

1988 logged

COMMAND COMPOSITION AND ORGANIZATION

Helicopter Mine Countermeasures Squadron 15 (HM-15) is homeported at NAS Alameda, California, and is the first operational squadron equipped with the MH-53E "Sea Dragon"--tail code TB. HM-15 received five aircraft during 1988. The squadron is under both the operational and administrative command of Commander, Anti Submarine Warfare Wing, U.S. Pacific Fleet (COMASWWINGPAC).

The squadron's primary mission is Airborne Mine Countermeasures, or AMCM. This mission is a vital component of the U.S. Navy's task of maintaining open sea lanes. HM-15 is charged with clearing or neutralizing any minefields world wide. The entire squadron or smaller detachments are deployable on 72 hour notice to critical locations world wide in order to allow free navigation by surface units.

The Commanding Officer of HM-15 is Commander Gary P. Tornatore, a native of Canastota, New York, and a 1971 graduate of St. Lawrence University. Upon completion of the Aviation Officer Candidate Program, he was commissioned an Ensign in February 1972, and was designated a Naval Aviator in November 1972.

Commander Tornatore's first tour of duty was with Helicopter Mine Countermeasures Squadron 12 (HM-12). He participated in Operation End Sweep, the clearing of mines from Haiphong Harbor and the Coastal waters of North Vietnam. While attached to HM-12, he also took part in minesweeping operations in the Suez Canal as well as evaluation of the H-53 Vertical Onboard Delivery (VOD) services in the Mediterranean Sea.

In January 1976, Commander Tornatore reported to Helicopter Training Squadron 8 (HT-8) where he functioned as NATOPS and Standardization

Officer as well as Model Manager for the TH-57A helicopter. After fleet refresher training, CDR Tornatore reported to Helicopter Mine Countermeasures Squadron 16 (HM-16) in Norfolk, Virginia. During his tour with the Seahawks, he served as Quality Assurance Officer during Operation Evening Light, the attempt to rescue American hostages from Iran.

In May 1980, Commander Tornatore returned to HM-12 as an instructor. During his tour he served as Administration Officer and Maintenance Officer. He also served as Officer In Charge of a minesweeping detachment to CFB Shearwater in Halifax, Nova Scotia-the first operational detachment to deploy from HM-12 since the squadron's designation as a Fleet Readiness Squadron.

From August 1983 to October 1985, Commander Tornatore was assigned to USS Iwo Jima (LPH-2) where he served as Assistant Air Officer and Safety Officer. During his tour, the USS Iwo Jima completed a Mediterranean deployment which included contingency operations off the coast of Lebanon. In April 1987, he reported to HM-15 as Executive Officer. Then, on October 13, 1988, Commander Tornatore relieved Commander John W. Tennant as Commanding Officer of HM-15.

January 1988

No Major Events.

February 1988

5 Aircraft BUNO 162514 delivered to HM-15.

March 1988

No Major Events.

April 1988

7 Aircraft BUNO 162516 delivered to HM-15.

May 1988

21 Aircraft BUNO 162515 delivered to HM-15

June 1988

16-8 JUL Two officer from the Japanese Navy visited HM-15 to observe MCM operations and the performance of the MH-53E.

20-25 MH-53E model manager conducted squadron NATOPS evaluation. Squadron was graded satisfactory.

July 1988

11-15 MRCI inspection conducted by COMMINWARCOM, Charleston, South Carolina. The squadron was graded satisfactory.

18 An MH-53E, BUNO 162512, while conducting minesweeping training operations, crashed west of the Golden Gate Bridge. Eight crewmen were killed.

29 Aircraft BUNO 162511 delivered to HM-15.

August 1988

18-26 Follow on test and evaluation (FOT & E) was conducted to test the operational effectiveness/suitability of the aircraft and weapon systems.

31 Aircraft BUNO 162513 delivered to HM-15.

September 1988

13-15 IMAGMEASUREMENT test conducted.

October 1988

- 13 Change of Command; Cdr Gary P. Tornatore relieved Cdr John W. Tennant.
- 17-21 Test conducted on the KY-58 secure voice system.
- 24-6 NOV Middle East Force Exercise (MEFEX) conducted in San Diego. Detachment from HM-15 sent to NAS North Island.
- 25-26 Maintenance Assist Visit conducted by CNAP

November 1988

- 29-1 DEC Deck landing qualifications conducted aboard the USS Tripoli.

December 1988

No Major Events.