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CH-47/MH-47 Chinook Helicopter

A Veteran Warrior

From [Gaiutra Bahadur](#), for About.com

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The Boeing Co. delivered the Chinook to the Army for use in Vietnam in 1962. A big and bulky workhorse, it is a tandem-rotor, heavy-lift helicopter with a primary mission of transporting artillery, ammunition, personnel and supplies to the battlefield. It also performs rescue, medevac and aircraft recovery operations.

The CH-47D, the model rolled out in March 1979 and still widely in use, carries twice the load of its Vietnam-era predecessor -- up to 19,500 lbs. Its twin-turbo Allied Signal T55-L-712 3750 engines are more powerful as well, and the chopper can reach a maximum speed of 195 mph, or 170 knots.

The helicopter has a triple hook system that stabilizes hefty external loads. It can airlift a bulldozer, a 16,000-pound armored Humvee or 155 mm howitzers at speeds up to 155 mph. The helicopter can handle multiple external loads, delivering to two or three separate destinations in one flight.

The cabin can hold up to 33 fully equipped troops or, for medical evacuation, 24 stretchers. It provides 42 cubic meters of cargo space and 21 square meters of cargo floor area -- enough to accommodate two Humvees or a Humvee with a 105 mm howitzer plus gun crew.

The CH-47D cockpit houses a crew of three: a pilot, a co-pilot and a flight engineer. The communications equipment consists of HF and UHF radio systems (that are "jam resistant") and an Identification Friend or Foe (IFF) interrogator. The helicopter has countermeasure systems, such as a missile approach alert, jammers, radar alert and chaff and flare dispensers. Weapons include three mounted machine guns, two in the right side door and one mounted on the left side window.

The Chinook bears the name of a tribe of American Indians and also a hot, dry, powerful wind that blows in the Pacific Northwest.

The helicopter can operate at night and in nearly all weather conditions. It has been used widely in Iraq and as part of Operation Enduring Freedom in mountainous Afghanistan, where the high altitude and temperatures have limited the use of the Black Hawk. The Chinook also delivered aid and evacuated the critically injured from some of the most inaccessible and remote parts of Pakistan after the earthquake in 2005. Since then, toy Chinooks have become favorite playthings of Pakistani children, a symbol of American



The CH-47 Chinook helicopter is the Army's workhorse, able to transport as many as 33 combat-ready troops, including these Iraqi soldiers from the 1st Brigade, 4th Iraqi Army Division.
Official Army Photo

goodwill.

An upgraded model, the CH-47F, was first rolled out on June 15, 2006, at the Boeing facility in Ridley Park, Penn., and is in final testing. It will slowly replace the 1979 model to extend the life of the helicopter beyond 2030. The Army has ordered about 450 CH-47Fs to replace its current, aging fleet in a modernization program that will cost about \$11 billion.

The CH-47F has a more modern airframe intended to reduce harmful vibrations and cut maintenance costs. It features two 4,868 horsepower Honeywell engines that improve fuel efficiency and increase lift capacity to 25,000 pounds and a new digital cockpit with enhanced communications and navigation equipment. Added internal fuel bladders will increase mission range.

The MH-47 is the U.S. Special Forces equivalent of the CH-47, with in-flight refueling, a fast-rope rappelling system and other upgrades.

Additional Specifications (CH-47D):

Maximum gross weight : 50,000 pounds

Empty weight : 23,401 pounds

Maximum speed : 170 knots / 184 mph

Armament : N/A

Rotor system : Three manual-folding blades per hub (two hubs); 225 revolutions per minute; 60-foot rotor span; fiberglass

Length : 98 feet, 10 inches

Height : 18 feet, 11 inches

Range : 265 miles

Price per Aircraft : \$10.3 million (Fiscal Year 1999)

Gaiutra Bahadur is a freelance journalist who covered the war in Iraq while a reporter for the Philadelphia Inquirer.

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7. javascript:void(0)