

# AIR AMERICA: SIKORSKY S-58Ts

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## The types of missions flown by Air America's S-58Ts:

In addition to the UH-34Ds flown by Air America since 1961, 5 UH-34Ds were converted to S-58Ts at Udorn in 1971, the first being completed in March 71 and the last in July 71 (Morrison / Conboy, *Shadow war*, p. 379). Those S-58Ts ("Twin Packs") were used to transport Hmong troops and to carry heavy slide loads like crates of ammunition (Parker, *Covert ops*, pp. 49, 230). A 6th UH-34D was converted for CIA contingencies and based at Taiwan, where it was flown by pilots of the 34th Squadron of the Republic of China Air Force (Morrison / Conboy, *Shadow war*, p. 386, note 14). In late 1971, this 6th S-58T was painted in the colors of the Republic of China Air Force (see the photos in: Conboy / Morrison, *The quiet one*, pp. 44/5) and used to train 6 Taiwanese 34th Squadron crewmen at Tainan to rescue a downed Hughes 500P, as a Hughes 500P was to be used on a covert wiretap mission into Vinh, North Vietnam. In the spring of 1972, training was continued at PS-44, a secret location located 26 kilometers north of Pakse in southern Laos (Conboy / Andradé, *Spies and commandos*, p. 255). All of these 6 helicopters were bailed from the US Marine Corps, only the 6 S-58T conversion kits belonged to Air America (Inventory list made up by R. Dixon Speas Associates Inc and dated 10 and 11 November 1975, p. 3, in: UTD/CIA/B18F6).

## Statistics according to official Air America documents:

- Inventories of 31 March 72 > 30 November 72 (UTD/CIA/B1F10): 6 > 6 conversion kits

## The individual aircraft histories:

Type	registration / serial	c/n (msn)	date acquired	origin
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Air America S-58T XW-PHA  
in "airline colors", probably taken in March 71  
(UTD/Hitner/B1F3)



Air America S-58T XW-PHA  
in green colors, taken by Tom Lum,  
probably at Udorn in the early seventies  
(photo no.VA024800, No Date, Allen  
Cates Collection, The Vietnam Archive,  
Texas Tech University, with kind  
permission from Steve Maxner)

Sikorsky S-58T      XW-PHA      58.1398      March 71      converted from USMC  
UH-34D BuA 148811

**Service history:** arrived at Udorn on 13 December 70 as a UH-34D (Minutes ExCom-AACL/AAM of 22 December 70, in: UTD/CIA/B8F4); the first flight as a S-58R was on 17 March 71; a photo (probably of its first flight) is preserved in: UTD/Hitner/B1F3; project manager for the conversion of 5 UH-34Ds into S-58Ts was Captain R. D. Davis (UTD/Leary/B1 for 17 March 71); made its first operational heavy lift, when it transported the engine of UH-34D H-73 from Nong Khai (T-22), Thailand, back to Udorn in 71 (photos are published in: *Air America Log*, vol. V, no. 4, 1971, p. 6, and in: Lundh, *Sikorsky H-34*, p. 127); assigned to contract AID-439-713 for use out of Udorn at least 1-31 July 71 (F.O.C.s of 1 and 15 July 71, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B); on 9 November 71, XW-PHA made a precautionary landing at coordinates UG065543 near Xieng Khouang (L-22) and was ferried to Ban Thang (LS-275) for repairs the same day (XOXO of 9 Nov. 71, in: UTD/Hickler/B25F11); current on 1 April 72 (List "Assigned, Maintained aircraft" as of 1 April 72, in: UTD/CIA/B49F2); on 17 July 72, XW-PHA made an emergency landing near Roi Et (T-02), Thailand, after problems with the gear box; repaired (XOXO of 17 July 72, in: UTD/Hickler/B27F2); at Vientiane on 23 September 72; at Udorn 18 April 73 (Udorn daily flight schedule of 18 April 73, in: UTD/Dexter/F1); a photo preserved in UTD/Cournoyer (Sm. Coll.1) shows XW-PHA in an airline-like color scheme operated in the first few months; it was later repainted in overall olive drab (see the photos in: Conboy, *War in Laos*, p. 33, and in the A. Cates collection at TTU [no. VA024800]); assigned to contract F04606-71-C-0002 for use out of Udorn 16-30 April 73 (F.O.C. of 16 April 73, in: UTD/Kaufman/B1F14); still assigned to contract F04606-71-C-0002 for use out of Udorn 1 November-31 December 73 (F.O.C.s of 1 Nov. 73 and 1 Dec. 73, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7C); still assigned to contract F04606-71-C-0002 for use out of Udorn 1-28 February 74 (F.O.C. of 1 Feb. 74, in: UTD/CIA/B51F21); still assigned to contract F04606-71-C-0002 for use out of Udorn at least 1 April-31 May 74 (Flight Operations Circulars dated 1 April 74 and 1 May 74, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7C).

**Fate:** returned to the USMC after removing the Air America owned S-58T kit and engines (Status as of 12 August 74, in: UTD/CIA/B56F4); reportedly scrapped on 31 May 74 (Lundh, *Sikorsky H-34*, p. 125).



Air America S-58T XW-PHB at Udorn in 1973  
(with kind permission from Ward S. Reimer)

Sikorsky S-58T      XW-PHB      58.1203      1971      converted from USMC  
UH-34D BuA 148089

**Service history:** BuA 148089 went into storage at AMARC/Davis Monthan AFB on 8 July 1970, leaving on the same day to North Island with 148074 (e-mail dated 8 April 2004, kindly sent to the author by Sid Nanson); arrived at Udorn on 13 December 70 as a UH-34D (Minutes ExCom-AACL/AAM of 22 December 70, in: UTD/CIA/B8F4); according to military records the conversion to S-58T was completed on 20 April 1971, at TT 5003 hours (e-mail dated 8 April 2004, kindly sent to the author by Sid Nanson); at Bonam Long (LS-32) on 7 June 71; assigned to contract AID-439-713 for use out of Udorn at least 1-31 July 71 (F.O.C.s of 1 and 15 July 71, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B); on 9 September 71, XW-PHB was hit by a fuel drum parachuted from C-123K "374", when parked at Moung Nham (LS-63); one main rotor blade was damaged; repaired and returned to service the same day (XOXO of 9 Sept. 71, in: UTD/Hickler/B25F11); shot down by ground fire at coordinates UG 009325 near Lat Khai (LS-280), Laos, on 20 December 71, but Captain H. R. Casterlin made a successful forced landing; the angle gear box oil line, the fuel tank and the main rotor blade were damaged; the crew was rescued by Bell 204B N8512F, there were no injuries; the aircraft was first left at scene for security reasons, but after some emergency repairs, it was ferried to Long Tieng (LS-20A) later the same day (UTD/Leary/B1 for 20 December 71; Minutes ExCom-AACL/AAM of 11 January 72, in: UTD/CIA/B9F7); current on 1 April 72 (List "Assigned, Maintained aircraft" as of 1 April 72, in: UTD/CIA/B49F2); on 29 May 72, the oil cooler had to be repaired, when XW-PHB was on the ground at Long Tieng (LS-20A) (XOXO of 29 May 72, in: UTD/Hickler/B27F2); on 25 July 72, the oil cooler of XW-PHB failed, while the aircraft was at Sam Thong (LS-20); repaired the following day (XOXO of 25 July 72, in: UTD/Hickler/B27F2); suffered an engine failure at coordinates TG991035 near Pha Khao (LS-14), Laos, on 12 August 72; repaired and returned to Udorn on 13 August 72 (XOXOs of 12-13 August 72, in: UTD/Hickler/B27F2); assigned to contract F04606-71-C-0002 for use out of Udorn 16-30 April 73 (F.O.C. of 16 April 73, in: UTD/Kaufman/B1F14); still assigned to contract F04606-71-C-0002 for use out of Udorn 1 November-31 December 73 (F.O.C.s of 1 Nov. 73 and 1 Dec. 73, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7C), 1-28 February 74 (F.O.C. of 1 Feb. 74, in: UTD/CIA/B51F21), and at least 1 April-31 May 74 (Flight Operations Circulars dated 1 April 74 and 1 May 74, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7C).

**Fate:** returned to the USMC after removing the Air America owned S-58T kit and engines (Status as of 12 August 74, in: UTD/CIA/B56F4); reportedly scrapped on 31 May 74 (Lundh, *Sikorsky H-34*, p. 125). According to military records, it was "de activated" on 31 May 1974 at a total time of 9748 hours (e-mail dated 8 April 2004, kindly sent to the author by Sid Nanson).

Sikorsky S-58T      XW-PHC      58.1188      71      converted from USMC  
UH-34D BuA 148074

**Service history:** BuA 148074 went into storage at AMARC/Davis Monthan AFB on 10 June 1970 and left the facility on 1 October 1970, going to NARF North Island (e-mail dated 8 April 2004, kindly sent to the author by Sid Nanson); arrived at Udorn on 13 December 70 as a UH-34D (Minutes ExCom-AACL/AAM of 22 December 70, in: UTD/CIA/B8F4); according to military records, conversion to S-58T was completed on 21 May 1971 at a total time of 3851 hours (e-mail dated 8 April 2004, kindly sent to the author by Sid Nanson); assigned to contract AID-439-713 for use out of Udorn at least 1-31 July 71 (F.O.C.s of 1 and 15 July 71, in:

UTD/Hickler/B8F7B); on 14 August 71, XW-PHC received battle damage at coordinates UG0455, 3 miles NW of Xieng Khouang (L-22), when piloted by Captain J. E. Hunter; one Lao passenger received a minor shrapnel wound, and the rotor blades and one tire and wheel were damaged; repaired and returned to service about fifteen hours later (XOXO of 14 Aug. 71, in: UTD/Hickler/B25F11); current on 1 April 72 (List "Assigned, Maintained aircraft" as of 1 April 72, in: UTD/CIA/B49F2); assigned to contract F04606-71-C-0002 for use out of Udorn 16-30 April 73 (F.O.C. of 16 April 73, in: UTD/Kaufman/B1F14); on 3 September 73, XW-PHC became uncontrollable on the Air America ramp at Udorn and rose and tipped to the left during a flight control servo on/off check, slightly injuring Captain T. A. Moher, and resulting in substantial damage; repaired and returned to service on 30 September 72 (XOXO of 3 Sept. 72, in: UTD/Hickler/B27F2; Accident report with photos, in: UTD/CIA/B61F9; Minutes ExCom-AACL/AAM of 12 September 72, in: UTD/CIA/B9F7; UTD/Leary/B1 for 27 August 72).

**Fate:** on 12 November 72, XW-PHC, piloted by Captain C. A. Weitz, suffered a complete loss of power on no.1 engine, when landing at Ban Laong / Phoummachedy (LS-257); on 13 November 72, a maintenance team visited the aircraft, and a power plant change was planned for 14 November; but this could not be done, as XW-PHC was damaged by hostile fire on 14 November 72, and recovery had to be deferred because of the insecurity of the area (XOXOs of 12-14 Nov. 72, in: UTD/Hickler/B27F2); it was cancelled from the bailment agreement on 14 June 73 (Letter by Paul C Velte dated 28 June 73, in: UTD/CIA/B15F5), but was still assigned to contract F04606-71-C-0002 for use out of Udorn 1 November-31 December 73 (F.O.C.s of 1 Nov. 73 and 1 Dec. 73, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7C), and at least 1 April-31 May 74 (Flight Operations Circulars of 1 April 74 and 1 May 74, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7C); nevertheless, the aircraft was still not recovered on 1 May 74 due to area insecurity (F.O.Circular of 1 May 74, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7C). According to the Status report as of 12 August 74 (in: UTD/CIA/B56F4), it was returned to the USMC at that time after removing the Air America owned S-58T kit and engines. This is probably an arbitrary date as probably is the date of 31 January 1973 given in military records (e-mail dated 8 April 2004, kindly sent to the author by Sid Nanson), when it was allegedly written off at a total time of 6228 hours.



S-58T XW-PHD at Vang Vieng on 27 August 72 (UTD/Anthony/F9)

Sikorsky S-58T	XW-PHD	58.1229	71	converted from US Navy UH-34D BuA 148110
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**Service history:** arrived at Udorn on 13 December 70 as a UH-34D (Minutes ExCom-AACL/AAM of 22 December 70, in: UTD/CIA/B8F4); assigned to contract

AID-439-713 for use out of Udorn at least 1-31 July 71 (F.O.C.s of 1 and 15 July 71, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B); on 12 October 71, XW-PHD made a precautionary landing at coordinates TE5765 near Nong Khai (T-22), Thailand; after repairs, the aircraft returned to Udorn the same day (XOXO of 12 Oct. 71, in: UTD/Hickler/B25F11); at Long Tieng (LS-20A), Laos, in 1971 (a photo is preserved in: UTD/Stuart [Sm.Coll. 5]); at Udorn on 22 February 72 (a photo taken by Ward Reimer is published in: Love, *Wings of Air America*, p. 103); current on 1 April 72 (List "Assigned, Maintained aircraft" as of 1 April 72, in: UTD/CIA/B49F2); on 27 April 72, an unknown Air America employee was slightly injured during a recovery mission flown with XW-PHD in the area between Pha Khao (LS-14) and Mounng Cha (LS-113) (Employee accident report of 28 April 72, in: UTD/CIA/B29F2); rescued the crew of the ill-fated C-123K "555" at Vang Vieng (L-16), Laos, on 27 August 72 (a photo is preserved in: UTD/Anthony/F9); on 5 September 72, some sort of grenade discharged on the ground at coordinates TG9245 near Ban Thang (LS-346), Laos, while a sling load was released; F/M Bevan sustained a penetrating wound about 0.7 cm in diameter and was transported to Udorn via C-123K "616"; XW-PHD received 5 small holes in the fuselage and was ferried to Long Tieng (LS-20A) the same day (XOXO of 5 Sept. 72, in: UTD/Hickler/B27F2); at Udorn on 24 December 72 and on 5 January 73 (Crew member duty report of H. F. Miller, in: UTD/Miller/B4F6); photos can be found in: UTD/Landry/B1F2, and in: Lundh, *Sikorsky H-34*, p. 127; assigned to contract F04606-71-C-0002 for use out of Udorn 16-30 April 73 (F. O. C. of 16



Air America S-58T XW-PHD at Udorn in September 73  
(with kind permission from Ward S. Reimer)

April 73, in: UTD/Kaufman/B1F14); on 3 October 73, XW-PHD was damaged during a medevac mission near Tha Tam Bleung (LS-72) at coordinates TG8528; piloted by Captain A. E. Cates, the aircraft attempted a medevac at approximately 22.00 hours local time to a landing zone at 6,000 feet elevation; on final approach, which was relatively flat and was conducted with reference to lights on the landing zone, the aircraft started to settle and finally crashed in an up-right position in brush and trees approximately ½ mile from and 1,000 feet lower than the landing zone (XOXOs of 3 Oct. 73, in: UTD/Hickler/B25F12; F.O.Circular of 1 November 73, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7C); dropped from the -0002 contract on 15 October 73; disposition still pending on 1 May 74 (F.O.Circular of 1 May 74, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7C).



The remains of S-58T XW-PHD at Udorn in October 1973, taken by Ward S. Reimer (with kind permission from Ward S. Reimer)

**Fate:** returned to the USMC after removing the Air America owned S-58T kit and engines (Status as of 12 August 74, in: UTD/CIA/B56F4); officially deactivated by the USMC on 3 April 74 (Nanson, "USMC Helicopter Disposition"), but this may be an arbitrary date.

Sikorsky S-58T	XW-PHE	58.1243	24 June 71	converted from US Navy UH-34D BuA 148113
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**Service history:** arrived at Udorn on 13 December 70 as a UH-34D (Minutes ExCom-AACL/AAM of 22 December 70, in: UTD/CIA/B8F4); the conversion to S-58T was completed on 24 June 71 (F.O.C. dated 1 July 71, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B); assigned to contract AID-439-713 for use out of Udorn at least 1-31 July 71 (F.O.C.s of 1 and 15 July 71, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B); at Long Tieng (LS-20A), Laos, in 1971 (a photo is preserved in: UTD/Stuart [Sm. Coll. 5]); made an emergency landing on a hill top at coordinates TG8347 near Houei Ki Nin (LS-38) on 24 September 71, when piloted by Captain P. G. Peyton; repaired and returned to service (XOXO of 24 Sept. 71, in: UTD/Hickler/B25F11); the fuselage was hit by ground fire at an

unknown location over Laos on 18 December 71 (Minutes ExCom-AAAC/AAM of 11 January 72, in: UTD/CIA/B9F7); on 28 December 71, XW-PHE made a precautionary landing at coordinates TG8827, after a warning light came on in flight; after a short inspection, the aircraft was ferried to Tha Tam Bleung (LS-72) and later to Udorn the same day (XOXO of 28 Dec. 71, in: UTD/Hickler/B25F11); current on 1 April 72 (List "Assigned, Maintained aircraft" as of 1 April 72, in: UTD/CIA/B49F2); suffered high frequency vibration and made an emergency landing at Sam Thong (LS-20), Laos, on 31 July 72, piloted by Captain B.L. Pearson; the engine oil cooler blower fan was damaged; repaired and ferried to Udorn on 1 August 72; returned to service on 4 August 72 (XOXO of 31 July 72, in: UTD/Hickler/B27F2; Minutes ExCom-AAAC/AAM of 22 August 72, in: UTD/CIA/B9F7); at Udorn in 1972 (photos are published in: *Air America Log*, vol. VI, no. 2, 1971, p. 1), on 2 March 73 (Udorn daily flight schedule of 2 March 73, in: UTD/Bonansinga) and on 18 April 73 (Udorn daily flight schedule of 18 April 73, in: UTD/Dexter/F1); assigned to contract F04606-71-C-0002 for use out of Udorn 16-30 April 73 (F.O.C. of 16 April 73, in: UTD/Kaufman/B1F14); still assigned to contract F04606-71-C-0002 for use out of Udorn 1 November-31 December 73 (F. O. C.s of 1 Nov. 73 and 1 Dec. 73, in: UTD/



Air America S-58T XW-PHE at Udorn in September / October 1973  
(with kind permission from Ward S. Reimer)

Hickler/B8F7C); used as a spare aircraft out of Udorn 1-28 February 74 (F.O.C. of 1 Feb. 74, in: UTD/CIA/B51F21) and 1-30 April 74 (F.O.C. of 1 April 74, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7C); again assigned to contract F04606-71-C-0002 for use out of Udorn at least 1-31 May 74 (Flight Operations Circular dated 1 May 74, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7C).

**Fate:** returned to the USMC after removing the Air America owned S-58T kit and engines (Status as of 12 August 74, in: UTD/CIA/B56F4); reportedly scrapped on 31 May 74 (Lundh, *Sikorsky H-34*, p. 125).



Air America S-58T “727” in the colors of the Republic of China Air Force  
training to rescue a downed Hughes 500 on Taiwan in 1971  
(with kind permission from Ken Conboy)

Sikorsky S-58T      “727”      58.1723      late 71      ex Air America UH-34D  
H-79; previously USMC  
BuA 150727

**Service history:** Air America UH-34D H-79 was no longer current on 1 January 72 (List “Assigned, Maintained aircraft” as of 1 January 72, in: UTD/Bisson/B5 reel 23); it is believed to have been transferred to Tainan in August 71 and converted to S-58T; it was reserialled as “727” in late 71, using call-sign “Red band 727” (e-mail dated 15 June 2006, kindly sent to the author by Clarence Fu). This was the Air America UH-34D which was converted to S-58T for CIA contingencies and based at Taiwan, where it was flown by pilots of the 34th Squadron of the Republic of China Air Force (Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p. 386, note 14). In late 1971, this S-58T was painted in the colors of the Republic of China Air Force (see the photos in: Conboy / Morrison, *The quiet one*, pp. 44/5, where no serial can be seen) and used to train 6 Taiwanese 34th Squadron crewmen at Tainan to rescue a downed Hughes 500P, as a Hughes 500P was to be used on a covert wiretap mission into Vinh, North Vietnam. In the spring of 1972, training was continued at PS-44, a secret location located 26 kilometers north of Pakse in southern Laos (Conboy / Andradé, *Spies and commandos*, p. 255).

**Fate:** rereg'd. as XW-PHY in early 1972

XW-PHY      58.1723      early 72      ex Air America “727”

**Service history:** current on 1 March 72 and 1 April 72 (List “Assigned, Maintained aircraft” as of 1 March 72 and 1 April 72, in: UTD/Bisson/B5 reel 23); believed to have been used out of PS-44 to train 6 Taiwanese 34th Squadron crewmen at Tainan to rescue a downed Hughes 500P, as a Hughes 500P was to be used on a covert wiretap mission into Vinh, North Vietnam. In September 72, the Taiwanese S-58T and Hughes 500P crews returned to Taiwan (Conboy / Morrison, *The quiet one*, p. 46) - possibly XW-PHY with them.

**Fate:** reserialled as “727” in September (?) 1972

“727”      58.1723      Sept. 72 (?)      ex Air America XW-PHY

**Service history:** at Tainan for ?

**Fate:** destroyed at Tainan on 5 January 73 as “727”; there were no fatalities (List “Air America aircraft destroyed” dated 3 May 73, in: UTD/CIA/B29F1, and in: UTD/CIA/B49F1); cancelled from the bailment agreement on 14 June 73 (Letter by

Paul C. Velte dated 28 June 73, in: UTD/CIA/B15F5); not current on 16 April 73 (F.O.Circular of 16 April 73, in: UTD/Kaufman/B1F14). This was the S-58 that crashed into the sea near Hsinchu base on 5 January 73 during a training flight and was subsequently lifted away by an American twin-rotor helicopter (e-mails dated 30 March 2005 and 4 June 2006, kindly sent to the author by Clarence Fu).

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