



Beauty is in the eye of the beholder! Sikorsky HH-53C "Super Jolly Green Giant" 69-5796 of the 67th ARRS, with its access panels open, at R.A.F. Woodbridge

That Others May Live

The U.S.A.F.'s 67th Air Rescue and Recovery Squadron

by MALCOLM ENGLISH

(Author's photos)

"O.K., THE situation is this—the 'Super Jolly' we provided yesterday to recover the injured SAS man from the Stanford PTA was ambushed on landing by terrorists. Because of intense ground fire we had to execute the PJ abandonment plan and leave them to protect him. The condition of the two PJs is unknown, the SAS man has sustained leg injuries."

This is a typical scenario for a practice rescue mission for the U.S.A.F.'s 67th Air Rescue and Recovery Squadron (ARRS) based at R.A.F. Woodbridge, Suffolk. The task was for a Sikorsky HH-53C, nicknamed "Super Jolly Green Giant", of the 67th ARRS to fly from Woodbridge to the Stanford

practical training area (PTA) and recover two para-rescue men or para-jumpers (PJs) and an SAS man. The role of the latter was also played by a 67th ARRS PJ.

According to the pre-flight brief, the SAS man had been called in to the Stanford PTA to help deal with a party of terrorists seen in the area. It was understood from intelligence that they were in the country to kidnap some U.K. Government officials and were armed with, among other weapons, rifles and SA-7 "Grail" surface-to-air missiles (SAMs).

In an ensuing fight the SAS man had been injured and a request for help was sent to the 67th ARRS. I never did find

out whether the SAS man received his injuries helping to kidnap the officials, or preventing it! In response, the 67th ARRS dispatched an HH-53C with two PJs. This, as mentioned previously, had been attacked and was forced to leave them.

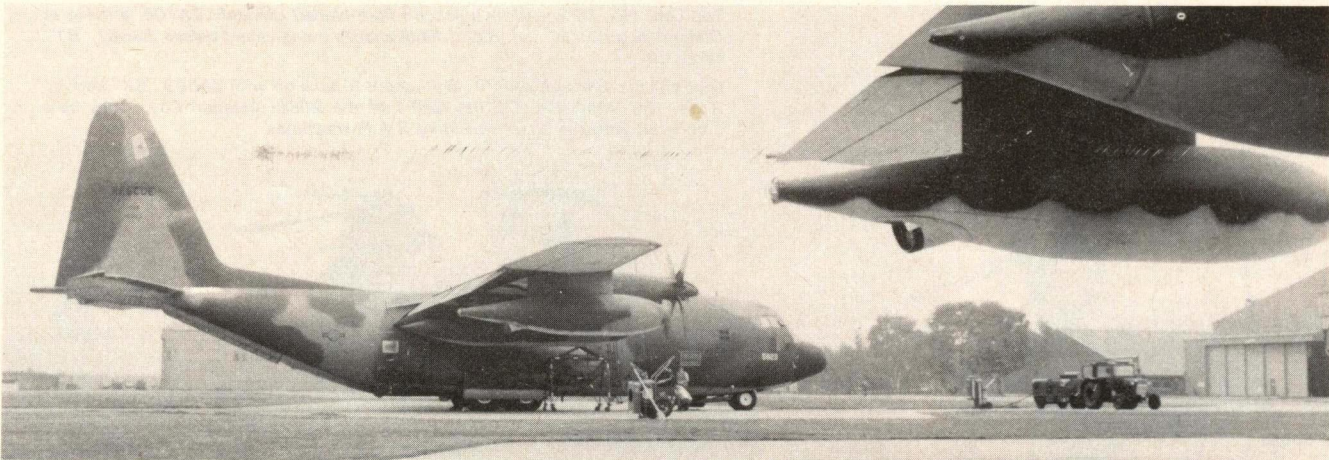
In reality the three PJs had been flown out from Woodbridge on the evening before my visit, dropped in the Stanford PTA and left to fend for themselves. They were told there would be a rescue attempt at 1800 hours the following day and given the colour code for the day, radio frequency and code word with which to communicate with the helicopter.

The brief was formal and thorough, the sortie being treated as a simulated combat rescue mission. In fact, in addition to being a demonstration sortie for my benefit, it had two other functions. It was to be a continuation sortie for Col. Charles E. Wicker, the 67th ARRS Commander, who was the rescue mission pilot and it was to be a familiarisation sortie for 2nd Lt. J. P. Osborn. Jim Osborn had only recently been posted to the 67th ARRS as a pilot and it was his first flight from Woodbridge.

Origin of a name

Our aircraft for the mission was Sikorsky HH-53C 69-5784, call-sign "Jolly 71". Its nickname "Super Jolly Green Giant" evolved from its call-sign "Jolly", used initially during the Vietnam conflict, and the "Green Giant" character who appeared on the tin of sweet corn rations which were prevalent at the time. The crew consisted of Col. C. E. Wicker, pilot; Capt. Pat M. St. Romain, co-pilot/aircraft commander; 2nd Lt. Jim P. Osborn, pilot/acting PJ; and Master Sergeant George P. Richardson, flight engineer.

Lockheed HC-130N Hercules 69-5823 framed by the wingtip and refuelling pod of HC-130N 69-5827. The squadron has five Hercules





"Super Jolly" flight-line comprising (front to rear) 69-5784, 69-5796 and 69-5797, all with 450-gal. external tanks. Two outer HH-53Cs are camouflaged in the "European" scheme of two-tone green and dark grey

In the event of not being able to communicate verbally with the PJs and SAS man, the colour and number of the day were purple and seven. The pick-up was nominally 1800 hours local with a \pm 2-minute tolerance and we were instructed not to attempt a rescue outside of the envelope. Likewise if the code word, colour or number of the day were wrong or missing, we were to suspect an ambush and abort the mission. In either event the PJs would have to wait until road transport could be spared to recover them. A good incentive for getting things right.

The planned flight time was 4 hours, in three phases. The first was to be a familiarisation sortie with Jim Osborn in the right-hand (pilot's) seat, and the second and third phases comprised the rescue mission and air-refuelling, both flown by Col. Wicker. Pat St. Romain concluded the briefing by detailing crew responsibilities for the rescue mission and a reminder of the 500 ft. minimum height limit until we were in the recovery area.

After the briefing I accompanied Jim Osborn and Pat St. Romain to the flight planning room where they completed the necessary pre-flight paper work. Although the HH-53C is fitted with navigation equipment, including TACAN and Doppler, the simulated combat rescue phase of our flight was to be flown by map reading and dead reckoning.

Pat explained that during a real combat mission he would plan to arrive at a safe holding point about 5 minutes flying time away from the pick-up zone, carry out final checks and orientation, then "run in" at very low level. To confuse and disperse enemy ground forces, a common trick is for the pilot to touch down at several places around the pick-up zone. Another simple but extremely effective ruse, often used in Vietnam, was for five HH-53Cs to fly in a loose line astern formation over the pick-up zone. The rescue was performed by the first helicopter which

then tagged on the rear of the formation after it had flown over. Using this technique, enemy radars monitored what appeared to be a continuous five-aircraft formation into and out of the zone.

"European" camouflage

At 1530 hours our aircraft was declared fit for flight, after a delay due to rotor pitch trim problems, and we drove out to the flight line. HH-53C 69-5784 was camouflaged in a new "European" scheme of two-tone green and dark grey overall, rather like that adopted by some of USAF's Fairchild A-10 Thunderbolt IIs. In line with this move to tone down the 67th ARRS's aircraft

the crews had been instructed to darken their uniform "squadron patches".

The late take-off restricted Jim Osborn to three left-hand circuits of the airfield before it was time to pick up Col. Wicker. During the circuits Pat explained that they had to be kept "wide" so as to avoid overflying the bomb dump or causing annoyance to personnel living on the base complex. Jim's third circuit was held for an A-10 of the 81st TFW, which is also based at Woodbridge, who had declared an emergency.

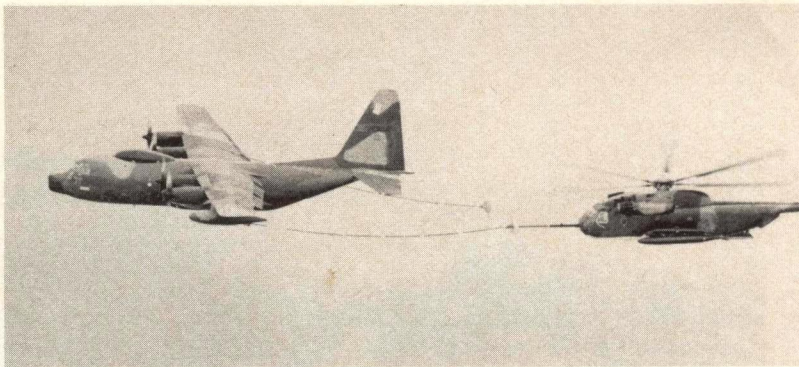
After our "full stop" landing Jim vacated the right-hand seat for Col. Wicker who, befitting a combat mis-



Above: Sikorsky HH-53C 69-5796 still in the older green and brown camouflage scheme

Below: HH-53C 69-5784, the aircraft in which the author flew, being prepared for its sortie. The three groundcrew are repairing a sticking door





Left: Capt. Pat St. Romain (nearer) and 2nd Lt. Jim Osborn planning the mission described in this article. They were, respectively, mission flight commander and acting PJ/second pilot. Right: An HH-53C refuels from a Hercules (Photo: U.S.A.F.)

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sion, wore full combat flying kit including a life protection unit, armour plate and ballistic helmet. While Col. Wicker was strapping in, Jim joined me in the cabin and George Richardson took the opportunity to give our aircraft a quick external inspection for fuel or oil leaks.

With the aircraft on the ground and the engine running, its warm Avgas-smelling exhaust was blown in through an open cabin window. This is not unpleasant, if one likes the smell of paraffin, and once out of ground effect it ceased to occur. Unfortunately the extremely high noise level in the cabin wasn't dependent on aircraft height or, apparently, whether the window was open or not and I was thankful for my headset and earplugs.

At 1720 hours we took off for our simulated combat rescue. Take-offs are usually performed from the vast Woodbridge runway by climbing vertically, followed by a short hover while in ground effect and then accelerating in a steady climb-out. Col. Wicker levelled out at 550 ft. and 110 kt. and set course for our pick-up zone. As he did so he closed the engine air particle separator (EAPS), which is a novel air intake centrifugal filter.

Visibility en route was limited to about 3,000 ft. by a slight haze but, at our low height, this didn't pose any navigation problems. As we progressed along our flight path Pat checked the route by calling out features we should shortly be flying over: "disused airfield off to the right is our next turning point, left to 298, main road should be coming up now, look for power lines..." The realism of the exercise was temporarily reduced as he pointed out his old house! It was soon restored when Col. Wicker selected the TACAN to "receive only" and Doppler to "air/air", their combat configurations. He also informed the crew of his intention to simulate external tank jettison before entering the pick-up zone. At this time we had 5,000 lb. of fuel and Col. Wicker wanted at least 3,000 lb. at the commencement of refuelling.

Prior to calling Honington Control to

inform them that we would shortly be entering Stanford PTA, Col. Wicker ordered our guns to be "simulated armed". The HH-53C is equipped with three 7.62-mm. miniguns for suppressive fire during rescues from contested areas. Two of the miniguns are pintle-mounted in the forward fuselage, firing out of the personnel door and cabin window directly opposite the personnel door, and the third is mounted on the rear ramp. Each gun carries 1,600 rounds of ammunition which may sound a lot but does not last very long with the gun's 2,000 or 4,000 rounds per minute firing rate.

From the flight engineer's seat, situated between and behind the pilot and co-pilot, I could see that the radar warning receiver (RWR) display was almost constantly illuminated. The small cathode ray tube (CRT) of the AN/APR-39 (V) displays threats in the form of alpha numerics (letters or numbers) which signify the type of radar illuminating the aircraft. That is the theory; in practice, in a real war, it may be very different. The symbols are generated by means of assumed or even known threat radar characteristics and it is a fair bet that these will be changed smartly at the outset of hostilities. The only symbol likely to be significant then is the one being used for an unknown radar. In addition to the RWR, the "Super Jolly Greens" carry bundles of chaff which can be dispensed by hand to prevent or break an enemy radar acquisition.

Fighter evasion

At 5 minutes to our holding point Honington Control informed us that Stanford Operations were closed but we were expected and were given clearance into the area. Col. Wicker arrived at the holding point 15 minutes earlier than required so that the "Super Jolly Green's" fighter evasion tactics could be demonstrated.

With Jim Osborn and George Richardson acting as lookouts in the rear fuselage, calling out imaginary fighter attacks, Col. Wicker "racked" our aircraft around in response. As he did so I was given a running commen-

tary on the manoeuvres. "If bounced by fighters the first move is to turn into the attack. Then, by performing tight reversing turns, it ought to be possible to outmanoeuvre the fighter and force it to overshoot."

Considering the HH-53C's peacetime manoeuvre envelope of 50° bank and 4g normal acceleration, the Colonel gave a most impressive demonstration of the aircraft's performance. Having successfully forced an overshoot, the HH-53C can then either be landed rapidly to hide or, if the terrain is unsuitable and if the pilot's nerves can stand it, he can repeat the manoeuvre. Hopefully the "Super Jolly Greens" are unlikely to be considered high-value targets, and the fighter will then call it a day.

Having "survived" the simulated fighter attacks, we returned to our holding point for a run-in to the rescue zone. Using a large-scale map for accurate navigation, the run-in was flown at 100 kt. and little more than tree-top height. Radio contact was made during our approach, with the correct code word, closely followed by a visual sighting of a coloured smoke plume. After a low fast pass over the pick-up zone to confirm that it was clear and safe to land, Col. Wicker pulled the HH-53C around in a tight turn and landed. Because of a temperamental door which was difficult to open in flight, due to structural flexing, the ramp was lowered for the PJs and "SAS" man who entered at a run, firing their rifles into the woods as they did so. The leg injuries were obviously not as serious as had been feared!

As soon as the three were on board the ramp was lifted and we took off from the edge of the wood, staying low and jinking to avoid imaginary enemy troop concentrations. Clearing the pick-up zone, Col. Wicker was able to relieve himself of the heavy armour plate he had worn for the mission. Calling up R.A.F. Woodbridge for news of our Lockheed HC-130N Hercules tanker, call-sign "King 23", we were told that it was unserviceable and to cancel our refuelling exercise.

To make the most of the flight time we had booked, we returned to Wood-

bridge, using radar control, "dropped off" Col. Wicker and the PJs, and Jim Osborn took the right-hand seat again. After a flight down the East Coast to familiarise him with the local landmarks, we returned for a few circuits and general handling.

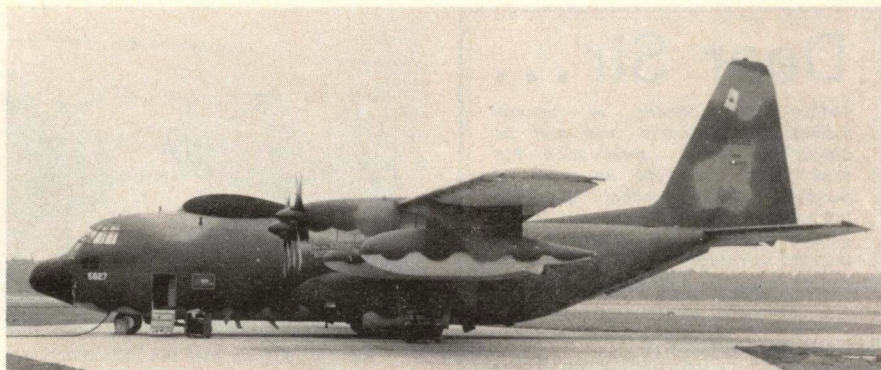
This phase of the flight gave me time to appreciate the pleasant environment of the "Super Jolly Green", apart from the high noise level mentioned previously. Throughout all the manoeuvres, the helicopter felt perfectly stable and "smooth", which is no mean praise considering that I was standing up for most of the flight.

Arriving back at Woodbridge for the second time Jim flew a circuit, landed and then carried out some general handling. After taxi-ing around the runway, demonstrating in the process the ground manoeuvrability, Jim took the HH-53C up to a hover, yawed through 90° and flew sideways along the runway. He then flew back, still sideways, to our original point above the runway and landed with only 50% power. Finally, Jim flew a circuit from a rolling take-off with 50% torque and landed at 1900 hours, as the sun was setting behind the pine woods which surround the airfield.

Squadron's "territory"

The primary role of the 67th ARRS is combat rescue—from land or water—and it has an area of responsibility bounded by the Arctic Circle to the southern tip of South Africa and from mid-Atlantic to the Middle East. In order to practise for its wartime role, the 67th ARRS frequently exercises with R.A.F., H.M. Coastguard and police services. Unlike the British search and rescue helicopter organisation which is on "instant readiness", the 67th ARRS provides a 1½-hour response capability. Nevertheless, it still provides an important rescue role in peacetime and has been scrambled within 19 minutes.

Recent recovery missions involving



HC-130N Hercules 69-5827 of the 67th ARRS. The prominent black bulge on top of the fuselage houses an ARD-17 Cook Tracker, which is a radio direction finder

the Super Jolly Green Giants include two A-10 Thunderbolt II crashes in Scotland and a Belgian aircrewman from the North Sea. One of the 67th ARRS HC-130N Hercules was also involved in a rescue mission in early 1981 when it was called upon to drop flares over the Thames estuary during the successful recovery of a German seaman who had fallen overboard.

In addition to the rescue missions flown from R.A.F. Woodbridge, the squadron's HC-130Ns on detachment to Keflavik NAS are on a 24-hour alert and are kept pretty busy. During the first half of 1981, for example, the Keflavik-based aircraft were involved in ten SAR missions, including two "saves" in one week—critically ill Russian and British seamen.

There are five HH-53Cs and five HC-130N "King Ships" on the strength of the 67th ARRS. At the time of my visit, one of the Hercules was undergoing an overhaul at Wright Patterson AFB, U.S.A., two were on base (69-5823 and 69-5827) and two were in the process of rotating for detachment to Keflavik NAS, Iceland. Of the HH-53Cs, three were on base (69-5784, 69-5796, 69-5797), one was undergoing a minor overhaul, and one was at Speyer AFB, Germany.

Many of the 67th ARRS personnel, such as Capt. Robert Dube, have served in Vietnam, as have the aircraft. Coincidentally, Robert Dube flew "5785", one of the HH-53Cs on the strength of the 67th ARRS, during the Son Tay raid and the rescue of the *Mayaguez* crew. The PJs, mentioned earlier, are an elite corps of multi-discipline specialists in gunnery, winching, paratrooping, surgery and skin-diving—to name but a few of their abilities.

The Super Jolly Green Giants, "King Ships" and their crews have distinguished themselves in Vietnam and other theatres still classified. My visit to R.A.F. Woodbridge showed that this spirit lives on in the 67th ARRS. The squadron is now equipping with night-vision goggles and HH-53Hs—with forward looking infra-red and terrain-following/avoidance radar—which will provide it with an all-weather capability. Aided by this equipment the 67th ARRS will continue to operate, as its motto reads: "So that others may live." *Acknowledgments.*—I should like to thank Capt. Kathleen McCollom of the 81st TFW Department of Information and the personnel of the 67th ARRS, in particular the crew of "5784", for their help and hospitality during my visit.

Left: Port refuelling pod of HC-130N 69-5827. Note guarded formation light for night refuelling missions. Right: Upper ramp door of the same aircraft, showing the ten ejector tubes for flares or smoke markers and the two transporter rails. Open flap on port side of the fuselage is used as an aerodynamic shield for para-jumpers and can house rocket motors for RATO

