



NEWS RELEASE

COMMEMORATIVE AIR FORCE HEADQUARTERS

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AIR WAR VIETNAM

MIDLAND, TEXAS (Sept. 14, 2007) – In 2006, the Commemorative Air Force (CAF) introduced a Vietnam-era reenactment into its Airpower Demonstration during FINA-CAF AIRSHO® 2006. The segment was so popular that it will be brought back and expanded during FINA-CAF AIRSHO 2007, scheduled to take place Sept. 29 and 30, 2007, adjacent to Midland International Airport, midway between Midland and Odessa, Texas.

Images from Vietnam flash through the mind's eye – searing yellow-orange napalm, the vivid blues and greens of sea and jungle, the terror in the eyes of children, the thousand-yard stare of the soldiers. Yet it might be a sound that best triggers memories of this war, the distinctive whoomp, whoomp, whoomp of the helicopter.

The air war over Vietnam began as a small, localized campaign and ended with a furious all out bombing campaign. New weapons and tactics were introduced onto the battlefield, and American military doctrine, geared to defeat the Soviet Union in a catastrophic world war, had to adjust to fight a smaller conflict against traditional and guerilla forces. While jet fighters and bombers streaked across the skies over Vietnam for over 14 years, it was the introduction of the helicopter and the concept of air assault that most drastically changed the tactics the United States would use in future conflicts. Historians might argue about the effectiveness of the air campaign in Vietnam, but one thing seems clear, once the true might of the U.S. military was brought to bear against North Vietnam, it had no choice but to negotiate, lest it be destroyed entirely. However the United States paid a heavy price in lives and money to exact that punishment.

Thanks largely to the efforts of CAF Col Gregg Baiano, FINA-AIRSHO 2007 will again incorporate into the traditional Airpower Demonstration, performed by the CAF Ghost Squadron, a segment dedicated to the brave men who were called on to fight in southeast Asia. Baiano provides three of his newly-restored

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helicopters, two UH-1 Huey's and one AH-1 Cobra, for AIRSHO so AIR WAR VIETNAM can recreate some of the sights and sounds most typical of that conflict. The rescue of a downed pilot provided some of the most heroic moments in the war, and, at FINA-CAF AIRSHO 2007, visitors will see a recreation of that moment. Supporting the helicopters in the skies over Midland will be an O-2A Super Skymaster, O-1 Birdog, OV-10 Bronco and OV-1 Mohawk, all Forward Air Control airplanes; a T-28 Trojan as used by the South Vietnamese air force; an A-1 Skyraider and AC-47 Spooky gunship used during "Dust Off" (rescue) missions, and an A-26 Invader light bomber used for night-time bombing of infiltration routes used by the Communist forces.

When the Commemorative Air Force expanded its focus, from strictly World War II aviation to encompass aircraft from other conflicts, a newly-minted CAF Colonel decided that he might be able to help. Baiano, a successful Midland businessman, initially thought that he might be interested in acquiring a TBM Avenger, one that could be restored in the markings of former President George H.W. Bush, who has significant roots in Midland. However, conversations with other veterans of more recent conflicts led him toward helicopters, specifically from the Vietnam era. Baiano is not a person to do things in half-measures, and he began his journey toward ownership of some big military hardware with much historical as well as technical research.

Interestingly, at about this same time, the CAF uncovered a little known fact that the CAF had, at one time, a helicopter outfit serving in Vietnam. Baiano now could point to historic precedent to link his helicopters to the CAF.

At AIRSHO 2005 the first Huey in Baiano's fleet did several fly-bys, and the response from many of the veterans of the Viet Nam era was so positive that the AIRSHO committee decided to expand that small display into a longer one, and to allow AIRSHO visitors to take home with them the memory of that distinctive "whoomp, whoomp, whoomp."