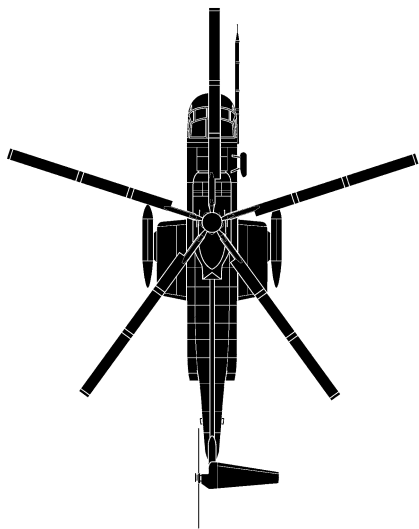


# Airpower Classics

Artwork by Zaur Eylanbekov

## HH-3 Jolly Green Giant



The HH-3 Jolly Green Giant was a long-range transport helicopter that performed key duties for the Air Force for 30 years. It served in both the Vietnam and Gulf Wars. In Vietnam, the HH-3E built a legendary rescue record, plucking hundreds of warriors from enemy territory. The powerful Jolly Green Giant often fought its way through intense enemy fire to snatch downed airmen. Few combat jobs were as dangerous.

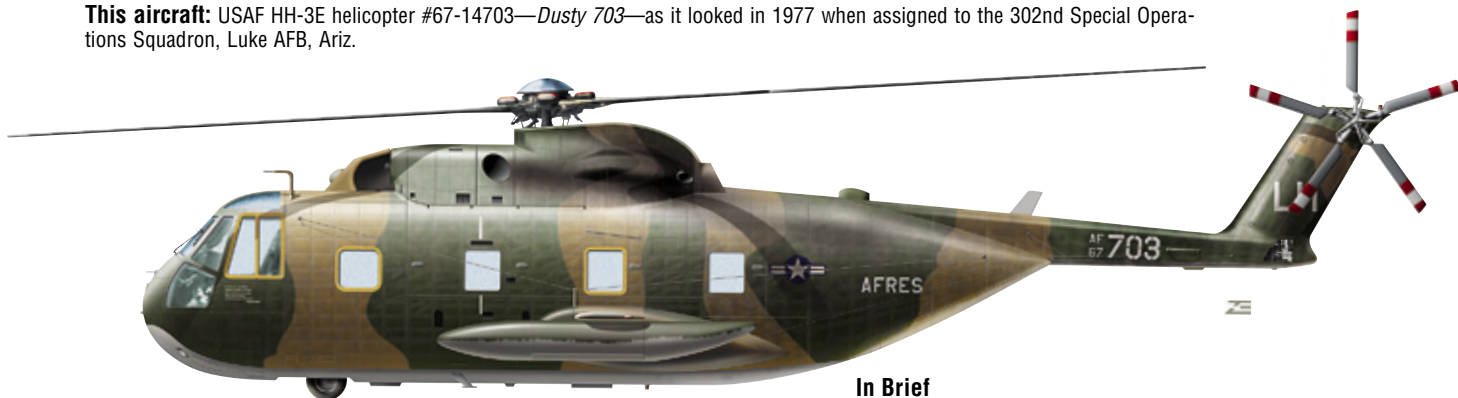
The Air Force HH-3 was an offshoot of the basic Sikorsky SH-3 aircraft developed for the Navy and first flown in 1959. The SH-3 was adaptable to a wide variety of duties. The initial USAF versions essentially were utility versions of the SH-3. The first USAF-specific version featured a redesigned fuselage, a rear cargo ramp, and tricycle landing gear. The Air Force ordered 51 and then 84 new

HH-3s designed specifically for combat search and rescue. Modifications included self-sealing fuel tanks, titanium armor plate, defensive weapons, external fuel tanks, jungle penetrator, and rescue hoist.

The first models, sent to Vietnam in 1965, were used mainly for clandestine missions along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Flown by superbly trained and motivated crews, the HH-3s soon established a magnificent reputation for rescue operations under fire. They operated out of air bases at Da Nang, South Vietnam, and Udorn, Thailand. Their range and refueling ability allowed them to reach any point in North Vietnam and return to base. Jolly Greens were also used in a wide variety of other duties. In 1991, HH-3s flew more than 250 missions during Operation Desert Storm.

—Walter J. Boyne

**This aircraft:** USAF HH-3E helicopter #67-14703—*Dusty 703*—as it looked in 1977 when assigned to the 302nd Special Operations Squadron, Luke AFB, Ariz.



An HH-3E in action during the Vietnam War.

### In Brief

Designed, built by Sikorsky ★ first flight (USAF model) June 17, 1963 ★ crew of 2 or 3 ★ capacity 25 troops or 5,000 lb cargo ★ two GE T58-GE-5 engines ★ number built 135 (USAF) ★ **Specific to HH-3E:** max speed 164 mph ★ cruise speed 154 mph ★ max range 760 mi ★ armament two GE 7.62 mm M60D machine guns ★ weight (max) 22,000 lb ★ span (rotor diameter) 62 ft ★ length 73 ft ★ height 18 ft 1 in.

### Famous Fliers

**Medal of Honor:** USAF Capt. Gerald O. Young. **Air Force Cross:** Capt. Ralph W. Brower, SSgt. Eugene L. Clay, CMSgt. Duane B. Hackney, Capt. Leland Kennedy, Sgt. Larry W. Maysey, TSgt. Donald G. Smith. **Notables:** Lt. Col. Royal Brown (32 saves); Lt. Col. Herbert E. Zehnder, pilot of HH-3 in 1967 trans-Atlantic flight and 1970 raid on Son Tay POW camp.

### Interesting Facts

Flown in 496 of 980 aircrew rescues 1966-70 in SEA ★ rescued future generals Michael Dugan (later Chief of Staff), Charles Boyd, Robert Russ ★ boasted 1,000 lb of titanium armor ★ made first nonstop trans-Atlantic helicopter flight (1967) ★ brought down 17 times in Vietnam War ★ flew in 1991 Gulf War ★ used in 1980 rescue of 61 passengers from liner *Prinsendam* ★ developed as a US Navy anti-submarine warfare platform ★ nicknamed for distinctive green-and-tan camouflage scheme.