

First C-119 in Years Nears Ready Status

NAKHON PHANOM, Thailand — Construction of the first C-119 aircraft to be built in 20 years is nearing completion here. The plane is an AC-119 "Stinger", the gunship version of a once docile, now vanishing species of cargo-carrying aircraft.

It is scheduled to make its maiden flight soon from a small airstrip on the base's golf driving range.

Actually, the new Stinger is a remote-controlled scale model. It has been under construction since August by Capt. John F. Hupe, a navigator assigned to the 18th Special Operations Squadron.

To plan the model, Captain Hupe used a yardstick and a camera taking more than 30 detailed photographs and measurements of an actual Stinger gunship.

Shots were taken from every angle, including three views of the reciprocating engines, four shots of the guns, and a close-up of the wheel-well interior.

Armed with his photographs and specifications, the captain drafted plans for a 20-to-1 scale

model with a 72-inch wingspan. Construction started with the fuselage, and then moved to the wing center section and booms.

The spars and firewalls were carved out of birch plywood while balsa sheets were used for the outer skin. Held together with nylon bolts, the plane's body may be disassembled into small sections for transport.

The only tools Captain Hupe had were carving knives, sandpaper, an electric drill and a soldering iron. Members of the base sheet metal section and machine shop did the welding and fashioning of the landing gear on their own time.

The plane will be powered by two Ehya .45 engines at .8 horsepower each with no help coming from two dummy jet pods. Flight control is centered in a 4-channel radio transmitter with two joy sticks. One stick controls the nosewheel, rudder and throttles, while the other controls the elevator and ailerons. The ten pound model will carry 20 ounces of nitromethane fuel for an endurance of 20 minutes.