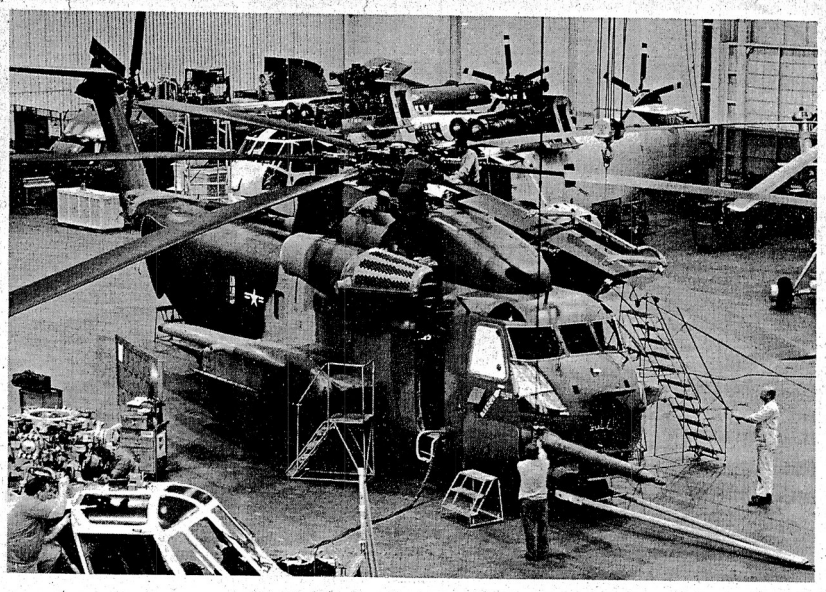
milestone



CONTRACT COMPLETED

USAF Accepts 72nd HH-53 "Super Jolly Green"

The United States Air Force, which has been flying Sikorsky helicopters for more than 30 years, has formally accepted the last HH-53 "Super Jolly Green Giant" helicopter called for in its current contract with the company.

The helicopter, the 72nd HH-53 produced for the Air Force since 1967, was accepted by Major General Ralph S. Saunders, USAF, Commander of the Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service (ARRS) during a Dec. 5 ceremony at Sikorsky's Stratford, Conn., plant.

The HH-53s, which won worldwide fame for their many daring and dramatic rescue operations in Southeast Asia, are used primarily by the ARRS, but other missions include support of the Tactical Air Control System, drone recovery, support of the Tactical Air Command's Special Operations Forces, and support of the Space and Missile Systems Organization.

Air Force HH-53s have also been used as the primary launch area retrieval vehicle for the Apollo space missions, and in 1970, two HH-53s made history's first trans-Pacific helicopter flight.

The first trans-Atlantic helicopter crossing was made 18 years earlier by two Sikorsky-built Air Force H-19s nicknamed Hop-A-Long and Whirl-O-Way. The first non-stop trans-Atlantic helicopter crossing was also made by the Air Force. Two ARRS HH-3 Jolly Green Giants made the trip in 1967, and not only set a new world speed record for helicopters, but proved the practicality of refueling helicopters in the air.

Delivery of the last HH-53 marked another milestone in a close relationship between Sikorsky and the Air Force that began in 1941 when the old Army Air Corps awarded Sikorsky a contract that led to the development and construction of the world's first production helicopter, the R-4A, which was accepted by Lt. Col. H. F. Gregory on July 3, 1943.

Since then, Sikorsky has supplied the Air Force with close to 1,000 helicopters, including the H-5s, which were introduced in 1946 and became the workhorses of the then infant Air Rescue Service, now the ARRS, and the HH-3 Jolly Green Giants, which like the HH-53s, were responsible for saving hundreds of lives in Southeast Asia.

The ARRS currently has HH-53s stationed at Eglin AFB in Florida; at Woodbridge, England; Nakom Phenom, Thailand; and at Hickam AFB in Hawaii.

Since its creation, the Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service has saved more than 15,000 persons, in both combat and non combat situations.

"We are proud that the Air Force, especially the Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service, has put Sikorsky helicopters to what we believe is their finest use," said Sikorsky Division President Gerald J. Tobias.

Tobias said Sikorsky looked upon the completion of the present contract not as an ending, but rather a temporary pause in a long standing business relationship.

"I believe that an association as long and as fruitful as ours is destined to continue," Tobias said, adding that he looked forward to that continuation.

ARRS MEMORIAL ESTABLISHED

A Memorial Park dedicated to the rescue airmen who gave their lives while carrying out their missions has been established by the Jolly Green Pilot's Association outside the headquarters of the Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service (ARRS) at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois.

The oval shaped park, landscaped with shrubbery and flowers, consists of a circular walkway around a granite monument. A bronze plaque on the monument reads "Rescue Memorial Park Dedicated to the Airmen Who Gave Their Lives That Others May Live."

The ARRS is credited with saving more than 15,000 lives since its formation in 1946, but it has also lost 278 airmen in the line of duty.

The Jolly Green Pilot's Association was formed in 1969 by the pilots of Sikorsky-built HH-3 Jolly Green Giant and HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giant helicopters who participated in rescue missions in Southeast Asia.

The Park was dedicated Sept. 27 by Gen. Paul K. Carlton, USAF, Commander of the Military Airlift Command.



Top: The 72nd HH-53 produced by Sikorsky for the U.S. Air Force nears completion in production hangar, Stratford.

Bottom: Major General Ralph S. Saunders, USAF, Commander of the Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service [center], accepts a log book from Sikorsky Aircraft President Gerald J. Tobias during a Dec. 5 ceremony marking the delivery of the last H-53 helicopter called for in the company's current contract with the U.S. Air Force. At left is Robert J. Torok, senior vice president for government programs.

Sent by Larry Wielgosz, ex- Jolly Green crew chief