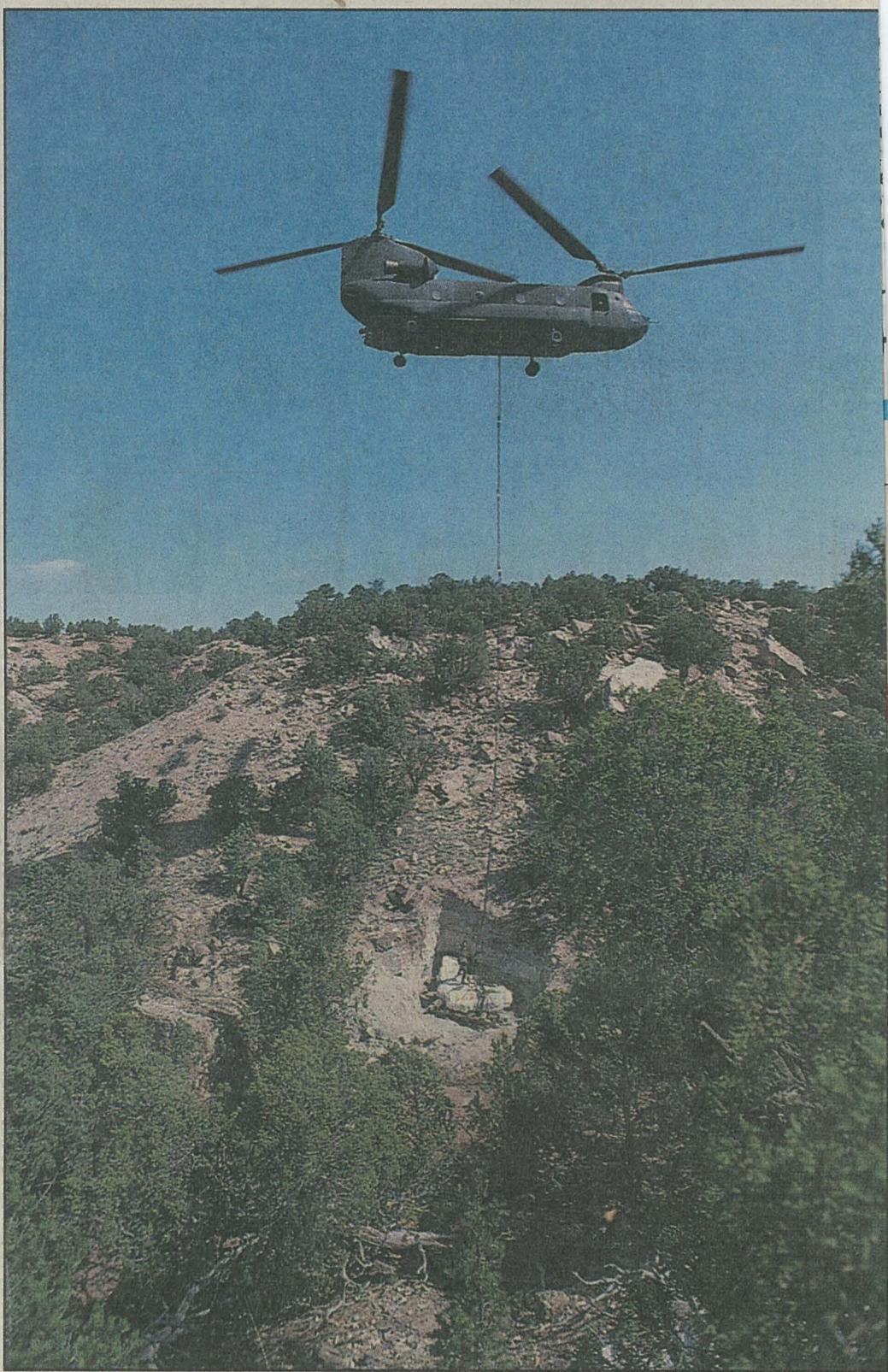


COPTER WHISKS DINOSAUR AWAY



The Denver Post / Kent Meireis

Army Chinook helicopter lifts dinosaur fossil yesterday.

Stegosaurus fossil plucked from prehistoric gravesite

By Mary George

Denver Post Environment Writer

CAÑON CITY — The bulk of the most intact stegosaurus skeleton ever found was removed from its prehistoric grave yesterday by a U.S. Army Chinook helicopter.

Creating fierce winds and stinging spirals of dust, the giant dual-rotored chopper gingerly lifted the packaged 5 1/2-ton skeleton of Colorado's state fossil from a prehistoric pond north of Cañon City where it was discovered in June.

Later, it gently deposited the package onto a trailer, which hauled it to an undisclosed

storage site nearby.

The Chinook, brought in from Fort Carson to assist with the dinosaur recovery, ferried ammunition and fuel during the Persian Gulf war, recently recovered a drug smuggler's plane from an El Salvador beach and once lifted a disabled fuel tanker. Yesterday's mission prompted a chuckle from pilot Ron Noga, a 27-year veteran.

"We've hauled a lot of stuff, but never a dinosaur," Noga said. "This takes the cake."

Scientists decided to move the fossil now