



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

HELICOPTER MINE COUNTERMEASURES SQUADRON 15

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From: Commanding Officer, Helicopter Mine Countermeasures Squadron 15

To: Director of Naval History (OP-09BH)

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Encl: (1) HELMINERON FIFTEEN, 1991 Command History

(2) Command PAO Photo

(3) Squadron "Brief Sheet"

(4) Rotor Review Spring 1991, "HM-15 Hauls Over A Million Pounds Of Cargo During Desert Storm"

1. Per reference (a), enclosures (1) through (4) are submitted for the Calendar Year 1991 Command History for Helicopter Mine Countermeasures Squadron 15 (HM-15).

  
B. E. DEWEY

*Logged*

## HELICOPTER MINE COUNTERMEASURES SQUADRON 15, 1991 COMMAND HISTORY

1. Command Composition and Organization. Helicopter Mine Countermeasures Squadron 15 (HM-15) is one of only two airborne mine countermeasures (AMCM) squadrons capable of deploying within 72 hours via C-5 airlift to counter any hostile mine threat throughout the world. HM-15 is commanded by Commander Bruce F. Russell and is homeported at Naval Air Station Alameda, California. Commander Russell graduated in 1973 from Purdue University and was designated a Naval Aviator in 1975. He has completed tours in HM-12, HM-14, HM-15, and HM-16 as well as Staff tours with the Naval Air Systems Command and DCNO (Naval Warfare). He obtained a Master of Science degree in Logistics Management from the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California in 1979. The squadron's immediate senior in command (ISIC) is Commander, Anti-Submarine Warfare Wing, U.S. Pacific Fleet located in San Diego, California. HM-15 flies the MH-53E "Sea Dragon" helicopter manufactured by the Sikorsky Corporation of Stratford, Connecticut. The squadron possesses twelve aircraft and is manned by 590 enlisted men and 40 officers. The squadron's call sign is "Hurricane" and the Unit Identification Letters are "Tango Bravo."

2. Chronology. HM-15 has completed its fourth year as part of the ASWWINGPAC and AIRPAC team. As the only west coast active duty Airborne Mine Countermeasures (AMCM) squadron, dramatic achievements in operational readiness were obtained in all primary/secondary mission areas. Through a unified commitment to training and mission accomplishment, HM-15 has sustained across-the-board superior performance, and has achieved consistently outstanding results in all exercises and operational tasking. Most significant accomplishments include:

\* HM-15 successfully exercised MK-105 minesweeping operations aboard USS TRIPOLI (first shipboard operation since CY 89) during KERNEL USHER 91-1. Attained over 99% clearance of assigned minefields in three days.

\* HM-15 exercised its capability to function as Mine Warfare Commander (MCM CDR) for the first time, during MARDEZEXPAC-91 (a combined air, surface, and EOD mine countermeasures exercise) with outstanding results. First AMCM exercise on west coast to use live practice mines. HM-15 actuated 100% of the mines in the exercise minefield.

\* Through extensive in-house AQS-14 training during KERNEL USHER 91-1, greatly increased operational ability to determine non-mine like contacts from mine-like contacts sighted during each mission. This reduction of false contact reporting optimized the utilization of available assets and produced high probability targets.

\* First AMCM squadron to validate the effectiveness of the MH-53E in its secondary role as a Vertical Onboard Delivery (VOD) platform. Letter of Commendation awarded to DET ONE from COMNAVLOGSUPPORT for sustained superior performance during Operations Desert Shield/Storm. Largest VOD/Carrier Onboard Delivery (COD) detachment operating from Bahrain. Delivered over 1.4 million pounds of cargo and 2400 passengers to deployed and shore units.

Enclosure (1)

\* Redeployed VOD detachment to the Persian Gulf to support post-Desert Storm operations following the departure of HC-1. Delivered over 1.8 million pounds of cargo and 2200 passengers to deployed and shore units.

\* Initiated a required operational capability (ROC)/projected operational environment (POE) change reflecting a complete reorganization of AMCM squadrons into two deployable detachments and established a secondary mission of VOD.

\* Demonstrated multi-detachment capability during shipboard and remote site deployed operations, exercising self-lift and air-lift capabilities.

\* Flew 101% of flight hours allocated utilizing 100% of OPTAR.

\* Minus Persian Gulf VOD hours, HM-15 flew 30.4% of its flight time in the AMCM mission.

a. Deployed operations

(1) Detachments:

| <u>DET #</u> | <u>LOCATION</u>    | <u>DATES</u>    |
|--------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| 91-1         | Persian Gulf       | 06 JAN - 17 APR |
| 91-2         | San Diego, CA      | 23 APR - 09 MAY |
| 91-3         | Fort Ord, CA       | 02 JUN - 05 JUN |
| 91-4         | Persian Gulf       | 17 JUL - 31 DEC |
| 91-5         | Whidbey Island, WA | 27 JUL - 22 AUG |
| 91-6         | USS TRIPOLI        | 17 OCT - 20 OCT |
| 91-7         | USS TRIPOLI        | 18 NOV - 22 NOV |

(2) Exercises:

| <u>NAME</u>       | <u>LOCATION</u>    | <u>DATES</u>    |
|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| KERNEL USHER 91-1 | San Diego, CA      | 26 APR - 07 MAY |
| MARDEZEXPAC 91-1  | Whidbey Island, WA | 05 AUG - 16 AUG |
| KERNEL USHER 92-1 | USS TRIPOLI        | 19 NOV - 21 NOV |

b. Fleet support operations

(1) Fleet support:

| <u>COMMAND</u> | <u>EVENT</u>         | <u>DATES</u> |
|----------------|----------------------|--------------|
| COMNAVRESSO    | VIP Transport        | 07 FEB       |
| COMNAVIRPAC    | VIP Transport        | 07 MAR       |
| COMASWINGPAC   | SECRETARY OF DEFENSE | 03 APR       |

|                  |  |               |
|------------------|--|---------------|
| COMNAVBASE S. F. | BAYMED 91 Disaster Drill   | 22 APR        |
| USNS MERCY       | VIP/Media Transport  | 23 APR        |
| HM-14            | AMCM Mission Commanders<br>Provided to Supplement<br>HM-14 Detachment in<br>Desert Storm Minesweeping<br>Operations (Persian Gulf) | 01 MAY-03 JUL |
| US Army          | GOLDEN KNIGHTS Paratroop   | 03 MAY        |
| 7TH INF DIV      | Heavy Lift Support   | 03-04 JUN     |
| COMASWINGPAC     | SECRETARY OF THE NAVY  | 15 JUL        |
| EODMU NINE       | Paratroop  | 25 JUL/23 SEP |
| USS MISSOURI     | VIP/Media Transport  | 12 OCT        |
| BLUE ANGELS      | FLEET WEEK Support   | 12-19 OCT     |
| USS LINCOLN      | VIP/Media Transport  | 25 NOV        |
| HM-19            | Aircraft Mishap Support  | 04 DEC        |

(2) Airshows supported:

| <u>LOCATION/EVENT</u>      | <u>DATES</u> |
|----------------------------|--------------|
| El Centro, CA              | 15 MAR       |
| Milbrae, CA (Fly-by)       | 07 APR       |
| MCAS El Toro, CA           | 26 APR       |
| Stockton, CA               | 03 MAY       |
| San Francisco, CA (Fly-by) | 18 MAY       |
| PT Mugu, CA                | 21 MAY       |
| MT Home AFB                | 07 JUN       |
| Oakland Parade (Fly-by)    | 14 JUN       |
| Portland Rose Festival     | 14 JUN       |
| Redding, CA                | 21 JUN       |
| Truckee, NV                | 21 JUN       |
| Aspen, CO                  | 27 JUN       |
| PT Mugu, CA                | 05 JUL       |
| Alameda, CA                | 11 JUL       |
| Whidbey Island, WA         | 26 JUL       |
| Seattle Sea Fair (Fly-by)  | 04 AUG       |
| Reno, NV                   | 13 SEP       |
| Salinas, CA                | 18 OCT       |
| March AFB, CA              | 08 NOV       |
| Bullhead City, AZ          | 08 NOV       |

c. Achievements in Aviation Safety

|  |   |
|--|---|
| (1) Class A mishaps                    | 1 |
| (2) Class B mishaps                    | 0 |
| (3) Class C mishaps                    | 0 |
| (4) Number of hazard reports submitted | 1 |

(5) Number of NATOPS changes submitted 73

d. Achievements in Command Inspections

(1) Completed NATOPS unit evaluation 18 MAY. Grade - outstanding.

(2) Completed aircraft maintenance evaluation 04-06 SEP. Grade - above average.

e. Achievements in Personnel Readiness

(1) Retention:

|             | <u>ELIGIBLE</u> | <u>NOT ELIGIBLE</u> | <u># REENLISTED</u> | <u>GROSS%</u> |
|-------------|-----------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| First Term  | 89              | 22                  | 49                  | 44%           |
| Second Term | 35              | 3                   | 26                  | 68%           |
| Career      | 40              | 5                   | 35                  | 78%           |

(2) Advancement:

|            | <u>TIS</u><br><u>ELIGIBLE</u> | <u>TIR</u><br><u>ELIGIBLE</u> | <u>TOOK EXAM</u> | <u>NOT</u><br><u>RECOMMENDED</u> | <u>SELECTED</u> | <u>PNA'S</u> |
|------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| <u>MAR</u> |                               |                               |                  |                                  |                 |              |
| E-4        | 127                           | 127                           | 127              | 0                                | 33              | 94           |
| E-5        | 78                            | 78                            | 75               | 3                                | 10              | 64           |
| E-6        | 70                            | 70                            | 69               | 1                                | 4               | 62           |
| <u>SEP</u> |                               |                               |                  |                                  |                 |              |
| E-4        | 115                           | 115                           | 105              | 9                                | 34              | 69           |
| E-5        | 124                           | 124                           | 114              | 5                                | 14              | 88           |
| E-6        | 72                            | 72                            | 71               | 1                                | 4               | 66           |

f. Contributions to Tactical Development Improvement

(1) Researched and drafted a comprehensive evaluation for the Commanders Tactical Decision Aide and MCM 91 AMCM tactical computer programs. Submitted to Naval Coastal System Center, Panama City, Florida for inclusion in future upgrades.

(2) Incorporated the global positioning system (GPS) used for AMCM precise navigation. Initial evaluation was conducted during KERNEL USHER 91-1 utilizing actual mine shapes, resulting in the successful location, reacquisition, and prosecution of 9 out of 10 mines.

(3) Conducted operational tests of the CM08 Commanders Mobile Communications Facility and submitted improvement recommendations to Naval Aviation Depot North Island, California.

(4) First operational tasking of HM-15 to exercise its capability as the MCM CDR was conducted during MARDEZEXPAC-91, a joint air, surface, and EOD mine countermeasures operation. Proved AMCM has the tactical knowledge, background, and expertise required to function in this capacity. Sweeping was conducted against live practice mines (moored and dual influence magnetic/acoustic) resulting in the actuation of 10 out of 10 influence mines and 4 of 6 moored mines proving the effectiveness of AMCM mine sweeping systems. Additionally, a lead through escort of a high value unit (SSBN) was successfully completed.

(5) Validated lessons learned during Operation Desert Storm through participation in KERNEL USHER 92-1. Operated aboard the USS TRIPOLI (first AMCM shipboard exercise in 2 years) attaining over 99% clearance of assigned areas in three day operational period.

(6) Conducted developmental tactical training with Horizons Technology, Incorporated regarding future mine sweeping computer systems and full system integration of the GPS into the MH-53E aircraft.

g. Contributions to Weapons Systems Development. HM-15 continues to be the benchmark of the AMCM community. The contributions to safety and maintenance programs have made significant improvement to the safety and reliability of the CH/MH-53E helicopter. Most significant accomplishments include:

|                   |    |
|-------------------|----|
| TPDRs Submitted   | 59 |
| HMR/EIs Submitted | 14 |
| MILCAPs Submitted | 5  |
| QDRs Submitted    | 1  |

h. Awards

(1) Squadron awards:

HM-15 DET ONE received a Letter of Commendation from COMNAVLOGSUPFOR for VOD support to forward-deployed ship and shore units during Operations Desert Shield/Storm.

|                              |             |                 |
|------------------------------|-------------|-----------------|
| LOA COMNAVRESSO              | VIP Support | FEB             |
| Southwest Asia Service Medal | VOD Support | JAN-APR/JUL-DEC |
| Sea Service Ribbon           | VOD Support | JAN-APR/JUL-DEC |

(2) Individual awards:

| <u>AWARDING AUTHORITY</u> | <u>AWARD</u>                        | <u>NUMBER</u> |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|
| CNO                       | Navy Commendation Medal             | 1             |
| CINCPACFLT                | Meritorious Service Medal           | 1             |
|                           | Navy Commendation Medal             | 1             |
| COMNAVAIRPAC              | Meritorious Service Medal           | 1             |
|                           | Navy Commendation Medal             | 4             |
|                           | Navy Achievement Medal              | 2             |
|                           | COMNAVAIRPAC "Safety Pro"           | 3             |
| COMNAVAIRLANT             | Navy Commendation Medal             | 1             |
| CNET                      | Navy Achievement Medal              | 1             |
| COMNAVBASE S. F.          | Letter of Commendation              | 1             |
|                           | Letter of Appreciation              | 1             |
| NAS Alameda               | Letter of Appreciation              | 27            |
| Sikorsky                  | Sikorsky 1000 Hour Flight Award     | 1             |
|                           | Sikorsky Aircraft Maintenance Award | 4             |

### 3. Narrative

a. 1991 was a year of refining deployability methods and incorporating upgraded mission/aircraft systems into squadron training. Throughout the year HM-15 has demonstrated tremendous versatility and depth. The tempo for the entire year was high, starting off with the rapid deployment of DET ONE via C-5 airlift to the Persian Gulf for heavy lift VOD support to surface combatants. DET ONE performed remarkably in support of Operation Desert Storm achieving 688 mishap free combat flight hours. DET ONE was nominated for a Navy Unit Commendation (still pending).

b. The squadron participated in three west coast AMCM exercises during the year. Additionally, the squadron was tasked with Persian Gulf VOD support for a second time in July. As a result of Desert Storm, an interim fix GPS was introduced to the AMCM community. The squadron quickly incorporated GPS into the aircraft and pilot training syllabus and proved its effectiveness during KERNEL USHER 91-1 and subsequent exercises.

c. The squadron's persistent reliability and high visibility has continued to attract VIPS/media and other commands for passenger and heavy lift support. The squadron continues to project a positive image to the civilian community through local static displays for schools and participation in airshows.

d. HM-15 has established itself as the front-runner in AMCM. By relying on committed personnel and stressing training and readiness the squadron has established an outstanding reputation throughout the fleet as the premier west coast AMCM/VOD squadron.



**HELICOPTER MINE COUNTERMEASURES SQUADRON  
FIFTEEN  
"BLACKHAWKS"  
CALLSIGN: "HURRICANE"**

HM-15 was established on 2 January, 1987 as the first of two currently active, deployable U.S. Navy Airborne Mine Countermeasures squadrons. Flying the Sikorsky MH-53 Sea Dragon helicopter, the squadron conducts training flights in and around San Francisco Bay, towing a variety of mine countermeasures devices through the water.

Initial squadron flight operations commenced in Norfolk, Virginia in July 1987 with receipt of the first MH-53E. In September of that same year, three aircrafts departed NAS Norfolk and arrived at NAS Alameda, California, completing a homeport change from East to West Coast and establishing the nucleus for the unit to grow to present strength. The squadron is under operational and administrative control of Command, Anti-Submarine Warfare Wing, U.S. Pacific Fleet, located in San Diego, California.

**MISSION**

Operate a deployable twelve aircraft MH-53E Airborne Mine Countermeasures (AMCM) Squadron. Maintain a 72-hour quick response readiness posture, providing rapid deployment AMCM detachments as required, world-wide, via air or surface lift. Squadron personnel, aircraft and airborne mine countermeasure assets may be deployed in support of theater (Joint Chiefs of Staff directed) mine countermeasures operations. Conduct AMCM operations from fixed land bases, aircraft carriers, air capable and amphibious aviation ships.

**AIRCRAFT**

Sikorsky MH-53E Helicopter: "Sea Dragon"  
Engines: Three/T64-GE-416 turboshaft,  
producing 4380 shaft horsepower each  
Armament: Two .50 caliber machine  
guns for mine neutralization; Anti-  
missile chaff and flares  
Length: 99' 1/2"  
Main rotor blades: 7  
Tail rotor blades: 4  
Blade path diameter: 79  
Max gross weight: 73,500 lbs  
Top speed: 180 knots  
Max external lift capability: 36,000 lbs

**MCM**

Rigid Inflatable Boats: 7  
Four Wheel Drive Trucks: 8  
6 Wheel Drive 2 1/2  
Ton Trucks: 4  
15 Ton Trucks: 2  
Vans: 5  
Forklifts: 6  
MK-105 Mine Countermeasure  
Sleds: 6

### ADMINISTRATION

|                         |              |
|-------------------------|--------------|
| Annual squadron salary: | \$12,700,000 |
| Operating budget:       | \$ 4,900,000 |
| Number of aircraft:     | 12           |
| Personnel:              | 591 enlisted |
|                         | 42 officers  |

# HM-15 Hauls Over a Million Pounds of Cargo During Desert Storm

by LT Steven L. O'Connor

With a carefully orchestrated MH-53E "load out" complete, three heavily laden C-5B Galaxy transports climbed into the sky over San Francisco. Operation Desert Shield created a critical need for combat logistic helicopter support services, and the "Blackhawks" were on the way to fill the gap. Upon arrival, DET ONE commenced operations at the International Airport on Muharraq Island, Baharain under the control of Commander, U.S. Naval Logistics and Support Force (COMUSNAVLOGSUPFOR).

VOD tasking took the "Blackhawks" to virtually every amphibious ship, airfield and LZ serving forward logistic centers for Operation Desert Shield/Storm (ODS/DS). The support record was impressive: over 1,000,000 pounds of cargo and mail carried, along with 2,000 passengers. The missions varied from external transportation of large, outsized equipment for ships, aircraft and ground forces, to Medical Evacuation reconfiguration in anticipation of heavy casualties during the initial hours of ODS/DS. Fortunately, the MEDEVAC requirement did not materialize, but the "Blackhawks" regularly provided VOD

services to two hospital ships on station- USNS MERCY and COMFORT.

The organized transportation of passengers and high priority cargo in such a dynamic environment as ODS/DS, required flight crews to be wary of changing cargo loading evolutions with little or no advance information on size or



weight of equipment to be moved. Congested, flight decks taxed all aircrew personnel. Loadmaster, passenger handler, and aircraft refuel supervisor became job assignments all members executed with skill and professionalism. The pace of combat support during day and night operations challenged flightdeck personnel to be especially vigilant. Forklifts, turning rotors and large cargo loads handled at such a high op-tempo presented an extreme challenge for all involved. It is a true testimony to professional training and safety awareness that

HM-15 DET ONE remained accident free while flying continuous VOD missions during a ninety day period.

The "Blackhawks" were also involved in several high visibility special interest transport missions. Of particular note was the airlift of Senator John Warner's Congressional Fact Finding Committee to the USS WISCONSIN for a live-fire demonstration of WISCONSIN's 16 inch guns. Other flights transported ABC and BBC camera crews to photograph enemy prisoner of war (EPW) camps and to record the gulf region's tremendous environmental damage resulting from Saddam Hussein's "scorched earth" policy. "Blackhawk" aircraft were the first on the scene airlifting damage control personnel and repair equipment to the stricken USS TRIPOLI, just hours after she struck a contact mine, deep inside northern gulf waters. The outstanding damage control procedures executed by Tripoli's repair parties combined with rapid delivery of emergency equipment and crews flown in by DET I, enabled Tripoli to arrest massive flooding, regain power and transit under her own power to a dry dock facility. Regardless of the visibility or priority of

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any flight, the "Blackhawks" of HM-15 DET ONE provided "on time" and professional service- logging 300 flight hours in February alone.

The overall operational, maintenance and safety success of HM-15 DET ONE cannot be attributed to aircrew alone. Despite a harsh working environment, the maintenance effort was superb. Working nonstop 12 hour shifts upon arrival, maintenance technicians kept three MH-53E aircraft operationally ready and allowed the detachment to exceed the monthly wartime flight hour requirement for the MH-53E.