



**DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY**  
HELICOPTER COMBAT SUPPORT SQUADRON FOUR (HC-4)  
UNIT 50011 BOX 3300  
FPO AE 09627-3300

5750  
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From: Commanding Officer, Helicopter Combat Support Squadron FOUR  
To: Director, Naval Historical Center, 805 Kidder Breese Street SE,  
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060

Subj: 2003 COMMAND HISTORY

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12H

Encl: (1) Command composition, organization, chronology and narrative  
(2) Biography of CDR Michael J. Fitzpatrick  
(3) End of Detachment Report 12 February - 5 May 2003  
(4) End of Detachment Report 3 - 13 May 2003  
(5) End of Detachment Report 9 - 20 May 2003  
(6) End of Detachment Report 26 May - 4 June 2003  
(7) End of Detachment Report 7 - 12 June 2003  
(8) Submission for CY03 Battle Efficiency Award

1. Per reference (a), enclosures (1) through (8) are submitted.

  
G. W. ADAIR

# 2003 Helicopter Combat Support Squadron FOUR Command History

## I. Command Composition and Organization

**Title:** The squadron's short title is HC-4 and is nicknamed Black Stallions. The Unit Identification Codes are 52959 (sea) and 55248 (shore).

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

**Established:** 6 May 1983  
**Homeport:** NAS Sigonella, IT

**Aircraft:** Nine MH-53E Sea Dragon Helicopters  
(Side Number - Buno)  
00 - 163068    40 - 162509    41 - 163057 (stricken)  
42 - 163065    43 - 164864    44 - 163053  
45 - 163055    46 - 162516    47 - 162505

**Manning:**            Officers: 38  
                          Enlisted: 231

**Organization:** Normally operate two to four aircraft at Naval Air Station Sigonella and two to three autonomous detachments of two aircraft each.

**CO:** Michael J. Fitzpatrick, CDR, USN  
**XO:** Kevin J. Bianchi, CDR, USN  
**XO:** Gregory W. Adair, CDR, USN (July 2003 - present)  
**CMC:** Rodney A. Parks, CMDCM (AW/SW), USN  
**CMC:** Shawn A. Sarver, CMDCM (AW/SS), USN (July 2003 - present)

## II. 2003 Chronology

<u>Location</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>
Fujairah, UAE	2 Jan - 8 Jun	Operation ENDURING FREEDOM/ Operation IRAQI FREEDOM: CVBG Logistics Support for USS KITTY HAWK (CV 63), USS LINCOLN (CVN 72), USS NIMITZ (CVN 68). ARG Support for USS KEARSARGE (LHD 3), USS BATAAN (LHD 5), USS BOXER (LHD 4), USS NASSAU (LHA 4), USS SAIPAN (LHA 2), USS TARAWA (LHA 1), USS BONHOMME RICHARD (LHD 6). Logistics Support for USNS COMFORT (T-AH 20), USS ASHLAND (LSD 48), USCGC HAMILTON (WHEC 715), USNS PATUXENT (T-AO 201), USNS SHASTA (T-AE 33).
Sigonella, IT	10 Jan	MV 2 <sup>nd</sup> LT JOHN P. BOBO-Logistic Support.
Sigonella, IT	12 Jan	USNS KANAWA (T-AO 196)-Logistic Support.
Sigonella, IT	24 Jan - 28 Jan	USS HARRY S. TRUMAN (CVN 75)-Logistic Support.
Aviano, IT	29 Jan - 6 Feb	Logistics Support and Naval Special Warfare Training with USS HARRY S. TRUMAN (CVN 75).

		with USS HARRY S. TRUMAN (CVN 75).
Sigonella, IT	31 Jan	USS SAIPAN (LHA 2) - Logistic Support.
Sigonella, IT	8 Feb - 12 Feb	USS HARRY S. TRUMAN (CVN 75) - Logistic Support.
Akrotiri, CY	12 Feb - 5 May	Operation ENDURING FREEDOM/ Operation IRAQI FREEDOM: CVBG's Logistic Support for USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT (CVN 71) and USS HARRY S. TRUMAN (CVN 75). ARG Support for USS IWO JIMA (LHD 7). Logistic Support for USS LASALLE (AGF 3), USNS ARCTIC (T-AOE 8), and USNS KANAWA (T-AO 196).
Sigonella, IT	14 Feb - 15 Feb	USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT (CVN 71) - Logistic Support.
Sigonella, IT	25 Feb - 26 Feb	USS LASALLE (AGF 3) - Logistic Support.
Sigonella, IT	1 Apr - 7 Apr	USS IWO JIMA (LHD 7) - Logistic Support.
Souda Bay, GR	12-17 Apr, 26 Apr-1 May	Operation ENDURING FREEDOM/ Operation IRAQI FREEDOM: Onload U.S. Marines to the USS IWO JIMA (LHD 7) Amphibious Ready Group.

Sigonella, IT	25 Apr - 30 Apr	USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT (CVN 71) and USS HARRY S. TRUMAN (CVN 75)-Logistic Support.
Lyneham, UK	3 May - 13 May	Operation ENDURING FREEDOM/ Operation IRAQI FREEDOM: Logistic Support for USS HARRY S. TRUMAN (CVN 75).
Cartagena, SP	9 May - 20 May	Operation ENDURING FREEDOM/ Operation IRAQI FREEDOM: Logistic Support for USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT (CVN 71).
Geneva, SW	26 May - 4 Jun	Logistic Support for POTUS at G8 Conference.
Sigonella, IT	7 Jun	USS LASALLE (AGF 3)-Logistic Support.
Naples, IT	7 Jun - 12 Jun	Logistic Support for Joint Civilian Orientation Conference.
Sigonella, IT	13 Jun	USNS BIG HORN (T-AO 198)-Logistic Support.
Sigonella, IT	16 Jul	Class "A" Mishap with Loss of Aircraft and 4 Crew (CDR Bianchi, LT Ober, AM1 Gibson, AE3 Cox).
Sigonella, IT	25 Jul	USS IWO JIMA (LHD 7)-Logistic Support.

Sigonella, IT	31 Jul	USS NASHVILLE (LPD-13)-Logistic Support.
Cagliari, IT	2 Aug - 4 Aug	Logistic Support for Secretary of the Navy.
RAF Mildenhall, UK	16 Aug - 31 Aug	Helicopter Aerial Refueling Training Detachment.
Stuttgart, GE	14 Sep - 20 Sep	Naval Special Warfare Unit-2 Training Support.
Sigonella, IT	19 Sep	USS LASALLE (AGF 3)-Logistic Support.
Souda Bay, GR	30 Sep - 2 Oct	Naval Special Warfare Training with USS NICHOLAS (FFG 47).
Sigonella, IT	4 Oct - 5 Oct	USNS GRUMMAN (T-AO 195)-Logistic Support.
Sigonella, IT	10 Oct	USS ENTERPRISE (CVN 65)-Logistic Support.
La Spezia, IT	26 Oct - 31 Oct	Naval Special Warfare Training (Fastrope, Paradrops, and Soft Ducks).
Sigonella, IT	28 Oct - 29 Oct	USNS LARAMIE (T-AO 20)-Logistic Support.
Sigonella, IT	6 Nov - 7 Nov	USNS GRUMMAN (T-AO 195)-Logistic Support.

Sigonella, IT	15 Dec - 16 Dec	USNS GRUMMAN (T-AO 195)-Logistic Support.
Sigonella, IT	23 Dec	USS GONZALES (DDG 51)-Logistic Support.

### III. 2003 Narrative

This year began with an unusually high operational tempo for the Black Stallions of HC-4 in both FIFTH and SIXTH Fleet units operating in NAVEUR and NAVCENT Theatres in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM and Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. At times we were operating Detachments ONE, TWO (DRAGON), THREE, and HOMEGUARD for a total of four detachments with each detachment supporting ships of the fleet. HC-4 flew an unprecedented yearly total of 3,063.4 hours and transported 4,130 passengers, 845,700 pounds of mail, and 4,788,500 pounds of cargo with a 96.7 percent mission completion rate.

HC-4's Detachment ONE was in Fujairah, UAE, flying missions from 2 November 2001 until 8 June 2003. During 2003, Detachment ONE flew an impressive 440.1 hours and carried 1083 passengers, 221,100 pounds of mail, and 1,518,400 pounds of cargo with a mission completion rate of 98.5 percent. During this time period, heavy helicopter combat support was provided to the KITTY HAWK, LINCOLN, and NIMITZ Carrier Battle Groups (CVBGs). An equal amount of support was provided to the KEARSARGE, BATAAN, BOXER, NASSAU, SAIPAN, and TARAWA Amphibious Ready Groups (ARGs). During missions the detachment flew many arduous legs, sometimes up to four hours each way over water. On 8 June 2003, Detachment ONE in Fujairah flew its last mission. The two aircraft returned home on 16 June 2003 after one year and seven months in the UAE.

On 12 February 2003, four aircraft from Detachment TWO, began their transit to Akrotiri, Cyprus in order to stand-up "Detachment DRAGON." While in Cyprus, Detachment DRAGON provided logistic support to the THEODORE ROOSEVELT and HARRY S. TRUMAN CVBGs. The IWO JIMA ARG also felt the benefits of receiving their combat support. The pilots and aircrew logged a combined 450.0 hours of flight time for all four aircraft. They hauled a total of 585 passengers, 367,400 pounds of mail, and 1,927,800 pounds of cargo with a 97.4 percent mission completion rate. The special cargo they carried consisted of 2,000 pound bombs, TF34's, F110's, T700's, F404's, JDAM kits, LGB-16 bombs, CH46 rotor head, 4'x6' steel plates, and much more. Detachment DRAGON flew its last mission on 4 May 2003, and returned home to

NAS Sigonella on 5 May 2003 after three months of support in Akrotiri, Cyprus.

On 3 May 2003, two aircraft left for RAF Lyneham, United Kingdom. The detachment furnished much needed mail and cargo to USS HARRY S. TRUMAN (HST) during a port visit. HC-4 carried 21 passengers and hauled 103,000 pounds of cargo and 9,700 pounds of mail. It was an educational detachment as well. There were a plethora of historical sights to see. For example, Stonehenge was near the route of flight between the HST and RAF Lyneham. The detachment was a success.

On 9 May 2003, HC-4 Detachment TWO began the transit to Cartagena, Spain, in order to support the USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT on its way out of SIXTH Fleet. They carried 90 passengers, 212,000 pounds of cargo, and 20,000 pounds of mail.

During 2003, the Black Stallions were given three VIP/POTUS support missions. We were assigned two POTUS support missions. From 26 May until 4 June, HC-4 supported POTUS at the G8 Conference in Geneva, Switzerland. From 15 - 28 November, HC-4 provided support for POTUS during a goodwill visit to various locations in the United Kingdom. HMX-1 provided VIP kits for the aircraft handling the press corps and support staff. The birds looked better than ever, and nothing but compliments were heard from all. The most humorous comment to come out of the detachment was from the British media. They stated on the nightly news that the "Black Stallions are an attack helicopter squadron assigned to protect the President." From 2 - 4 August, the Secretary of the Navy was visiting Cagliari, IT. It was requested that we provide support for his visit, so we did.

HC-4 provided logistic support for the yearly Joint Civilian Orientation Conference (JCOC) from 9 June to 12 June. This year the support was provided from Naples, Italy to the USS LASALLE and the USNS PATUXENT. 180 passengers were carried, most of which were VIPs. HC-4 hauled over 23,000 pounds of cargo and 50 pounds of mail during the exercise. The detachment headed home on 12 June.

Naval Special Warfare has always been a part of our lives at HC-4. Three detachments were sent in support of Naval Special Warfare Exercises/Training to Stuttgart, Germany; Souda Bay, Greece; and La Spezia, Italy. The training sorties consisted of fast rope to USS NICHOLAS, paradrops, and soft duck exercises with American and allied special operations units. Training missions with EODMU EIGHT were flown from NAS Sigonella on a regular basis.



The obvious low point of the year was our Class "A" mishap on 16 July that resulted in a total loss of aircraft 41 and the crew. That day we lost CDR Bianchi, LT Ober, AM1 Gibson, and AE3 Cox. A fire was reported from the aircraft while it was on the downwind leg of the PAR pattern for Runway 10.

Throughout the year, the Black Stallions demonstrated excellence in the world of logistical support, and the ability to complete diverse types of missions. In the years to come, HC-4 will maintain a full-spectrum dominance of all combat support missions.