying," he said. "We've never dropped a mission in Afghanistan due to a maintenance problem. That's such a testament to our youngest soldiers—19-to-25-year-old soldiers, working and turning wrenches on these aircraft."

Overall, he said, the Afghanistan missions validated the training special operations pilots and crews receive.

"It's neat to talk about how awesome this aircraft is all day long," the pilot said. "This is such a special piece of equipment. But what's truly special about the 160th and the 'Nightstalkers' is the training that we give our soldiers."

The Army uses a "deliberate assessment" process to bring the right soldiers into the organization and the training they receive is superb, he added. There's not a lot of simulated training, compared to realistic training in the actual environments they may have to operate in, he said.

From the field: 'Prairie Riders' assist in Presidential visit

By WOC Steve Glavin

The Prairie Riders of Detachment 1, Company F, 106th Aviation, Davenport, Iowa were recently given the mission of providing aircraft support in conjunction with the president's visit on April 24 to Madison, S.D.

The Prairie Riders deployed three CH-47Ds to the South Dakota Air National Guard Base in Sioux Falls, S.D. After arriving in Sioux Falls, the unit linked up with elements of HMX-1, the U.S. Marine Corps presidential helicopter squadron for briefings and rehearsals for the mission.

The unit's part of the mission was to fly advisors, staff and members of the press corps that accompany the president on his trips to his designated speaking engagement. The crews of the aircraft that were deployed were amazed to see how many people accompany the president and the support that is required to pull off such a mission. The mission, which went off without a hitch, was special because it gave us the opportunity to directly serve our commander-in-chief.



Photo by CW3 Dennis Lane

The "Prairie Riders" of Detachment 1, Company F, 106th Aviation, Davenport, Iowa, recently supported President George W. Bush on one of his many visits to the Midwest. 1st row kneeling: SSG Jeff Latham, SGT Gerald Santos, CW4 Bill McCombs, SSG Todd Isley; 2nd row kneeling: SSG Bob Jacobsen, 1LT Yon Abel, CPT Jamie Dailey; Standing 2nd row: CW3 Dennis Lane, SGT Jake Naber, CPT Bob Hegland, SGT Layne Martin.

Snapshots: Tandem rotors in Afghanistan



Sugar Bears cont. from Page 2

bit mushy and the aircraft a little slow to react. Engines are producing maximum available power and there is no tolerance for error when it comes to predicting out-of-ground effect hover power requirements. Landings on the mountain are often referred to as "controlled crashes."

However, with the perfect blending of excellent training provided by the Army and the superior design of the Boeing Chinook, the Sugar Bears maintain a 100 percent successful rescue attempt and completion rate.

The weather on Denali often affects the outcome of climbing. It certainly plays a major role in planning rescue attempts.

Respected pilots, such as CW4 Ivan D. Thomas, will tell you, "On any given day, and without warning, the conditions can swing from a balmy 60 degrees in bright sunlight to minus 50 degrees in total whiteout."

Aircrews operating the mighty CH-47D in this part of the world are well trained in predicting weather changes and prepared for the challenge.

They are also quite comfortable flying a helicopter they have come to trust.