

Hasegawa's UH-1H "Medivac Huey"



by Dick Smith

There probably aren't more than a hand-full of people in the world that haven't seen the classic Korean War television show "M*A*S*H." The show's opening featured a Bell-47 Sioux helicopter swooping into the landing zone while the doctors and other medical personnel of the 4077th prepared to receive the wounded.

While this drama was being enacted on a Hollywood backlot, *real* medivac personnel were dodging *real* enemy fire a half a world away in Vietnam. In the Southeast Asian drama, the helicopter was another Bell helicopter, the UH-1. Model kits of the "Huey" come in all sizes ranging from the huge 1/24th scale down to the tiny 1/144th scale versions. Almost every model of this ubiquitous bird is represented in kit form.

To build a model of the "Huey" medivac helicopters from Vietnam, I used Hasegawa's kit of the UH-1H "Iroquois" in 1/72nd scale. (The UH-1H was the most widely produced version of the famous "Hueys" and were essentially "D" models with an upgraded engine.)

Construction starts with the assembly and painting of the interior in neutral gray. Spray the instrument panel and center console flat black and apply the decals for the gauges

and switches. The seats are olive drab, FS-34086, and will benefit from belts made from paper strips painted light tan.

The rotor gearbox, which is attached to the top of the cabin interior, is assembled next and painted “steel.” Carefully align and cement the interior cabin and the gearbox assembly into one of the fuselage sides. Align the fuselage sections and cement them together.



The kit instructions next call for the installation of the clear windshield and door windows. To eliminate the task of masking all of this “glass,” hold off on this step until the painting is complete.

The main skids for the helicopter can be attached at this time. This model is an overall white medivac chopper from the 68th Medical Detachment at Chu Lai in Vietnam in 1972. A painting of this aircraft appears on the back cover of the Squadron Signal Publication “Airmobile: The Helicopter War in Vietnam.” Photos and drawings show the tail rotor of some UH-1’s on the starboard side of the vertical stabilizer. With very few exceptions, all U.S. Army “Hueys” had the rotor located on the port side.

Check your references and attach all of the antennae and intake scoops common to the UH-1H. Stuff some wet tissue into the windshield and door openings before you spray the entire model with gloss white, FS-17886. When dry, mask off the leading edge of the vertical tail, the tail rotor boom drive housing, and the nose anti-glare panel. Paint those areas flat black.

While the paint is drying on the fuselage, assemble and paint the main rotor and tail rotor blades flat black. The tips of the main rotor are yellow, FS-13538; the tail rotor tips are red-white-red. Next the attachment points and blade control links are masked off and sprayed with “steel.” Set these parts aside until final assembly.

The decals in the kit only provide the black “United States Army” lettering that appears on the tail boom. The red crosses can be fabricated using the ScaleMaster decal sheet #SS-1 Red. This sheet provides several strips of color with widths designated by letters. (“A” is the widest.) Ten, one-half millimeter long strips, were cut from the “E” line. These were used to make the crosses on the doors and nose. Four one-inch long strips were cut from the “B” section of the decal sheet and were used to form the large crosses located on the rear of the fuselage.

The black aircraft registration numbers, 15616, located on the vertical tail, were taken from a ScaleMaster sheet of letters and numbers, #SM-18B. Seal the decals with a spray coat of Testor’s Dullcoat and Glosscoat mixed 50/50 for a satin finish.



The windows located over the pilot’s seats are tinted green. Spray the inside of the windows with a light coat of Tamiya “clear green” acrylic paint. Acrylic paint does not “fog” clear plastic parts as will some that are enamel or lacquer based. All of the clear parts can be attached using Johnson’s “Future” acrylic floor wax. This product also will not attack clear plastic and dries invisible. Attach the tail and main rotors and the model is complete.

This overall white “Huey” was a significant departure from the olive drab “Hueys” that airlifted hundreds of wounded GIs from the fighting in Vietnam. But no matter what the color, it must have been an incredible sight to a wounded soldier.