



The SAAF Museum's airworthy Puma in action

## Puma

**Country of origin:** France

**Manufactured as:** Aerospatiale SA 330C Puma

**First flight:** 15 April 1965 (SA 330)

**Service period with SAAF:** 1969 until 1997

**Served with:** 15, 16, 17, 19, 22, 30 and 31 Sqns.

**Role:** Air-Sea rescue, troop and cargo carrier.

**Power plant:** 2 x Turbomeca Turmo IVC rated at 991 kW (1,328 hp) for take-off

**Max take-off mass:** 6,246 kg (14,470 lb)

**Max speed:** 294 km/h (182 mph; 158 kn)

**Max range:** 527 km (327 mi; 284 nmi)

**Armament:** Unarmed

**Accommodation:** Pilot, co-pilot & flight engineer + 16 passengers

## Operational history

In January 1970, the first SAAF Puma flew at Ysterplaat after assembly at 11 air depot. 19 squadron, (“A” flight being at Swartkop and “B” flight being at Durban) was involved in all major search, rescue and aid missions since 1973.

The Puma’s endurance, speed and reliability made it the most versatile helicopter the SAAF had in its inventory. At sea level, the Puma C could carry 16 passengers, but on the Highveld and on the border, it could only carry 12 due to “hot and high” conditions. The Army, of course, saw the Puma as a sort of flying truck and on multiple occasions tried to load them as such. But the average soldier loved the Puma which was used to pick up many of them after a follow up operation. The Puma could also be used as a “flying ambulance” and many a soldier’s life was saved by the Puma and the medics on board who worked tirelessly to stabilise many injured soldiers until a hospital could be reached.

The Puma C model had metal rotor blades while the later H and L models made use of composite rotor blades. Initially, the Pumas made use of the box-type air filter while later they made use of cylindrical-type air filters fitted in the engine intakes.

The Puma is no longer in service, but the Museum still has an airworthy C model which forms part of the flying collection at the SAAF museum. There is also one on static display. Most of the H and L models were converted to Oryx standard which made this versatile helicopter even better.

## Further information

Barcode1: Puma in flight



Barcode 2: Puma car drop



Barcode 3: Puma cockpit view



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