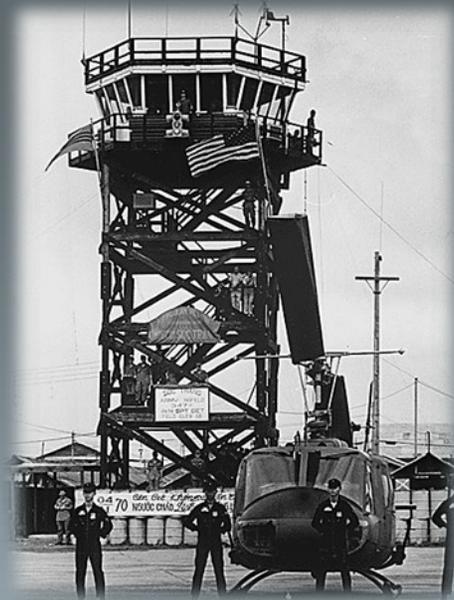


Abstract

Although the military had helicopters prior to 1962, the war in Vietnam is known as the “Helicopter War” because of the extensive use of helicopters in the combat arenas and the important changes in technology during these years. In the United States, the buildup for the Vietnam War included construction of mission-related buildings and structures to support the war. The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, requires federal agencies to inventory and evaluate their cultural resources, usually as they near 50 years of age. These structures are about to turn 50 and there is currently no existing historic context describing the development, construction, and use of Vietnam War helicopter-related facilities. A broad overview from 1962 through 1975 highlights the Vietnam-influenced construction that created facilities on many installations. This new construction augmented the existing World War II-era infrastructure that became heavily utilized in support of the Vietnam War.



President Lyndon Johnson Views Helicopters
in Flight, 1966



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Images from:

Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library
The Vietnam Center and Archive
National Archives at College Park
National Naval Aviation Museum
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Helicopter Training and Use on US Military Installations Vietnam War Historic Context Subtheme

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Objective

The purpose of this effort was to research and develop a historic context subtheme for how military helicopter use during the Vietnam War influenced construction on US military installations during this time period. The report also provides context and typology of Vietnam War (1962–1975) helicopter resources on DoD installations in the United States. The project provides cultural resource professionals with a standardized approach to identify property types, determine historical significance of these properties, and assess integrity, thereby greatly increasing efficiency and cost-savings.



Navy Helicopters in Flight Over Vietnam

Methodology

The process included a literature review, investigation of primary and secondary sources for context, site visits to select installations, and report development. Researchers accessed primary and secondary sources at the National Archives and Records Administration, military libraries and museums, university libraries, and online sources. A number of individuals provided additional support by assisting with data requests and site visits.

This report provides context and typology for Vietnam War (1962–1975) helicopter-related resources on Department of Defense (DoD) installations in the United States and contains an analysis of the development and use of rotary-wing aircraft during the war. Military action in Vietnam is addressed in general terms only to fortify the overall context describing the use of helicopters in the war and how their increased use affected DoD installations in the United States.

This report can be used to develop installation-specific contexts to support the identification and evaluation of Vietnam War helicopter-related facilities on those installations. This historic context provides military cultural resource professionals with a common understanding for determining the historical significance of Vietnam War helicopter-related facilities.

Resources Types

Types of resources associated with this historic context include facilities and structures that were constructed, underwent a major expansion, or were adapted and heavily used during 1962–1975 and were directly related to:

- providing training to integrate helicopter use with ground troops, aeromedical personnel, special ops troops, and the other military operations
- helicopter pilot training
- providing helicopter mechanics training
- development of helicopter use tactics and strategies
- areas of installation where helicopter units were housed separately from other units
- research and development associated with helicopter use (arming helicopters, armoring, etc.)
- transport of helicopters to and around Vietnam including transport vessels, planes, and helicopter carriers

Examples of These Facilities Include:

- Buildings and indoor training areas that accommodated classrooms, battle labs, simulators, and mock ups. These buildings vary in size, shape, and design.
- Outdoor training areas including clearings or hardscapes for landing zones, hover areas, and stage fields, tactical instrument training course, aerial firing ranges and targets, tactical training sites, and pinnacle training areas.
- Flightline resources in support of helicopter use, including aprons, tarmacs, helipads, operations buildings, hangars, fire stations, and control towers.
- Maintenance hangars, paint shop, storage, warehouses, fueling systems, wash racks, and avionics shops.
- Buildings and structures comprising a separated cantonment area including barracks and other housing, mess halls, administration buildings, chapels, gymnasiums, branch exchanges, and branch clinics, and unit headquarters.

Conclusion

Resources would need to be directly tied to the Vietnam War. Resources constructed during this time period could be associated with general modernization or other Cold War programs. Many of these resources would not be eligible individually; however, they should be assessed and considered as a historic district.



Leaving Saigon