

1999 ✓



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
HELICOPTER COMBAT SUPPORT SQUADRON FOUR (HC-4)
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From: Commanding Officer, Helicopter Combat Support Squadron FOUR
To: Director of Naval History (OP-09BH)

Subj: COMMAND HISTORY INPUT FOR U.S. NAVAL AIR STATION,
SIGONELLA CALENDER YEAR 1999

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12

Encl: (1) 1999 Helicopter Combat Support Squadron FOUR Command History

1. Per reference (a), enclosures (1) is submitted.

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M. E. ZAMESNIK

1999 Helicopter Combat Support Squadron FOUR Command History

I. Command Composition and Organization

Title: The Command's short title is HC-4 and we are called The Black Stallions. The Unit Identification Code is 52959 (sea) and 55248 (shore).

Mission: Operate from Naval Air Station Sigonella, Italy, to fixed land-bases and U.S. Naval ships certified for MH-53E helicopter operations in support of COMFIFTHFLT and COMSIXTHFLT. Although primarily operated within the European and Arabian Gulf theaters, HC-4 is capable of operating worldwide to provide passenger and cargo transportation, vertical onboard delivery, search and assistance, MEDVAC services, Naval Special Warfare and Explosive Ordnance Disposal operations support, and airborne fire fighting as directed by higher authority.

Commissioned: 06 May 1983

Homeport: NAS Sigonella, Sicily

Aircraft: 9 MH-53E Sea Dragon Helicopters

Manning: Officers: 38

Enlisted: 245

Organization: Normally operate two to four aircraft at NASSIG and one to three autonomous detachments of two aircraft each.

CO: CDR Joan M. Zitterkopf

XO: CDR Michael E. Zamesnik

CMC: MMCM(SS) Gary Bynum

II. Chronology

January:

1. Participated in OPERATION SOUTHERN WATCH Manama, Bahrain through August.
2. Supported ENTERPRISE Battle Group, Antalya, Turkey from 13-17 January
3. Supported ENTERPRISE Battle Group, Bari, Italy from 18-26 January.
4. Supported ENTERPRISE Battle Group, Pisa, Italy from 27 January through 5 February.

February:

1. Supported ENTERPRISE Battle Group, Hyeres, France from 17-21 February.
2. Supported ENTERPRISE Battle Group, Pisa, Italy from 21-24 February.
3. Supported ENTERPRISE Battle Group, Bari, Italy from 24-27 February.
4. Supported ENTERPRISE Battle Group, Trieste, Italy from 27 February through 4 March.

March:

1. Supported the NASSAU Amphibious Ready Group, Nea Anchialos, Greece from 5-19 March.
2. Participated in EXERCISE JUNIPER STALLION in Tel Aviv, Israel from 6 – 17 March.
3. Supported the NASSAU Amphibious Ready Group, Nea Anchialos, Greece from 16 March to 10 April.
4. Participated in OPERATION SHINING HOPE, Bari, Italy and Sigonella, Sicily from March – June.
5. Participated in OPERATION ALLIED FORCE, Bari, Italy and Sigonella, Sicily from March – May.

April:

1. Supported the THEODORE ROOSEVELT Battle Group, and NASSAU Amphibious Ready Group, Bari, Italy from 1 – 30 April.

May:

1. Supported THEODORE ROOSEVELT Battle Group, Antalya, Turkey from 6 – 12 May.
2. Participated in OPERATION NOBLE ANVIL, Bari, Italy from 12 May through 6 June.

June:

1. Supported THEODORE ROOSEVELT Battle Group, Rota, Spain from 16 – 21 June.
2. Participated in OPERATION JOINT GUARD embarked aboard USS KEARSARGE (LHD-3) from 18 – 23 June.
3. Supported USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT Battle Group, Hyeres, France from 28 June through 6 July.

July:

1. Participated in OPERATION JOINT GUARD embarked aboard USS KEARSARGE (LHD-3) from 7-15 July.

August:

1. Disestablished Detachment ONE in Manama, Bahrain 14 August.
2. Participated in OPERATION AVID RESPONSE embarked aboard USS KEARSARGE (LHD-3) from 20 August through 13 September.

September:

1. Supported THEODORE ROOSEVELT Battle Group, Rhodes, Greece from 3 – 10 September.

October:

1. Participated in EXERCISE BRIGHT STAR Cairo, Egypt from 12 October through 2 November.

November:

1. Supported JOHN F KENNEDY Battle Group, Aqaba, Jordan from 3 – 7 November.
2. Supported President of the United States visit, Athens, Greece from 9 – 11 November.
3. Supported President of the United States visit, Pisa, Italy from 15 – 22 November.
4. Supported President of the United States visit, Skopje, Macedonia from 16 – 25 November.

December:

1. Change of Command, 10 December. CDR Michael E. Zamesnik relieved CDR Joan M. Zitterkopf as Commanding Officer. CDR Daniel E. Braswell assumed duties of Executive Officer.
2. Supported BATAAN Amphibious Ready Group, Bari, Italy From 12 - 21 December.

III. Narrative

During 1999, Helicopter Combat Support Squadron FOUR demonstrated continued superiority in heavy Helicopter Combat Support. HC-4 moved 5.3 million pounds of internal cargo, 1.3 million pounds of mail, and 36.6 thousands pounds of external cargo for the year. They also transported 9,260 passengers including six days and one night MEDEVAC. The squadron flew 1723.9 hours of vertical onboard delivery with 3495.1 hours total from shore during 2,220 sorties. Over 200 hours were flown during 152 sorties while embarked. HC-4 was also awarded the Battle "E" for 1999.

For the period from 31 January to 10 July 1999, HC-4 received the Navy Unit Commendation for participation in Naval Forces Joint Task Force NOBLE ANVII. Participation included combat support operations against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) and humanitarian relief operations in Albania and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM).

On 14 August 1999, HC-4 concluded seven years of continuous logistical support to FIFTH Fleet operations in the Arabian Gulf. Based out of Manama, Bahrain, HC-4's two-aircraft detachment remained the logistical workhorse of FIFTH Fleet. From its establishment in 1992, Detachment One carried over 36,000 passenger, 5.7 million pounds of mail, and 12.5 million pounds of cargo, while logging nearly 8,000 mishap-free flight hours. Operating with two to three aircraft in a demanding desert environment, Detachment One maintained an impressive 97% mission completion rate. Over the seven-year period, Detachment One supported 14 U.S. Navy carrier battle groups, starting with the USS RANGER (CV-61) and terminating with flawless support for the USS JOHN C. STENNIS (CVN-74).

On three separate occasions during the summer and early fall of 1999, HC-4 deployed a two-aircraft detachment aboard USS KEARSARGE (LHD-3); the first two deployments in support of OPERATION JOINT GUARDIAN in Macedonia and the Aegean Sea, with the third deployment spanning the duration of OPERATION AVID RESPONSE, the humanitarian relief effort following a major earthquake in Turkey.

In response to the conflict in Kosovo and the subsequent buildup of NATO forces in the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, HC-4 simultaneously supported the ROOSEVELT Carrier Battle Group, the NASSAU and KEARSARGE Amphibious Ready Groups and other maritime assets in an extremely demanding wartime environment. From March through June, Black Stallion helicopters carried 2,613 passengers, 387.2 thousand pounds of mail, and 1.9 million pounds of cargo in direct support of OPERATIONS ALLIED FORCE, SHINIG HOPE, NOBLE ANVIL and JOINT GUARDIAN.

For three weeks during October and November 1999, HC-4 deployed a detachment to Cairo, Egypt in support of BRIGHT STAR '99-'00, the largest multinational exercised of its kind, involving 73,000 military personnel from 11 coalition nations. The detachment's role was primarily logistics support for the JOHN F. KENNEDY Carrier Battle Group, the BETAAN KEARSARGE Amphibious Ready Group, FIFTH Fleet, and the Joint Special Operations Command. Two Black Stallion Helicopters moved 250 thousand pounds of cargo, 37.4 thousand pounds of mail and 797 passengers during the exercise. HC-4 flew 125.6 hours and achieved a 100% mission completion rate. In addition, the Black Stallions worked with SEAL TEAM TWO, and

combined Egyptian and Jordanian Special Operations Commands conducting PARADROPS (including HALO), cast and recovery, and fast rope operations.

During President Clinton's European visit in November 1999, HC-4 deployed seven aircraft to augment HMX-1's presidential helicopter support. Over 127 hours were flown carrying 29 thousand pounds of cargo and 718 passengers.