

## AIR AMERICA: BOEING-VERTOL CH-47C CHINOOK by Dr. Joe F. Leeker

First published on 15 August 2003, last updated on 24 August 2015



Air America Chinook "016" airlifts a C-46 fuselage at Udorn in 1973  
(*Air America Log*, vol. VII, no. 8, 1973, p. 3)

### **The types of missions flown by Air America's CH-47C Chinooks:**

All Air America Chinooks had armor plates and IFR capability. Essentially, there were four types of missions flown by the Chinooks: First, they were used as troop carriers within Laos, and in this configuration, they could carry 32 passengers (Aircraft and avionics information as of 1 April 73, in: UTD/Kaufman/B1F14); to quote one example: On 20 January 73, two Air America Chinooks were used to transport troops to re-open the Vientiane-Luang Prabang highway (Bowers, *The USAF in South-East Asia. Tactical Airlift*, p. 462). In another configuration, they could carry wounded out of a battle area, then they could be equipped with 24 litters, while 2 attendants could take care of the wounded. In still another configuration, they could carry cargo and even small vehicles, and so they had roller conveyer tracks and inertia reels. They could also rescue besieged people and lift heavy equipment with its hoist winch, and they could transport large outside cargo in a sling (Aircraft and avionics information as of 1 April 73, in: UTD/Kaufman/B1F14), including downed aircraft like a Twin Otter or even a C-46 fuselage estimated to weigh about 13,000 pounds. But the primary mission of the Chinook was probably transporting large external sling loads from Udorn, Thailand to isolated exact positions in Laos. An Air America Chinook could move a 155MM gun with ammunition and crew from one position to another in one trip; the crew and ammunition were loaded inside and the gun outside to a cargo hook. Sometimes, even four cargo hooks were used in order to transport four different loads to four different places (Hutchison, *Chinooks*, p. 4).

**Statistics according to official Air America documents:**

- 8 Boeing-Vertol CH-47C Chinooks were acquired from the US Army in late 72 (Bowers, *The USAF in South-East Asia. Tactical Airlift*, p. 454)

According to the original Loan Agreement (dated 23 August 1972) between the US Army Aviation Systems Command and DEPCHIEFJUSMAG, Udorn – called “Project Black Horse” –, the last 2 Chinooks to be supplied for use by Air America were intended to be 69-17107 and 70-15002 (Agreement in: UTD/Bisson/B5 microfilm reel no. 24). Modification no. P00065 to Contract no. F04606-71-C-0002 (in: UTD/Bisson/B5 microfilm reel no. 23) replaces them by 68-16016 and 69-17103, still given here as “Hook 016” and “Hook 710”. Air America’s Flight Operations Circulars like no. DFOD-C73-011 of 16 April 73 (in: UTD/Kaufman/B1F14) give these 2 Chinooks as “016” and “103”.

DCH-L/ASB  
26 September 1972  
SUBJECT: Project Black Horse Loan Agreement DA No. W58P89-2234-8806

USAFPO Det 11 AFMCM  
Udorn RTAFB, Thailand

- Attached as inclosure 1 are two (2) copies of the Project Black Horse Loan Agreement between DEPCHIEFJUSMAG, Udorn, Thailand and The United States Army Aviation Systems Command.
- One (1) copy of this agreement is for your files and the other copy is to be forwarded by your office to the contractor.
- Suggest particular attention be directed to paragraph 2 e and f.
- We desire a copy of all DA Form 1352's be forwarded to us for information and filing.
- We also feel that it will be necessary for us to receive information copies of all crash facts messages and results of accident investigations.

Incls  
a/s

JAMES L. WREN  
LTC, USAF  
Chief, Air Support Branch

LOAN AGREEMENT DA No. W58P89-2234-8806

This Agreement of Loan, entered into this 23rd day of August 1972, between the UNITED STATES ARMY AVIATION SYSTEMS COMMAND, hereinafter referred to as the Lessor, and DEPCHIEFJUSMAG, Udorn, Thailand, hereinafter referred to as the Lessee.

- The Equipment applicable to this agreement will be as listed in the attached SPECIFICATIONS. Additions and deletions may be made by change order to the Lessee. Applications for changes will be made to the Command General, US Army Aviation Systems Command, PO Box 359, St. Louis, Missouri 63166.
- Whereas, the Lessee desires the use of certain Army Equipment, the following conditions and terms of Loan are mutually agreed on:
  - Period of Loan - Indefinite. Loan will begin upon receipt of aircraft.
  - Return of Equipment - The equipment is to be returned to the Lessor in as good condition as received to a point designated by the Lessor. All costs required to render aircraft in as good condition as received will be borne by the Lessee.
  - No modification or change will be made to the equipment without prior approval of the Lessor. The right to have the equipment returned to its original form is reserved by the Lessor.
  - All cost incident to the transfer, support and return, is to be borne by the Lessee. Actual cost of overhead and source of funds to be stipulated at the time of requirement for overhaul.
  - Required Reports - The Lessee shall submit to the Lessor, ATTENTION: DEPCOM, a monthly report of status information in accordance with AR 710-12, using DA Form 1352, to be dispatched NLT the second working day of the month following the reporting month.
  - In the event aircraft is involved in an accident, an immediate report shall be made to the nearest Army installation for investigation and submission of a Crash Fact Report, in accordance with AR 385-40, AR 28-48 and TB 790-99-5. In the event of a total loss of aircraft, replacement costs will be borne by Lessee.

Signature: *[Signature]* Date: *[Date]*  
 Signature: *[Signature]* Date: *[Date]*

APPENDIX TO LOAN AGREEMENT ATTACHED

APPENDIX TO LOAN AGREEMENT DA No. W58P89-2234-8806

- Equipment applicable to Basic Loan Agreement:
  - Nomenclature: CH-47C passenger/cargo helicopter
  - Federal Stock Number: 1520-871-7308
  - Quantity: Eight (8) each
  - Serial Numbers: 68-15828 68-15992 69-17107  
68-15857 68-15998 70-15002  
68-15864 68-16019
- Replenishment Supply Support will be in accordance with the United States Air Force HO-51 system.
- Maintenance:
  - Maintenance will be accomplished as prescribed in applicable publications or manuals.
  - Maintenance will be accomplished by Lessee.

**Loan Agreement between the US Army and DEPCHIEFJUSMAG, dated 23 August 1972 (in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no. 24)**

Modification F04606-71-C-0002-P00065  
Air America, Inc.  
Page 4

BLOCK 12 (Continued)

(m) By revising paragraph 1(a) of Exhibit "F" to Part II Section E as set forth in Modification P00061, effective 27 September 1972, to read as follows:

"(a) Subitem 0005AA through 0005AH"

(n) By revising Part II, F-2(4) as set forth in Modification P00061, effective 27 September 1972, to read:

"(4) Application of AFR 55-22 dated 8 October 1971, is limited to UH-1, UH-34, 209B/205, S-58T and CH-47 Functional Check Flights under Item 0020, and Functional Check Flights of C-7A and C-123K type aircraft at Udorn and Watteray performed in connection with maintenance services under Items 0005AJ and 0005AK"

(o) By revising Part II, F-2(2) as set forth in Modification P00061 by adding thereto the CH-47 normal flight crew complement of Captain - 1, First Officer - 1, and Flight Mechanic - 2.

(p) By revising Attachment "10" - Revision Three as set forth in Modification P00061, effective 27 September 1972, by adding the following listing of CH-47 aircraft to page 2 of the attachment:

"CH-47 (8)

Manufacturer's Serial Number	Contractor's Identification Number
68-15828	Hook 016
68-15857	Hook 019
68-15864	Hook 710
68-15992	Hook 828
68-15998	Hook 857
68-16019	Hook 886
68-16016	Hook 892
69-17103	Hook 988

(q) This Modification P00065 consists of paragraphs (a) through (q) of this Block 12 and Exhibit "A" - Revision Seven - 2 pages.

SERIAL NR	AIRCRAFT	USC NR	Status	Location	Contractor	NOTATIONS
828	B540	68-15828	C	UTB	-0002	
857	B569	68-15857	"	"	"	AGP numerous items
864	B576	68-15864	"	"	"	
992	B584	68-15992	"	"	"	
998	B590	68-15998	"	"	"	
016	B608	68-16016	"	"	"	
019	B611	68-16019	"	"	"	
103	B618	69-17103	"	"	"	AGP numerous items
<b>S-58 (4)</b>						
XM-PHA	581398	148811	DT	UTB	-0002	
XM-PHD	581203	148809	"	"	"	
XM-PHE	581229	148810	"	"	"	
XM-PHF	581243	148813	"	"	"	
XM-PHC	581198	148074	"	"	"	Damaged by hostile action 11A. Recovery deferred due area insecurity.

Modification no. P00065 to Contract no. F04606-71-C-0002 (in: UTD/Bisson/B5, reel 24)

Flight Operations Circular no. DFOD-C73-011 of 16 April 73 (in: UTD/Kaufman/B1F14)

- The first three CH-47s arrived at Udorn on 2 October 72 (Minutes ExCom-AAAC/AAAM of 10 October 72, in: UTD/CIA/B9F7); these were “857”, “864”, and “103”
- Inventories of 31 March 72 > 30 November 72 (in: UTD/CIA/B1F10): 0 > 6L

### The individual aircraft histories:

Type	registration / serial	c/n (msn)	date acquired	origin
Boeing CH-47C	“992”	B-584	Oct./Nov. 72	ex US Army 68-15992

**Service history:** used for local training at Udorn on 7 January 73, involving the Air America crew of Messrs. Kanach, Hutchison, Wade, and Yamskulna (Udorn daily flight schedule of 7 Jan. 73, in: UTD/Severson/B1F7); on 26 January 73, “992” was flown by the Air America crew of Messrs. Reid, Bengtson, Davis, and Sangduen on a AID-439-713/*Peppergrinder* mission out of Udorn (Udorn daily flight schedule of 26 Jan. 73, in: UTD/Severson/B1F7); on 29 January 73, the rotors of Air America CH-47s “992” and “857” touched each other, while taxiing at the refueling area of Vang Vieng (L-16), Laos (XOXO of 29 Jan. 73, in: UTD/Hickler/B25F12); repaired; also flown by Preston S. Myers on several occasions (Interview with P.S. Myers in March 96); assigned to contract F04606-71-C-0002 for use out of Udorn 16-30 April 73 (F.O.C. of 16 April 73, in: UTD/Kaufman/B1F14); still so 1-30 November 73; in flyable storage at Udorn 1-31 December 73 and 1 April-31 May 74 (Flight Operations Circulars of 1 November 73, 1 December 73, 1 April 74, and 1 May 74, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7C).

**Fate:** returned to the US Army in June 74 (?); converted to CH-47D in 1990 and reserialled as 90-0214.

Boeing CH-47C	“998”	B-590	Oct./Nov. 72	ex US Army 68-15998
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**Service history:** used for local training at Udorn on 7 January 73, involving the Air America crew of Messrs. Spearman, Collard, Higgings, Sickler, and J. Myers (Udorn daily flight schedule of 7 Jan. 73, in: UTD/Severson/B1F7); on 26 January 73, “998” was flown by the Air America crew of Messrs. R. Davis, Collard, Dodds, and Disonrutana on a Requirements Office/*Peppergrinder* mission out of Udorn (Udorn daily flight schedule of 26 Jan. 73, in: UTD/Severson/B1F7); flown by the Air America crew of Messrs. Collard, Bengtson, Crowell, and Disonrutana from Udorn (T-08) to Vang Vieng (L-16) under contract AID-439-713 on 2 March 73 (Udorn daily flight schedule of 2 March 73, in: UTD/Bonansinga); photos can be found in: UTD/Abadie/B1; UTD/Landry/B1F2; the A. Cates collection preserved at TTU (no. VA024826); Love, *Wings of Air America*, p. 69; and Conboy, *War in Laos*, p. 60; assigned to contract F04606-71-C-0002 for use out of Udorn 16-30 April 73 (F.O.C. of 16 April 73, in: UTD/Kaufman/B1F14); still so 1 November-31 December 73 and 1 April-31 May 74 (Flight Operations Circulars of 1 November 73, 1 December 73, 1 April 74, and 1 May 74, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7C).

**Fate:** returned to the US Army in June 74 (?); converted to CH-47D in 1990 and reserialled as 90-0217. Used in Afghanistan in 2002, where it experienced an engine failure in the summer of 2003, loaded with troops, and crashed; no one was killed, but the aircraft was a total loss (e-mail dated 4 Nov. 2004, sent by Rob Devlin to Dr. Erik Carlson, who kindly forwarded it to the author).

Boeing CH-47C	“016”	B-608	Oct./Nov. 72	ex US Army 68-16016
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**Service history:** photos were published in: *Air America Log*, vol. VII, no. 8, 1973,

p.3; another photo can be found in the A. Cates collection preserved at TTU (no. VA024827); based at Udorn in 73; also flown by Preston S. Myers on several occasions (Interview with P. S. Myers in March 96); assigned to contract F04606-71-C-0002 for use out of Udorn 16-30 April 73 (F.O.C. of 16 April 73, in: UTD/Kaufman/B1F14); still so 1 November-31 December 73; in 1973, “016”, crewed by Captain W. R. Hutchison, First Officer T. H. Olson, and Flight Mechanics S. G. Sickler and D. R. Crowell, airlifted two C-46 fuselages from Air America’s Udorn base to the Royal Thai Army compound and to the Royal Thai Border Police Camp, where they were to be used for training; Air America’s Chief Flight Mechanic G. Eiler performed the rigging chores on the pick-up end and Assistant Chief Flight Mechanic C. Brigham was the rigging specialist at the delivery end (E. W. Knight, “Udorn-based CH-47 lifts stripped C-46s”); in flyable storage at Udorn 1 April-31 May 74 (Flight Operations Circulars of 1 November 73, 1 December 73, 1 April 74, and 1 May 74, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7C); airlifted Air America DHC-6 N389EX, which had crashed at Sala Phou Koum (LS-260), Laos, on 28 April 74, back to Udorn in April 74 (a photo is preserved in: UTD/Maxwell/B1F5).

**Fate:** returned to the US Army in June 74 (?); converted to CH-47D in 1988 and reserialled as 88-0096.



Chinook 019 at Udorn in 1973  
(*Air America Log*, vol. VII, no. 5, 1973, p. 8)



Chinook 019 at Udorn in 1973  
(with kind permission from Judy Porter)

Boeing CH-47C      “019”      B-611      Oct./Nov. 72      ex US Army 68-16019

**Service history:** a photo can be found in: *Air America Log*, vol. VII, no. 5, 1973, p. 8, and in: UTD/Landry/B1F2; used for local training at Udorn on 7 January 73, involving the Air America crew of Messrs. Brand, Moher, Gehring, R. Stewart, and Sivasilchai (Udorn daily flight schedule of 7 Jan. 73, in: UTD/Severson/B1F7); on 26 April 73, Air America UH-34D H-45 suffered an engine failure and made a forced landing at coordinates TF 6799, about 6 nautical miles northeast of Ban Xon (LS-272); as an engine change was required, Air America Chinook “019” picked up H-45 and returned it to Udorn (XOXO of 26 April 73, in: UTD/Hickler/B25F12); assigned to contract F04606-71-C-0002 for use out of Udorn 16-30 April 73 (F.O.C. of 16 April 73, in: UTD/Kaufman/B1F14); still so 1 November-31 December 73 and 1 April-31 May 74 (Flight Operations Circulars of 1 November 73, 1 December 73, 1 April 74, and 1 May 74, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7C).

**Fate:** returned to the US Army in June 74 (?); converted to CH-47D in 1991 and reserialled as 91-0233.

Boeing CH-47C      “828”      B-540      Oct./Nov. 72      ex US Army 68-15828

**Service history:** flown by the Air America crew of Messrs. Hitchman, Gehring,



Dodds, and Sivasilchai from Udorn (T-08) to Vang Vieng (L-16) under contract AID-439-713 on 2 March 73 (Udorn daily flight schedule of 2 March 73, in: UTD/Bonansinga); assigned to contract F04606-71-C-0002 for use out of Udorn 16-30 April 73 (F.O.C. of 16 April 73, in: UTD/Kaufman/B1F14); still so 1 November-31 December 73 and 1 April-31 May 74 (Flight Operations Circulars of 1 November 73, 1 December 73, 1 April 74, and 1 May 74, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7C).

**Fate:** returned to the US Army in June 74 (?); converted to CH-47D in 1990 and reserialled as 90-0184.



Chinook 857 in 1972/73  
(UTD/LaShomb/B6F10)

Boeing CH-47C      “857”      B-569      1 October 72    ex US Army 68-15857

**Service history:** arrived at Udorn on 1 October 72 (Telex of 1 October 72 in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.24); flown by the Air America crew of Messrs. Weitz, Arnesen, Crowell, and Dodds from Udorn (T-08) to Vang Vieng (L-16) on 7 January 73 on a *Peppergrinder* mission (Udorn daily flight schedule of 7 Jan. 73, in: UTD/Severson/B1F7); on 26 January 73, “857” was flown by the Air America crew of Messrs. Kanach, Olson, Crowell, and Emarat on a AID-439-713 mission out of Udorn (Udorn daily flight schedule of 26 Jan. 73, in: UTD/Severson/B1F7); on 29 January 73, the rotors of Air America CH-47s “992” and “857” touched each other, while taxiing at the refueling area of Vang Vieng (L-16), Laos (XOXO of 29 Jan. 73, in: UTD/Hickler/B25F12); repaired; used for local training at Udorn (T-08) on 2 March 73, involving the Air America crew of Messrs. Spearman, Andrews, Bulkley, and J. Myers (Udorn daily flight schedule of 2 March 73, in: UTD/Bonansinga); a photo is preserved in: UTD/LaShomb/B6F10; assigned to contract F04606-71-C-0002 for use out of Udorn 16-30 April 73 (F.O.C. of 16 April 73, in: UTD/Kaufman/B1F14).

**Fate:** returned to the US Army on 20 September 73 (Flight Operations Circular of 1 November 73, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7C); converted to CH-47D in 1990 and reserialled as 90-0219.

Boeing CH-47C      “864”      B-576      1 October 72    ex US Army 68-15864

**Service history:** arrived at Udorn on 1 October 72 (Telex of 1 October 72 in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.24); a photo of “864” can be found in the A. Cates collection preserved at TTU (no. VA024831); on 2 December 72, the forward main rotor blade was struck by a wind shield brace, while “864” was at the Air America ramp at Vientiane, but as there was no damage, the aircraft resumed normal operation; flew Udorn (T-08) - Vientiane (L-08) on 14 December 72 (Crew member duty report of H .F. Miller, in: UTD/ Miller/B4F6; type not given); used for local training at

Udorn on 7 January 73, involving the Air America crew of Messrs. Kanach, Hutchison, Wade, and Yamskulna (Udorn daily flight schedule of 7 Jan. 73, in: UTD/Severson/B1F7); on 26 January 73, “864” was used for local training at Udorn involving the Air America crew of Messrs. Spearman, Egecrone, Stewart, and Yamskulna (Udorn daily flight schedule of 26 Jan. 73, in: UTD/Severson/B1F7); assigned to contract F04606-71-C-0002 for use out of Udorn 16-30 April 73 (F.O.C. of 16 April 73, in: UTD/Kaufman/ B1F14).

**Fate:** returned to the US Army on 20 September 73 (Flight Operations Circular of 1 November 73, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7C); converted to CH-47D in 1990 and reserialled as 90-0195.

Boeing CH-47C “103” B-618 1 October 72 ex US Army 69-17103

**Service history:** arrived at Udorn on 1 October 72 (Telex of 1 October 72 in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.24); flew Udorn (T-08) - Long Tieng (LS-20A) on 2 February 74 (Crew member duty report of H .F. Miller, in: UTD/Miller/B4F6; type not given); assigned to contract F04606-71-C-0002 for use out of Udorn 16-30 April 73 (F.O.C. of 16 April 73, in: UTD/Kaufman/B1F14); still so 1 November-31 December 73 and 1 April-31 May 74 (Flight Operations Circulars of 1 November 73, 1 December 73, 1 April 74, and 1 May 74, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7C).

**Fate:** returned to the US Army in June 74 (?); converted to CH-47D in 1991 and reserialled as 91-0259.

Before Air America received their own Chinooks in 1972, heavy cargo like guns was transported by US Army Chinooks even within Laos. The photo below, which was taken by MacAlan Thompson at Nam Bac (LS-203) in the spring of 1967, shows US Army Chinook “179” hauling a 105 mm gun up to the top of a nearby hill.



US Army Chinook “179” at Nam Bac in 1967  
(with kind permission from MacAlan Thompson)

**Errors:**

Some publications mention an Air America Chinook “999”, which was reported to have been written off in the Republic of Vietnam on 19 May 72. According to official Air America fleet lists, such an aircraft did never exist. The error seems to go back to a photo published in Conboy, *War in Laos*, p. 60, probably taken in late 72, where Chinook “998” looks a little bit like “999”.