

## 3637 FLYING TRAINING SQUADRON (HELICOPTER)



### MISSION

### LINEAGE

3637 Flying Training Squadron (Helicopter)

### STATIONS

Sheppard AFB, TX, 1 Oct 1965-30 Jun 1971

### ASSIGNMENTS

### WEAPON SYSTEMS

### COMMANDERS

### HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

### EMBLEM

## **MOTTO**

## **NICKNAME**

## **OPERATIONS**

On 1 October 1965, Air Training Command activated the 3637th Flying Training Squadron (Helicopter) and assigned it to the center.

In August 1965, an advance party from Stead AFB arrived with a single H-19B helicopter to form the nucleus of Sheppard's helicopter training program. Leading the helicopter school after its arrival on Sheppard was Lt Col Jimmy Hamill, a veteran helicopter pilot who had flown rotary winged aircraft since the early 1950s. By October, the 3637th Flying Training Squadron was organized, and the wholesale transfer of Stead's personnel and equipment began. On 10 December, sufficient equipment and personnel were in place to warrant the activation of the 3630th Flying Training Wing, of which the 3637th remained a part. By year's end, 26 H-19B helicopters were in place for training.

A critical component of the Air Force helicopter training program had been its emphasis on real-world flying scenarios. Since Air Force helicopters were employed extensively in the search and rescue capacity, much of the training hinged on that mission. At Stead AFB, the Sierra Nevada Mountains had been close enough to allow for rescue training in steep and difficult terrain. There were also numerous natural lakes upon which to practice water rescues. There were no comparable ranges near Sheppard, but the Wichita Mountains were close enough to provide a significant challenge.

For new students in the helicopter flight training program, the curriculum began with what was termed "the dollar ride." The orientation flight was designed to acquaint students with the capabilities of the helicopter and its differences from conventional aircraft. The first flight was definitely a shakeup mission. For example, most new students were severely apprehensive about engine failure, feeling that a helicopter would surely fall like a rock in such a situation. Thus, from the first flight, the instructor demonstrated "autorotation," whereby a helicopter could be landed without power using the wind currents to propel the rotor for a controlled landing. The aerodynamics of rotary wings provided some lift as long as the propeller free-wheeled at a sufficient rate. After having experienced auto rotation, the student pilots gained confidence in their aircraft and were ready to begin the course in earnest.

In 1967, the helicopter training program had 60 operational aircraft in service on the average. They were comprised of 39 UH-19s, 10 CH-3Cs, 2 CH-3Es, and 9 HH-43s. By 1968, because of the operational dictates of Southeast Asia where helicopters were required to operate over great distances, pilots at the 3630 FTW had to learn to fly in formation. These flights enhanced the defensive capability of the helicopter and allowed the pilot to learn how to accomplish in-flight refueling.

Eighty percent of the wing's graduates went directly to Southeast Asia, and virtually all of its instructors were veterans of that conflict.

In 1970, at the direction of Congress, the Sheppard helicopter pilot training program ended. Future training would be provided by the Army.

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USAF Unit Histories  
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Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.  
*Sustaining the Wings, A Fifty-Year History of Sheppard Air Force Base (1941-1991)*. Dwight W. Tuttle. Midwestern State University Press. Wichita Falls, TX. 1991.