

Ocean-Conquering Helicopters Welcomed

DA NANG, Vietnam (AP) — The first helicopters to fly across the Pacific Ocean arrived here Monday after a nine-day, 9,500-mile journey from the United States.

The 12 crew members of two HH53 "Super Jolly Green Giant" helicopters were greeted with handshakes, champagne and a traditional dousing by a fire hose.

Officers said the flight not only cut 75 per cent off the time it normally takes to freight aircraft to Vietnam but the helicopters demonstrated their worldwide tactical capability.

"We proved the concept of being able to fly anywhere in the world and then doing our business," said the mission commander, Maj. James L. Butera, 38.

Spokesmen said that plans are now being made for three more

HH53 helicopters to fly across the Pacific in October.

The helicopters which landed Monday began their journey from Florida Aug. 15, flying via air bases in North Dakota, Alaska, Japan, Okinawa and the Philippines.

They were delayed for a day at Fort Nelson, British Columbia, Canada, for a maintenance check, and at Elmendorf Air Base in Alaska by bad weather.

Their longest hop was the

1,700-mile transpacific trip from Shemya Air Force Station in the Aleutian Islands to Misawa Air Base, Japan. The trip took 14 hours and required four aerial refuelings.

The final leg, which took six hours and 10 minutes, was made from Clark Air Base in the Philippines, 917 miles away.

The aircraft were accompanied on most of the journey by fixed wing refueling planes.