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# CH-147D Chinook Nose Art in Afghanistan

W.E. Storey

Caitlin McWilliams' article in *Canadian Military History*, Vol.19, no.4 amply documented how the nose art on the No.6 Group Royal Canadian Air Force bombers from the Second World War was an expression of camaraderie, morale, squadron and national pride. Although nose art may have fallen out of vogue during the post-Second World War era, it was not extinct and this flying art form has once again gained limited popularity on the CH-147D Chinook helicopters that are being flown by the Canadian aviation wing out of Kandahar Airfield in Afghanistan.

The CH-147 Chinook medium-lift helicopter has an interesting history with the Canadian military. Replacing 12 CH113A Voyageur helicopters that the Canadian army had been using since 1964, the Canadian Forces first operated eight CH-147C-model Chinook helicopters from 1974 until 1992. These aircraft were flown by two squadrons, 450 based out of Uplands (Ottawa), Ontario and 447 Squadron in Namao (Edmonton), Alberta.

In 2005, the then-Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS), General Rick Hillier, made Chinooks (or similar medium-lift helicopters) his top

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**Opposite: Canadian Forces CH-147D Chinook helicopters fly in formation during a training mission for Operation Moshtarak, 9 February 2011.**

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**Abstract: Nose art is an important component of any combat aircraft's markings. Nose art not only helps to boost crew morale, esprit de corps and instill pride in the service, but it also adds a distinct character to the aircraft. Although the subject of current nose art has changed since the classic "pin up" girls of the 1940s, today's artwork is just as interesting and worthy of study. With the help of imagery taken in Afghanistan and first-hand study of the artwork, this article catalogues and explores the meaning of the artwork now use.**

priority for the Kandahar deployment. The Harper government responded in July 2006 with an advance contract award notice (ACAN) for 16 newly-built CH-47F-model Chinooks. This contract consists of a \$1.2 billion capital acquisition and a \$2.2 billion 20-year support and maintenance element. Meanwhile, the Department of National Defence (DND) began looking for an aircraft that it could immediately employ on operations and found the CH-47D-model.

Under pressure from the terms of the Manley Report, DND arranged to buy CH-47Ds already in Afghanistan from the US Army. In August 2008, the Government of Canada announced the purchase of six Chinook CH-47D helicopters from the US Army under a Foreign Military Sales Agreement with the Government of the United States.

These Chinooks, redesignated by the CF as CH-147D, were bought to meet the immediate need for medium-to-heavy-lift helicopters as directed by the March 2008 Parliamentary motion to extend the Afghan mission to 2011. The transfer of the helicopters, which were already located in Afghanistan, was completed on 30 December 2008. On 8 January 2009, a CH-147D Chinook made its debut flight as a Canadian aircraft at Kandahar Airfield, where they are based.

In the original proposal, 16 helicopters were to be procured; however, due to inflation and other factors in the approximately three years since the original proposal, this number has been reduced to 15. The delivery of the first Chinook is expected in July 2013.

With the arrival of the CH-147D Chinook, Joint Task Force Afghanistan has gained greater access to one of the world's most powerful workhorse helicopters for moving troops and supplies in theatre. Already proven in Afghanistan with other nations, and with its ability to carry large quantities of cargo and soldiers, the Chinook is a major asset to Canada and her allies in Afghanistan. With the addition of helicopter airlift, there will be a corresponding reduction in the need for troops to travel by road, thereby lowering their risk of ambushes, land mines and improvised explosive devices.

When analyzing current operational Canadian aircraft nose art it quickly becomes obvious that the traditional Second World War themes for nose art have fallen out of vogue. Images of leggy, scantily-clad, well-endowed, attractive ladies adorning combat aircraft are no longer considered acceptable by the public and the military. Squadron insignia could compromise operational security. There is also no longer a requirement for stylized maple leaves as the helicopters in theatre are fully marked, albeit in subdued black, with the Canadian flag on the tail as well as the Canadian government logo which consists of the word "Canada" with the flag flying off of the "D" on

the top of the main fuselage and a maple leaf in a roundel on the bottom portion of the main fuselage. What is left is nose art that consists of word plays and double entendres.

In July 2010, Canadian Expeditionary Force Command (CEFCOM) Headquarters sent a two-person team under Operation Keepsake into theatre in order to catalogue historical mementos for repatriation back to Canada and to photograph the living conditions at Kandahar Airfield. One of the tasks was to record the nose art on the six Canadian CH-147D Chinooks.

During the visit in July, only five of the six helicopters were available to be photographed and

of the five only four were sporting nose art as one had been painted over as the artwork was considered unacceptable. The four examples consist of a diverse cross-section of themes and since there are so few, they can be discussed individually.

"Jack'D Up - Old No. 7" sported this nose artwork when it was still in United States Army livery and it pays homage to Jack Daniel's Tennessee Whiskey which is distilled in Lynchburg. "Jack" or "JD" as it is commonly referred to by connoisseurs of this alcoholic beverage, is popular with US military personnel and not unknown in Canadian Forces circles. Since Afghanistan is a "dry operation" with no alcohol for



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**Below: Canadian Forces new D model Chinook on parade as the Joint Task Force (Afghanistan) Air Wing was officially stood up at Kandahar Air Field (KAF), Afghanistan. This is "Jack'D Up - Old No. 7" as it appeared when transferred from the US Army in December 2008.**

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**WO Ed Storey, CEFCOM HQ War Diarist, photographed with Chinook CH147D "Jack'D Up - Old No. 7." WO Storey was visiting Afghanistan in July 2010 as part of Operation Keepsake.**

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Canadian personnel, the artwork is a poignant reminder of sampling the odd shot at family BBQs back home or while on leave.

“Jacked Up” can also have other meanings such as a military slang term for when a person gets in trouble and is reprimanded by a superior; or it can also refer to the capability of the Chinook to use its hoist to sling cargo from underneath the helicopter.

Unique among the four Chinooks with nose art is that “Jack’D Up” is the only helicopter with internal artwork. Located aft just above the gunner’s position can be found some additional inspirational artwork that maintains the “Jack” theme. “Yukon Jack” is a Canadian whiskey that is distilled in Valleyfield, Quebec and is advertised as “The Black Sheep of Canadian Liquors.” This domestically inspired artwork counterbalances the distinctly American theme of “Jack’D Up,” while keeping to similar alcoholic drink labels.

“Black Jack” is a very dark and ominous nose art in which a man is silhouetted by a full moon and he is partially hidden by his black cape and top hat revealing only his menacing eyes. In his right hand is thrust up a large meat hook that drips of blood. The words “Black Jack” are also accented with small drops of blood. The hook is significant in that the Chinooks are used to carry slung loads under the fuselage by means of a hook. The macabre and dark nature of this work may be a reflection of the night-time operations carried out by the helicopters and their crews and the nature of military operations that result in the spilling of blood by killing or incapacitating the enemy.

The term “Black Jack” not only rhymes but the “black” term also fits the dark motif of this nose art. Blackjack, also known as “21,” is most widely played casino card game in the world and the art work may have been painted on the Chinook by a French-Canadian crew.



W.E. Storey Collection



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**Top: A close-up of the “Yukon Jack” artwork found inside “Jack’D Up.”**

**Above: A door gunner and flight engineer keep a watchful eye from the ramp of a CH-147 Chinook helicopter during a mission. The “Yukon Jack” panel can be seen over the head of the gunner.**



Storey: Chinook Nose Art



On a lighter note is the Chinook "The Magic Bus" which has nose art that consists of a cartoon version of a yellow school bus with overhead spinning rotors which symbolize the CH-147D helicopter. The term "bus" may also refer to the helicopters' role of ferrying personnel and cargo throughout the Canadian area of operations which is located in southern Afghanistan.

"The Magic Bus" nose art may have been inspired by the artwork for "The Magic School Bus" which is the longest running children's Saturday

**Above left: "Black Jack"**

**Above right: "The Magic Bus"**

**Below: Canada's new CH-147 D-Model Chinook helicopters wait for their next assigned duties at Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan, 20 February 2009. In the foreground sits "2 for Hooking!," while "Jack'D Up" is visible behind.**

morning animated science television series based on the book series of the same name by Joanna Cole.

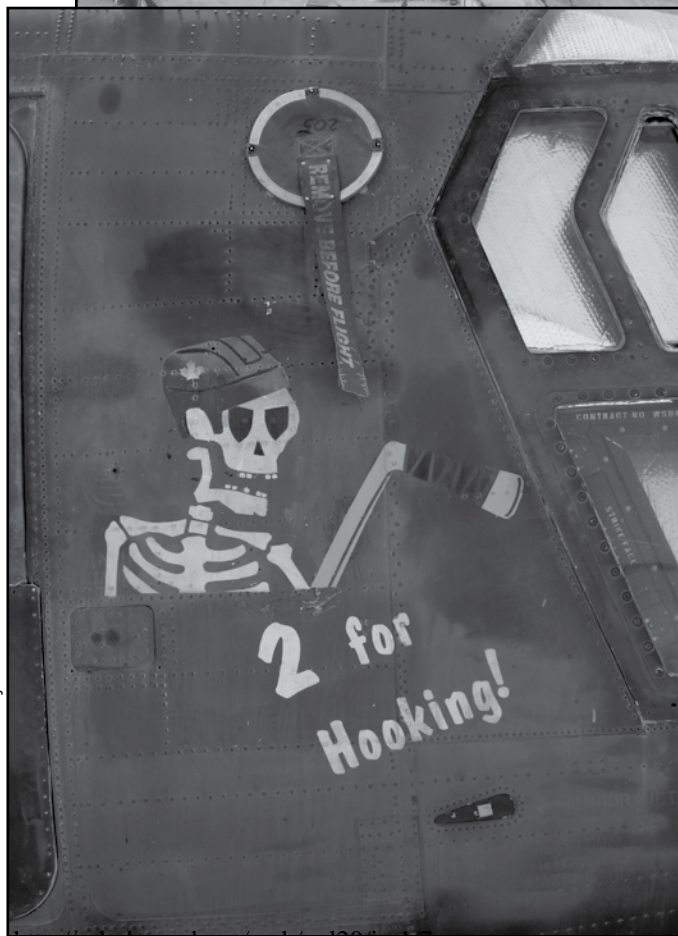
Unfortunately, a couple of weeks after these photographs were taken, "The Magic Bus" was brought down

and destroyed as a result of enemy ground fire. Thankfully, all of the passengers and crew survived. This aircraft, but not the nose art, has since been replaced.

Finally there is "2 For Hooking!," perhaps the most Canadian of all of the nose art. It features the upper torso and skull of a stylized skeleton wearing a red hockey helmet with a small white maple leaf. He is holding an upturned hockey stick that symbolizes not only a hooking motion but, on a more ghoulish note, that of a scythe that is used by the



CFJIC ISX2010-0031



**Left: "2 for Hooking!"**

**Above: Canadian Forces Chinook helicopter flies over Kandahar City with a slung load. The Chinook slung load capability is used to re-supply forward operating bases.**

Grim Reaper. For Canadians, in which hockey is the national pastime and is followed with religious zeal, "2 For Hooking!" represents a two minute penalty that is incurred for hooking an opposing player with the stick. "2 For Hooking!" also relates to one of the many roles that the CH-147D Chinook is used for, that of hauling one or two slung loads simultaneously hooked underneath the helicopter.

Correspondence with the Air Wing in theatre has confirmed that there is another nose art to be painted, it will be entitled "Lady Mary-Ann;" At the time of writing, no further details on this nose art were available.

The four examples of Chinook nose art covered in this article may be relatively simple designs but they should not be regarded as a reflection of any lack of talent to create detailed or artistic

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pieces. While cataloguing the nose art, the Operation Keepsake team was given access to the air wing paint shop to view a panel that was being painted to commemorate Rotation Number 8 of the Canadian Helicopter Force, Kandahar, Afghanistan. "The Dragon's Breath of Allah" is a mythical green dragon spewing fire from its mouth which has been painted over a background of muted browns and olive drab which represent the terrain of Afghanistan. Directly underneath the dragon is a silhouette of the CH-147D Chinook and painted in the bottom corners of the panel are silhouettes of the other helicopter type used by Canada in Afghanistan, the CH-146 Griffon.

"The Dragon's Breath of Allah" motif is taken from the term used by the Taliban when reporting on the concentrated fire provided by the door-mounted 7.62 mm Dillon Aero M134D "Miniguns" which are mounted in the CH-146 Griffons.

Canadian helicopter nose art in Afghanistan continues the trend set during the Second World War and although the artwork is less risqué than the past, it still inspires morale, boosts esprit de corps and instils pride in a job well done.

Ed Storey is the Expeditionary Force Command (CEFCOM) Headquarters war diarist. Since 2008 Ed has served as a reserve engineer warrant officer following a 26-year career in the regular force. Following a trip into Afghanistan in July 2009, Ed initiated a plan called Operation Keepsake described in the article. In July 2010 he was back in Afghanistan to catalogue mementos, assess the memorials and to photograph the living and working conditions in theatre. October 2010 saw Ed as part of the Camp Mirage close-out team where he was tasked to collect the camp mementos and recover the memorial for repatriation back to Canada, and his work was highlighted in the Canadian Forces *Maple Leaf* Newspaper and *Frontline* Magazine. Ed lives in Ottawa with his wife and two teenage children.



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CFJIC IS2009-0124

**Top: "The Dragon's Breath of Allah," an allusion to the firepower of the Dillon Aero minigun (above), was adopted as the crest of Roto 8 of the Canadian Helicopter Force.**

**The master gunner sits in the door-gunner's position in the CH-146 Griffon helicopter and fires the new Dillon Aero 7.62mm M134 Minigun during a training exercise at the firing ranges in the desert.**