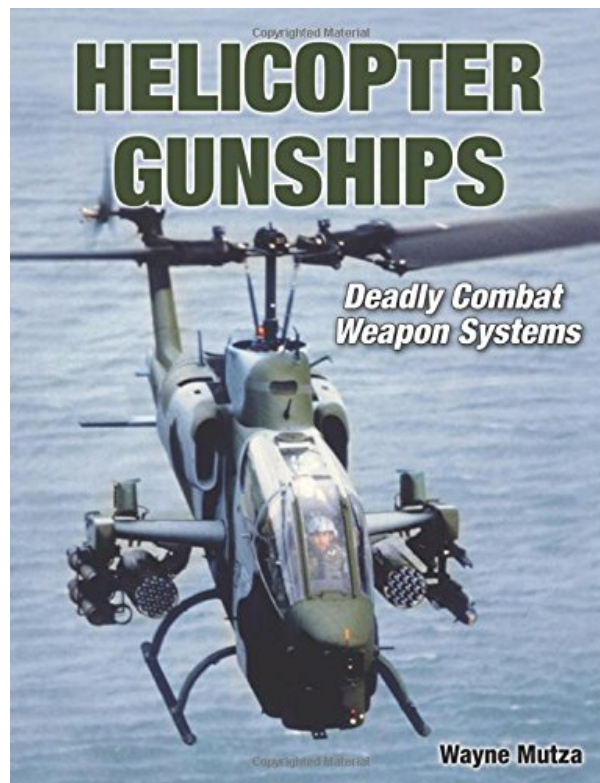
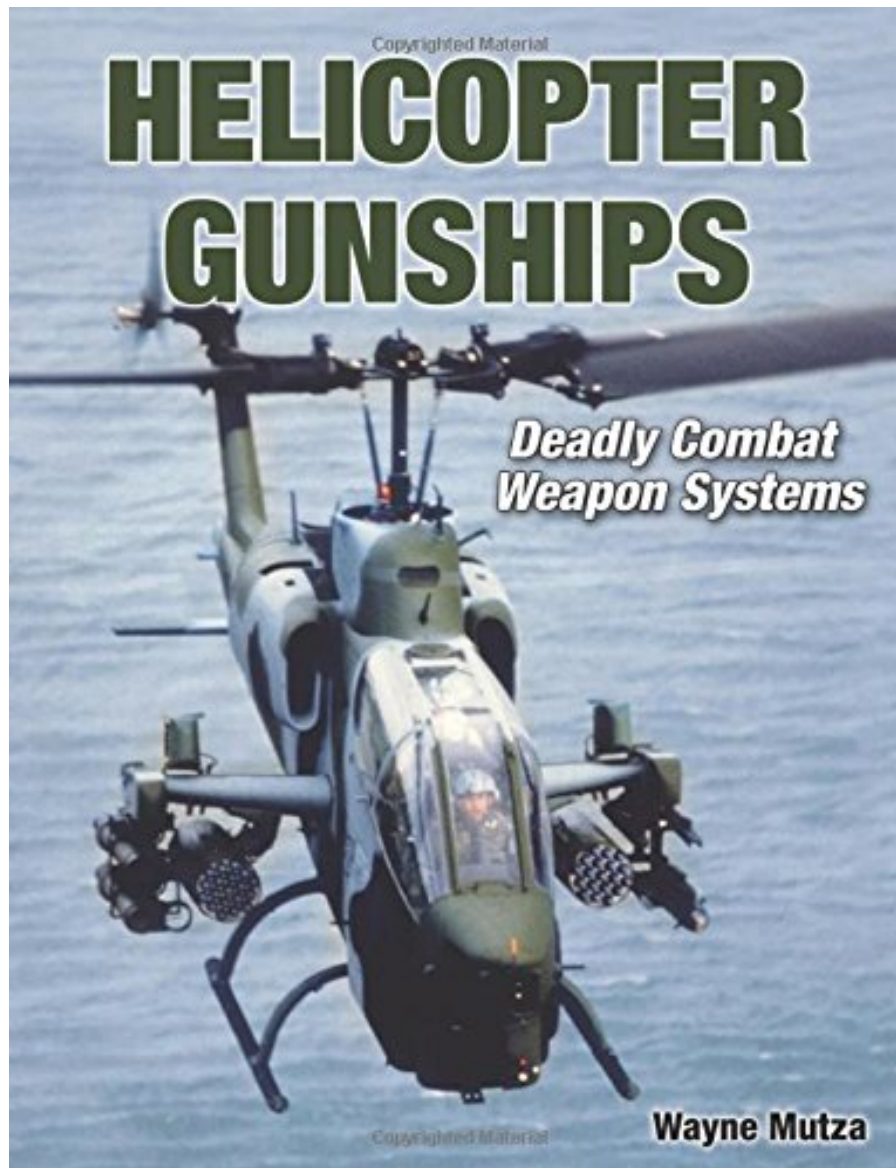


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COMBAT WEAPON SYSTEMS (SPECIALTY
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Helicopter Gunships begins with the Vietnam War as the ultimate proving ground that first utilized helicopter gunships and saw the development of other rotary-wing weapons systems as well. This book also explores fascinating post-war programs like the experimental Comanche, Blackhawk, and Apache. Through in-depth research and exclusive high-quality photos, noted author and helicopter expert Wayne Mutza examines in vivid detail the numerous weapon systems mated with a surprisingly wide variety of helicopters. Attention is also given to helicopter gunships developed by other Free World countries and Communist nations.

- Sales Rank: #461342 in Books
- Published on: 2010-09-20
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 11.00" h x .44" w x 8.50" l, 2.14 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 208 pages

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full of info. Too much superfluous information etc. ...

By Amazon Customer

full of info. Too much superfluous information etc.-- such as gunship numbers.

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

The Definitive Reference Thus Far

By Raymond L. Robb

Following up on the success of his book concerning fixed-wing gunships (*Gunships: The Story of Spooky, Shadow, Stinger and Spectre*, Specialty Press, 2009), veteran author Wayne Mutza has turned his attention to the vastly more complex history of the rotary-wing gunship. Recognizing the depth of such a wide-ranging topic, the author attempts early on to broadly define an "armed helicopter" and an "attack helicopter" while also acknowledging that differences in the two are blurred. To further illustrate this point, he explains that the distinction between the two is oftentimes determined only by the type and amount of armament carried, and whether or not the aircraft in question was modified from its original intended use or purpose-built for the role. Rather than dwell on this aspect however, the author chooses instead to give coverage to armed rotorcraft of virtually all types, making it all the more interesting for the reader.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the development of the helicopter as a practical flying machine, primarily in the United States, but with a brief mention of similar efforts undertaken in Europe. This approach, which is meant to provide a foundation for understanding rotary-wing aircraft and their evolution as aerial weapon systems, is fitting and particularly helpful for the uninitiated reader. Of particular note is the fact that the arming of helicopters was not seriously considered until after the Korean War.

Next, the author focuses on the early efforts to arm helicopters at a time when virtually no concept was too ambitious or far-fetched. Although the emphasis here is primarily on experiments carried out by the U.S. Army, the work of the French military to fit torpedoes and anti-tank missiles to their helicopters is also discussed. Particularly noteworthy is the Army's steadfast determination and persistent focus on arming its helicopters with a menagerie of weapons, much to the chagrin of the U.S. Air Force which sought to limit this effort in light of the Key West Agreement of 1948.

The following chapter forms one of the most important parts of the book, detailing the first large-scale employment of helicopters in combat as American forces became embroiled in the Vietnam War. As history shows, this conflict was destined to validate the armed helicopter's effectiveness on an unprecedented scale. Much attention is given to heavily-armed versions of the ubiquitous UH-1 Huey and its dedicated attack variant, the AH-1 HueyCobra. The short-lived operations of the ACH-47 Chinook are also covered, while the tried-and-true hunter/killer operations of the OH-6 and AH-1 are discussed. In addition, the advent of helicopters in Air Force Special Operations is discussed.

Chapter 4 details how the U.S. Marine Corps embraced the gunship concept, drawing on the 1957 French experiences in Algeria for inspiration, while closely monitoring U.S. Army experiments. A wide variety of weapons trials on various aircraft are covered, ranging from the early HOK-1 to the more modern CH-53. The importance of the gunship in Marine Corps service is expressed through numerous first-person accounts from the war in Vietnam.

Use of the helicopter gunship by the U.S. Navy primarily in a maritime environment is covered in Chapter 5. Highlights include fielding of the unmanned QH-50 Drone Anti-Submarine Helicopter (DASH) in anti-submarine operations, the formation of Combat Search and Rescue squadrons, and the establishment of the Seawolves in support of the so-called "Brown Water Navy" in Southeast Asia. Not to be forgotten, the introduction of the Light Airborne Multi-Purpose System (LAMPS) in the 1970s is covered.

The greatly expanded quest for dedicated, purpose-built gunships is discussed in Chapter 6. Particularly appealing in this chapter are the numerous never-before-published photos of prototypes which, despite failing to progress beyond the testing phase, introduced a wide variety of new and innovative concepts for consideration in gunship development. Early attempts range from the AH-56 and the S-67 to the Model 309 KingCobra and the YAH-63, ultimately leading up to the introduction of today's AH-64 Apache and other purpose-built gunships.

Chapter 7 details the growth and expansion of gunship roles and missions. It discusses the increasing use of armed scouts not only in concert with gunships as pioneered in Vietnam, but also as lightweight attack platforms in their own rite. In addition, it covers the arming of troop transport/assault helicopters, a concept designed to infuse more versatility in the type and get "more bang for the buck". The rise and fall of the RAH-66 Comanche is also summarized.

Reflecting on current operations in the Middle East as well as those in recent years, Chapter 8 discusses the use of armed helicopters in the deserts of both Iraq and Afghanistan, emphasizing their critical role in the Global War on Terrorism. Briefly mentioned are the helicopters captured by coalition forces and pressed into active service. Along with military operators, examples are provided of paramilitary forces which employ helicopters in the counternarcotics and counterterrorism role.

The ninth chapter explores the continuing development of gunships into the 21st Century. The meteoric rise and continuing evolution of unmanned helicopter systems is discussed, along with the prominent role they are destined to play in future conflicts. Modernization of existing manned types which originated in the

1960s/1970s versus procurement of all-new designs is outlined. Additionally, information on the first-time arming of U.S. Coast Guard helicopters is provided.

The final chapter emphasizes - more so than any other chapter - the diverse range of armed helicopters and dedicated gunships from around the world. While covering the widespread use of U.S. types exported worldwide, the author discusses the increasing variety of indigenous designs in recent years intended to suit the unique requirements of their home nations.

At 208 pages, the book is unsurpassed in its coverage of a heretofore sporadically covered topic. Where the book really shines is in its outstanding photographic coverage. The majority of the 365-plus photos - many of which have never before been published - are in color, which serves to enhance their overall appeal. Far from being merely a picture book, the engrossing text makes this tome a must-have for anyone with an interest in rotary-wing firepower. The sheer breadth of the topic could easily fill multiple volumes, but the author manages to condense more than half a century of history into an informative, well-illustrated, and highly readable account, representing the best attempt thus far at capturing the topic in a single volume. Admittedly, there is an emphasis on American-built designs with lesser coverage of helicopters from other nations. For those seeking an exhaustive, detailed historical account of specific aircraft types and their specifications, the reader must look elsewhere. However, for those wishing to understand the dynamic development and continuing evolution of the helicopter as a weapon system, this book will not disappoint.

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful.

Best overview of armed helicopters I've ever seen

By Ray Wilhite

I just finished reading this book and I have to say I am a bit surprised by the poor review it received here. As the author mentioned it is clearly stated in the introduction that the book is about the development of US helicopter gunships. As a avid collector of all things related to helicopter gunships, I was amazed at the amount of detail and number of high quality images packed into this book. I dare say that every significant or insignificant US armed helicopter variant is covered to some degree (How many readers of this review have ever heard of the Boeing Model 523, for example) and of course the AH-1 and UH-1 are covered in great detail. It should come as no surprise to anyone who has any knowledge about armed helicopters that the UH-1 and AH-1 literally wrote the book on armed helicopter warfare in Vietnam. Since the US Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines all flew a armed version of the Huey in Vietnam and the Marines are still flying armed versions of both the UH-1 and AH-1 today, these two aircraft types figure much more heavily into the big picture of the armed helicopter than the AH-64 which is only flown by the US Army. Also, every weapon system on the Apache from Hellfire missiles to it's 30mm cannon to the components of it's nose mounted TADS/PNVS was first tested on a UH-1 or AH-1.

As another measure of the focus of this book, consider that Mutza has included 367 photos. Of those 91 are of the UH-1 and 57 are of the AH-1. That means that there are 219 images of OTHER helo types. It should also be noted that Mutza has included more than just helicopters with fixed forward firing weapons. There is also info on US helicopters with crew served weapons as well, including the newest armed Coast Guard helos. Another great feature of this book is that the author includes a bibliography at the end so those interested in finding more in depth info have a great reference point. In my opinion, if you are interested in armed helicopters, this book is a must read.

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