



Denis Cameron—Franz Furst
AH-1 (HUEY COBRA)
 FUNCTION: Gunship
 PAYLOAD: Two crew; machine guns,
 grenade and rocket launchers
 COST: \$500,000



David Terry

OH-6 (CAYUSE)
 FUNCTION: Observation
 PAYLOAD: Four persons
 COST: \$100,000

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like the World War I flying," says a gunship commander. "We go about the same speed as the Spads did, and that's the kind of flying a man can comprehend."

It's also the kind of fighting that a man can get his teeth into, if he wants. U.S. ground forces may have grown somewhat "flaky" from their recent inactivity (NEWSWEEK, Jan. 11), but most helicopter pilots still truly love to fight. "We're the last of the hand-to-hand warriors," declares one veteran pilot. "We can see the enemy, and he can see us. The jet jockeys and even the infantry often don't get that chance." This means a lot to many Army fliers, and they revel in the memory of point-blank shoot-outs. "We were going into a hot LZ," one Huey door gunner recalls, "and we could see all those dudes up in the trees, firing at us. I spotted one guy doing a real John Wayne right at me. I put my 60 [M-60 machine gun] on him and we both fired. It was pretty exciting. I saw him shoot, and I saw him fall and I got him myself."

Killer: It takes a particular kind of man to enjoy the work. Some are case-hardened pros. "I don't want to sound brutal," says Capt. Mark Afferbach, 26, a gunship pilot from Temple, Pa., "but war is about killing people, and if you fly Cobras, well, you're flying the most efficient killing machine the Army has to offer." Other pilots are more like career adventurers. C Troop's Harry Adams has been a deep-sea diver (hunting for sunken treasure off the coast of Florida), a professional shark fisherman and, he claims, a pilot for the CIA. "I've always done what I wanted to do in life," Adams explains. "I'm here by choice—though sometimes lately I wish I wasn't."

Refined to the ultimate degree, the airborne gunfighter turns out to be someone much like Warrant Officer Wayne Forbes, 23, from Galveston, Texas. The skipper of a light observation and control helicopter (known as a "Loach"), Forbes is one of three pilots left from the seven

who originally went into Laos with his unit. Despite the danger, Forbes likes his job. "I can do this very well, and maybe that's the satisfaction," he muses. The principal source of satisfaction: "You can see a guy lying on the ground and know that you killed him personally." But it's not all play and no work. "Some guys think this job is glamorous," says Forbes, "but they find out pretty fast that it isn't. They see people getting messed up, and then they're afraid. But me, I've been afraid the whole goddamned time, and that's why I'm alive."

In living through the invasion of Laos, Forbes has sharpened a vast array of skills. Hovering his Loach a few feet above the ground, he is an expert tracker. "Footprints are very important," he says. "If the print is distinct, and the water in it is still muddy, you can tell that the guy was here recently. But if the print has eroded and the water is clear, then he went through some time ago." Then there are the techniques of flying a scout helicopter. "We have to go in deep enough to get the enemy to com-

mit himself by opening fire," he explains, "but not so deep that you can't get out. It's hard to teach new pilots just how to do it." Still, Forbes tries to pass on what he has learned. "I feel responsible for the new pilots, and I have to check them out before they can become scouts. I'm not going to turn someone loose to get killed."

For many helicopter crews, including those who fly Huey transports and "medevacs" (medical-evacuation craft), saving lives is a full-time job. NEWSWEEK's Saigon bureau chief, Kevin Buckley, discovered this at firsthand late one afternoon last week when he was stranded at an ARVN outpost in Laos called Delta One. "The light was going fast," Buckley reported later, "and there was not much hope that we would be picked up—especially because, as reporters, we were low priority for risky missions. But, incredibly, a 'slick' [Huey transport] roared in through an enemy rocket barrage. We scrambled aboard shouting, 'Go, go, go!' When we landed at Quang Tri, I ran around to the front to kiss the pilot's



T. Khoo

Damaged helicopter at Khe Sanh: Playing down the losses