

1983



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
HELICOPTER COMBAT SUPPORT SQUADRON FOUR (HC-4)
FPO NEW YORK 09523

IN REPLY REFER TO:

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From: Commanding Officer, Helicopter Combat Support Squadron FOUR
To: Chief of Naval Operations, Washington D. C. 20374 (OP-05D2)

Subj: 1983 COMMAND HISTORY; SUBMISSION OF

Ref: (a) Chief of Naval Operations ltr ser 000824 of 05 December 1984
(b) OPNAVINST 5750.12C

Encl: (1) 1983 Command History Narrative
(2) Initial Operating Capability Brochure.

1. In response to reference (a), enclosures (1) and (2) are submitted in accordance with reference (b).

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1983 Command History Narrative

Helicopter Combat Support Squadron FOUR (HC-4) was established as the Navy's first CH-53E squadron on 06 May 1983 at Naval Air Station Sigonella, Sicily. Assigned to Commander, Fleet Air Mediterranean, HC-4's primary mission is to provide all weather, day/night combat logistic support to SIXTH Fleet units operating in the Mediterranean theater.

Squadron standup initiated at two separate locations. At NAS Sigonella, the Commanding Officer, CDR Ronald A. McDANIEL, and two enlisted members began administrative and facilities preparation for the scheduled arrival of aircraft and personnel in late summer. Simultaneously, at NAS Norfolk, Virginia, the Executive Officer, CDR James F. SCURRIA, with thirteen additional officers and thirty two enlisted personnel established HC-4 "Detachment ONE". Although formally assigned to HELMINERON TWELVE (HM-12) for enroute training, the CH-53E syllabus was not yet established at the FRS, and HC-4 Det-01 was formed to provide an accelerated training schedule. The detachment accepted delivery of the first of five aircraft on 17 May 1983 and immediately commenced flight training for pilots, and aircrew and ground training for maintenance personnel.

As the squadron expanded, the lack of administrative and maintenance facilities proved to be an obstacle at both sites. The squadron was operating in a small office formerly occupied by the station chaplains. The Commanding Officer worked to ensure facilities were readied prior to the scheduled aircraft arrival in August. The immediate solution was to lease mobile trailers for office space and to use Mobile Maintenance Facility (MMF) vans for maintenance shop space. Construction of the hangar was delayed for at least two years and all maintenance was to be performed outdoors. In Norfolk, the situation was much the same. The detachment utilized two small offices and one workshop, and maintenance personnel shared the use of HM-12's hangar facilities.

As Det ONE took delivery of the aircraft and initiated an intense period of training, every effort was made to achieve maximum results in minimum time. In addition to general familiarization and instrument flights, the training included day/night shipboard qualification and day/night air-to-air refueling qualification. Accordingly, a total of 323.6 flight hours were flown, five Helicopter Aircraft Commanders (HAC's) were qualified, eight Pilots were Qualified in Model (PQM), nine aircrewmen were qualified, and an additional 23 maintenance and administrative personnel were trained during the period 17 May - 10 August 1983.

Initial training complete, HC-4 Det ONE embarked in USS INCHON (LPH-12) for the first leg of a trans-Atlantic crossing on 08 August 1983. The transatlant detachment, consisting of 13 pilots, two maintenance officers and 45 enlisted personnel, flew the five aircraft aboard and became the Navy's first embarked CH-53E detachment.

In Sigonella, preparation continued at a feverish pace for the arrival of the detachment aircraft, personnel and equipment. The recently completed mobile facilities stood ready. On 21 August 1983, HC-4 Det ONE arrived in Europe, departed USS INCHON in the English Channel, and began the flight to Sigonella. Inclement weather and diplomatic clearance problems forced the Det to remain at RAF Upper Heyford, England until the morning of 23 August 1983. Later that same day, while transiting eastbound 40 miles off the coast of Cannes, France, aircraft BUNO 161536 experienced a catastrophic failure of its main gear box oil cooler. Although the aircraft was badly damaged, the pilots were able to make an emergency landing at Cannes. With aircraft 161536 safe on deck, the remaining four aircraft continued south stopping at Nice, France and Naples, Italy and ultimately arriving at NAS Sigonella on 25 August. For the first time, HC-4 was united.

In the 110 days that followed, the squadron worked day and night to meet the next major milestone, Initial Operating Capability (IOC) in December 1983. During this time period, HC-4 continued massive training efforts, qualifying two additional HAC's, seven Helicopter Second Pilots (H2P's) and two pilots in air-to-air refueling. HC-4 served as its own Fleet Replacement Squadron (FRS), conducting both flight training and ground school, while simultaneously completing the final stages of squadron standup. These efforts readied the squadron for Initial Operating Capability on 13 December 1983, a day marked with a ceremony in which RADM B. T. HACKER, Commander, Fleet Air Mediterranean, was the guest speaker.

On 16 December 1983, HC-4 detached two aircraft to Larnaca, Cyprus in direct support of the Multi-National Peacekeeping Force, Beirut, Lebanon. Additional tasking included the replenishment of SIXTH Fleet units operating in the eastern Mediterranean. Enroute to Cyprus, with the assistance of a New York Air National Guard KC-130, the detachment displayed the first operational utilization of air-to-air refueling for Navy helicopters. History was made again on 18 December as HC-4 became the first Navy CH-53E squadron to accept and complete logistic tasking. For the period 18 to 31 December 1983, HC-4 "Det Larnaca" transported a remarkable 310,430 pounds of cargo, 154,540 pounds of mail and 659 passengers. The "Black Stallions" of HC-4 were now established, and a new era in Combat Logistics Support began.

1983 Command History Narrative
CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS 06 MAY TO 31 DECEMBER 1983

MAY

- 06 - HC-4 established simultaneously at NAS Sigonella and NAS Norfolk.
- 17 - Accepted first aircraft, BUNO 161536 from SIKORSKY Aircraft Co. Stratford, Ct.
- 18 - Commenced unit standup flight training.
- 26 - Accepted second aircraft, BUNO 161537 from SIKORSKY Aircraft Co.

JUNE

- 07 - Initial day and night shipboard landing qualifications, USS SHREVEPORT (LPD-12).
- 22 - Accepted third and fourth aircraft, BUNO's 161538/161539 from SIKORSKY Aircraft Co.

JULY

- 17 - Five pilots qualified in air-to-air refueling training, utilizing VMGR-25 KC-130 aircraft.
- 25 - Accepted fifth aircraft, BUNO 161532 from SIKORSKY Aircraft Co.

AUGUST

- 08 - Five aircraft flown aboard USS INCHON (LPH-12) for trans-Atlantic crossing.
- 10 - To date, 323.6 flight hours flown, devoted solely to training. 152 syllabus flights completed, five HAC'S, eight PQM's, nine aircrewman and 12 plane captains have been designated. All was accomplished with a cadre of 15 officers and 45 enlisted personnel.
- 11 - HC-4 Det ONE personnel depart Norfolk in USS INCHON (LPH-12) enroute to NAS Sigonella, Sicily. First shipboard deployment of Navy CH-53E's.
- 21 - HC-4 Det ONE departs USS INCHON in English Channel.
- 25 - Aircraft arrive in Sigonella following 2000 mile self-lift across Europe.

SEPTEMBER

- 1-30 - Work-ups to establish Initial Operating Capability by 13 December.

OCTOBER

- 20 - Day carrier qualifications onboard USS EISENHOWER (CVN-69).

NOVEMBER

- 23 - Designated first Helicopter Second Pilot (H2P).

DECEMBER

- 13 - HC-4 achieved Initial Operating Capability.
- 14 - Additional air-to-air refueling training completed, two additional aircraft commanders qualified.

DEC continued

- 16 - Aircraft BUNO 161536/161538 depart for Larnaca, Cyprus. Inflight refuel enroute.
- 18 - First operational shipboard landing made by CDR J. F. SCURRIA onboard USS J. F. KENNEDY (CV-67).
- 23-26 Transported Bob Hope - USO Show to ship's supporting the Multi-National Peacekeeping Force, Beirut, Lebanon.