



**DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY**  
HELICOPTER MINE COUNTERMEASURES SQUADRON 15  
9020 OCEAN DRIVE  
CORPUS CHRISTI, TX 78419-5000

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From: Commanding Officer, Helicopter Mine Countermeasures Squadron 15  
To: Director, Naval History and Archives, 1242 10<sup>th</sup> Street SE, Washington Navy Yard,  
Washington DC 20374-5059

Subj: HM-15 CALENDAR YEAR 2002 COMMAND HISTORY REPORT

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST. 5750.12G

Encl: (1) HM-15 Calendar Year 2002 Command History Report  
(2) CD-ROM

1. Per reference (a), enclosures (1) and (2) are provided

  
P. A. LLOYD



## **HELICOPTER MINE COUNTERMEASURES SQUADRON 15**

The world's premier Airborne Mine

### **COMMAND HISTORY CY2002**

#### 1. Command Composition and Organization.

Command Short Title: HELMINERON FIFTEEN (HM-15)

Command Mascot: Blackhawk

UIC: 55201

Mission: Provide a 72-hour rapid response airborne mine countermeasures (AMCM) capability worldwide in support of Joint Chiefs of Staff operational tasking.

#### Organizational Structure.

##### **Immediate Senior Operational Command:**

Commander Mine Warfare Command, RDML Paul J. Ryan, USN

##### **Immediate Senior Administrative Command:**

Commander Helicopter Tactical Wing, U.S. Atlantic Fleet, CAPT John A. Brown, USN

##### **Squadron Commanding Officer:**

MAR 01 - APR 02, CDR Patrick W. Menah, USN

APR 02 - MAR 03, CDR Steven J. Richey, USNR

##### **Permanent Duty Station:**

Naval Air Station Corpus Christi

##### **Type of Aircraft:**

Sikorsky MH-53E "Sea Dragon" Helicopter

##### **Number of Aircraft:**

	<u>Side #</u>	<u>BUNO</u>
1.	TB00	163052
2.	TB01	164792
3.	TB03	164770
4.	TB04	164768
5.	TB05	164766
6.	TB06	164764
7.	TB07	162507
8.	TB10	162497
9.	TB11	162513
10.	TB12	162508
11.	TB13	162510

2. Chronology.

19FEB02 - 20FEB02	MK-105 MOD4 Beach Operations I
21FEB02 - 26FEB02	MK-105 MOD4 Beach Operations II
07MAR02 - 22MAR02	USS NASSAU DET
18MAR02 - 22MAR02	FOAL EAGLE (Corpus Christi)
18APR02	Change of Command
29APR02 - 11MAY02	RONEX 02-02 (Panama City)
11JUN02 - 01AUG02	RIMPAC 02 (USS DULUTH)
12JUL02 - 29JUL02	MERCURY GOMEX 02-02
26JUL02 - 01OCT02	OPEVAL AN/ANS-163 Navigation Set
19OCT02 - 03NOV02	RONEX 03-01 (USS KEARSRAGE)
07NOV02 - 14NOV02	USS TRENTON DET
FEB 03	DEPLOYED VOD DETACHMENT TO 5 <sup>TH</sup> FLEET
MAR 03	DEPLOYED AMCM DETACHMENT TO 6 <sup>TH</sup> FLEET

3. Narrative.

- **MK-105 MOD4 Beach Operations I&II (19FEB - 20FEB, 21FEB - 26FEB):** Prior to CY02, the HM community did not commonly conduct MK-105 launch and recoveries from the shoreline or beach. Often, MK-105 sled operations necessitated the allocation of a Navy ship or shore based ramp and support facilities. In doing so, the Navy spent significant amounts of TEMADD funds to send HM detachments to various locations throughout CONUS to allow them to acquire MK-105 training and maintain its readiness. In an effort to reduce cost and increase the AMCM community's war fighting posture, the HM-15 MCM department worked with local and federal law officials to establish guidelines and procedures to allow HM squadrons to conduct MK-105 sled operations from specifically designated beaches in the local South Texas region. As a result, the first ever MK-105 MOD 4 beach launches and recoveries were conducted several times in the local area and have paved the way for future beach site operations and fleet integrated exercises.

While also improving the command's overall expeditionary capabilities, HM-15's outstanding efforts in this endeavor have resulted in more efficient training and expanded the potential MCM capabilities of the MK-105 MOD 4 minesweeping sled by enabling missions to be accomplished from essentially any beach access worldwide.

- **USS NASSAU (LHA4) DET (07MAR - 22MAR):** HM-15 embarked 2 aircraft onboard USS NASSAU for a fifteen-day DLQ detachment from 07 March to 21 March 2002. The detachment operated on a single shift maintenance concept based around a typical flight operations window of six hours. The detachment was able to fly 105.7 hours and gain currency for 10 pilots. Additionally, HM-15 responded to PMC tasking as well as supporting MEDEVAC requirements to Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico. On the cross country flight back to Corpus Christi NAS, detachment maintainers were able to remove and replace a main landing gear hydraulic servicing pin assembly with minimum support at a small civilian airfield. This outstanding maintenance effort resulted in detachment personnel returning to home base on schedule.
- **FOAL EAGLE (18MAR - 22MAR):** HM-15 provided AMCM support in accordance with Mine Warfare Command directives. AMCM systems deployed for this exercises included the MK-103 mine sweeping system and the AN/AQS-14A mine hunting system.
- **CHANGE OF COMMAND (18 APR):** CDR Steven J. Richey, USNR, assumed duties as HM-15 Commanding Officer, taking over for CDR Patrick W. Menah, USN, at the annual Change of Command ceremony. The ceremony was held at NAS Corpus Christi, Hangar 42. Upon CDR Richey's assumption of duties as Commanding Officer, CDR Paul A. Lluy, USN, assumed Executive Officer duties for HM-15.
- **RONEX 02-02 (29 APR - 11 MAY):** The exercise objectives were to conduct AN/AQS-14A hunting operations in the Panama City Operating Area (PCOA) and perform unit level training in AN/ALQ-141 and AN/37-U operations. The detachment maintained an FMC rate of 92.3 percent while achieving 87 aircrew sign-off's. Of the 34 missions scheduled, 29 were flown amassing 132.4 flight hours for the detachment. This detachment enabled HM-15 to be the Navy's only AMCM squadron that had crews fully trained in both the AN/37U and AN/ALQ-141 and with the completion of 38 pilot qualifications and 107 for the aircrewmen.
- **RIMPAC 02 (11 JUN - 01 AUG):** This exercise, conducted by MCMRON 1 while embarked onboard USS DULUTH with HM-

15, was conducted within a simulated amphibious assault geometry utilizing all assets in the MCM inventory. Command and control of AMCM, SMCM, EOD det's and VSW det's was both challenging and rewarding in that it is very uncommon to have all of the assets embarked on one platform exercise. HM-15 successfully conducted AN/AQS-14A missions in the Inner Transit Area. Along with operational successes, the squadron improved its readiness by achieving 23 total initial qualifications for aircrewmembers and 12 for pilots.

- **MERCURY/GOMEX 02-02 (12-29 JUL)**: This exercise, was conducted in the Corpus Christi Operations Area simultaneously with RIMPAC 02. That was significant in that it demonstrated the squadron's ability to support two exercises with high operational tempo in two different regions while maintaining total independence from each other. In spite of limited manpower and focus of the squadron toward deploying for RIMPAC, HM-15 conducted AMCM operations involving nearly all towed systems in their inventory. Utilization of Selected Reservists was instrumental in accomplishing dual site commitments.
  
- **OPEVAL AN/ASN-163 Navigation Set (MAGR) (26JUL - 29JUL)**: HM-15 was selected to represent the fleet in assisting COMOPTEVFOR and Air Test and Evaluation Squadron One (VX-1) to complete the operational test and evaluation (OPEVAL) of the newly developed AN/ASN-163 navigation set. The test totaled 75 cross country and local flight hours and included shipboard flight tests aboard USS SAIPAN (LHA-2).

In accordance with CNO directives related to upgrading GPS interoperability throughout the fleet, the MH-53E helicopter was chosen by the Navy to be the first combatant aircraft to have the ability to perform GPS non-precision approaches (NPAs). The AN/ASN-163 navigation set, also known as the MAGR (Miniaturized Airborne GPS Receiver), is the system of choice the Navy is looking to procure to provide the HM community and subsequently the fleet this capability. The MAGR will ultimately provide the HM and other aviation communities with an increased war fighting capability by allowing aircrews to do the following:

- Auto sequencing of up to 50 GPS waypoints for both NPAs and flight plan execution.
- Storage with data cartridge of over 20,000 GPS waypoints
- Local memory storage of 200 GPS waypoints
- Ability to program and intercept moving waypoints
- Provides precise time inputs to the AN/ARC-210 radios to support their anti-jam measures
- Channel acquired positional information to the cockpit display and AMCM mission avionics.

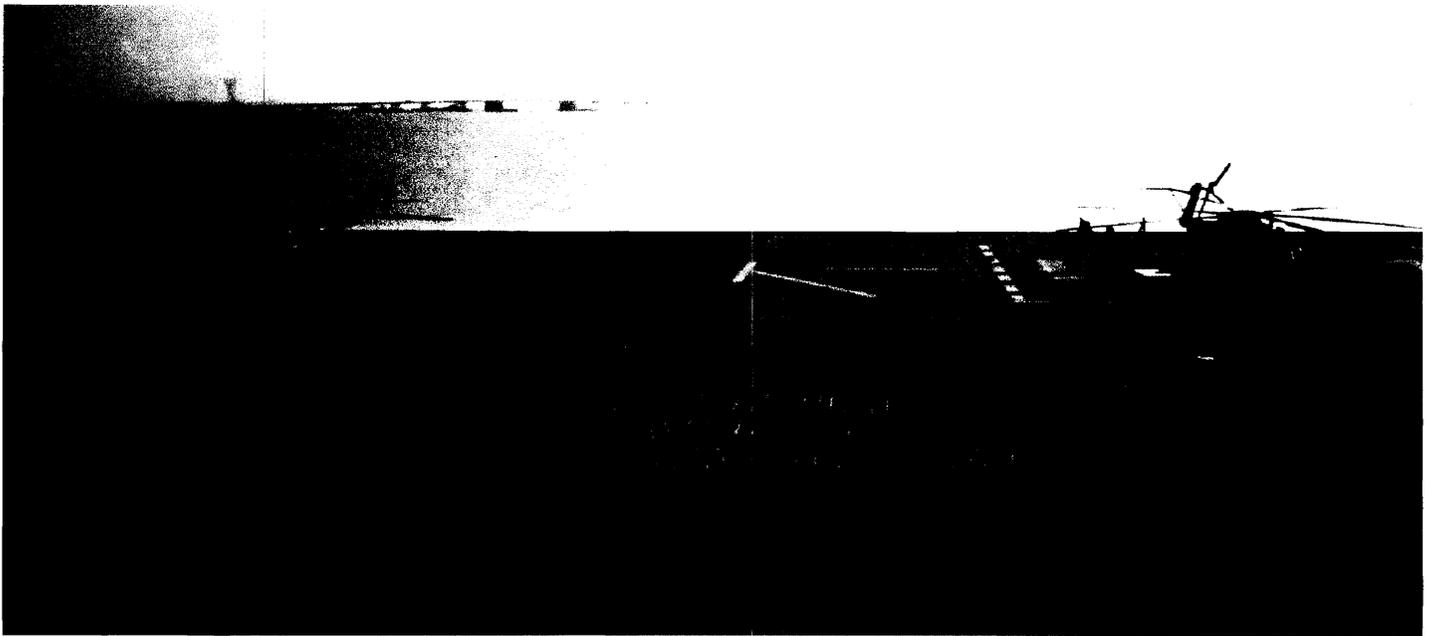
HM-15 was the first fleet squadron in the Navy to fly with the AN/ASN-163 navigation set. The command's efforts in supporting this OPEVAL contributed directly to the increased HM warfighting capabilities of today and of the future.

- **RONEX 03-01 (19OCT - 3NOV):** In addition to a RONEX, this exercise was used as an opportunity for COMINSEWARCOM to have access to an LHD in order to prove MCM's deployability on a "Ship of Opportunity" after the early retirement of the USS INCHON. HM-15 was tasked to embark USS KEARSARGE with 8 aircraft and all of her AMCM systems in order to simulate the requirements for a six-month deployment. In addition to flexing the command's onload/offload procedures, the squadron was tasked to develop RHIB/MK 105 launch and recovery procedures for LHD class ships. The high visibility that accompanied this exercise was apparent when both CINCLANTFLT and COMSECONDFLT flew to the ship in order to view the MK-105 operations. This exercise allowed the Aircraft Maintenance Department to display their prowess by maintaining aircraft FMC rates exceeding 90% and MCM Maintenance to also achieve outstanding system availability rates exceeding 90%.
- **USS TRENTON DET (07NOV - 14NOV):** HM-15 embarked 2 aircraft onboard USS TRENTON for an eight-day DLQ detachment. Flight operations were conducted in the Gulf of Mexico and a port call was in Galveston, Texas. A total of nine pilots received initial or re-qualification for day and night DLQs.
- **DEPLOYMENT ORDERS:** In February 03, HM-15 executed deployment orders establishing a VOD Detachment in the 5<sup>th</sup> Fleet AOR. In March 03, HM-15 executed a second set

of deployment orders by establishing an AMCM detachment in the 6<sup>th</sup> Fleet AOR.

4. Supporting Documents.

- A. RONEX 02 Press Release (Enclosure 1)
- B. RIMPAC 02 Press Release (Enclosure 2)
- C. RONEX 03 Press Release (Enclosure 3)
- D. CDR Steven J. Richey, USNR, Biography (Enclosure 4)



## BLACKHAWKS RETURN FROM



**RONEX-02**



**LTJG Vince Spozio**

HM-15 PAO

On April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2002, four MH-53E helicopters and one NALO C-9 carrying equipment and personnel from Helicopter Mine Counter Measures Squadron Fifteen departed the blustery confines of NAS Corpus Christi destined for Coastal System Station (CSS), Panama City, Florida. The detachment of HM-15 "Blackhawk" assets to the "Sunshine State" was in direct support of RONEX 02-2, conducted in the Panama City Oparea (PCOA) between 30APR02 and 10MAY02. HM-15's RONEX 02-2 mission objective, as set forth by newly crowned Skipper, Commander Steven J. Richey, was to conduct mine countermeasures operations in the PCOA to include unit level training with the AN/ALQ-141 and AN/37U-1 Mine Countermeasure Systems. In order to accomplish their mission, HM-15 pilots, aircrew, and maintainers were divided into two separate work parties. The first party, led by AOIC LCDR Ted Dempsey and HM-15 XO CDR Paul Lluy arrived at CSS on April 29th to kick off the exercise.

Using the CSS Heliport as their base for operations, personnel from HM-15 quickly set up an intricate network of Mil -vans and shared spaces with CSS to create the Squadron's home away from home. With the groundwork for operations having been laid, the Blackhawks quickly got to work commencing flight operations. During the first week of operations in the PCOA, HM-15 conducted a total of 17 missions including the employment of both the AN/ALQ-141 and AN/AQS-14A mine countermeasure systems. These 17 missions, supported by an outstanding maintenance effort, amassed a total of 63 flight hours.

With the first week of operations under their belt, HM-15's first party (less a few essential personnel) were soon back on board the C-9 and home bound to Corpus Christi, Texas. Once on ground at NAS Corpus Christi, a proper turnover was conducted between the first and second detachment parties, and the second group of Blackhawks was soon airborne, headed for Panama City.

Upon arrival at CSS, CDR Richey, aided by his detachment OIC, LCDR Robert Young, quickly picked up where CDR Lloy and LCDR Dempsey left off. With their Skipper by their side, HM-15's second party coordinated and executed 16 separate missions en route to racking up 76 hours of flight time. While conducting these 16 missions, Blackhawk aircrew employed the use of both the AN/ALQ-141 and the MK-37U-1 mine countermeasure systems.

In addition to participating in actual missions, HM-15 aircrew were exposed to invaluable AN/ALQ-141 console training. Assistance for the Q-141 console training was provided by CSS resident expert, Mr. Alan Hawkins. While Q-141 console training took place on site in Panama City, MK-37U training was coordinated months in advance and conducted back home, at NAS Corpus Christi. Initial guidance and classroom training was provided by CSS's Richard Jermyn, Tony SanFelipe and Chief Petty Officer Chad Smith during a three day stay in Corpus. HM-15 then continued crewman specific training in the AMCM Stream and Recovery Module (ASRM). Armed with thirty plus hours of ASRM training devoted to streaming and recovering the MK-37U gear, Blackhawk aircrew performed their missions with skill and precision.

All said and done, HM-15 left CSS Panama City on the 11<sup>th</sup> of May, 2002, posting the following stats; 30 pilots AN/ALQ-141 tow experienced, 8 pilots MK-37U-1 tow experienced, 87 aircrewmembers AN/ALQ-141 tow experienced, and 20 aircrewmembers MK-37U-1 tow experienced.

Most importantly, all members of the HM-15 RONEX 02-2 detachment returned home safely to Corpus Christi having gained valuable insight, training and knowledge through the exposure to sophisticated methods of airborne mine countermeasures.

## **HM-15 BLACKHWAKS COMPLETE SUCCESSFUL NAVAL EXERCISE**

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**Members of HELMINERON FIFTEEN wash down an MH-53E helicopter with fresh water after another successful mission in the waters off of the Hawaiian Islands in support of RIMPAC 2002.**

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**By LTJG Vince Spozio**

PAO HM-15

The first week of August 2002 saw the return of Helicopter Mine Countermeasures Squadron Fifteen (HM-15) Det 1 to Naval Air Station Corpus Christi. HM-15 Det 1, consisting of three Sikorsky MH-53E "Sea Dragon" helicopters and over 150 personnel, made their recent return after completing a successful and rewarding journey across the Pacific to Hawaii on board the amphibious support ship USS Duluth. (LPD-6). HM-15's primary mission while operating on board the DULUTH was to provide Airborne Mine Countermeasures (AMCM) in support of the Rim of the Pacific exercise.

Seven Pacific Rim nations along with the United Kingdom and France participated in Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) 2002, a major maritime exercise conducted in the waters off Hawaii from June 24 through July 22, 2002. RIMPAC 2002 brought together maritime forces from Australia, Canada, Chile, Peru, France, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the United Kingdom and the United States.

This year's exercise was the eighteenth in a series of RIMPAC exercises conducted periodically since 1971. Over 30 ships, 24 aircraft and 11,000 sailors, airmen, marines, soldiers and coastguardsmen participated in RIMPAC 2002 training operations. Of the 11,000 personnel participating in the exercise, approximately 7,900 were U.S. Armed Forces personnel. These operations are intended to enhance the tactical proficiency of participating units in a wide array of combined operations at sea. By enhancing interoperability, RIMPAC helps promote stability in the Pacific Rim region to the benefit of all participating nations. This year's exercise included a variety of surface combatant ships, submarines, tactical aircraft, and amphibious forces.

The exercise scenario focused on enduring maritime war fighting competencies and has no connection to any recent or ongoing world events. Nevertheless, retaining sufficient well-trained and adequately equipped military forces to respond to any future crisis is a prudent measure for any nation in any security environment. Additionally, the post-cold war era has witnessed a dramatic increase in combined multi-national operations around the world. The interoperability exercised during RIMPAC benefits all participants and could serve as valuable training in the event of some future multi-national maritime based operation.

Planning for this year's RIMPAC had been ongoing for two years, with availability of participants playing a key role in the timing of this year's exercise. Overall coordination was directed by RIMPAC Commander Combined Task Force, Vice Admiral T. Michael Bucchi, Commander Third Fleet.

While conducting their Airborne Mine Countermeasure operations, the Blackhawks of HM-15 towed the AN/AQS-14A Side-Scan Sonar and the Mk-104 Acoustic mine hunting device. These efforts resulted in over 260 miles of ocean being searched and/or swept for maritime mine threats. In

addition to providing exercise support, HM-15 pilots, aircrew, and support personnel gained valuable experience operating in a shipboard environment. As a result, 15 pilots received qualification and currency in deck landings (DLQs) on the various types of ships sailing in the same flotilla as the USS DULUTH. All totaled, HM-15 Det 1 flew nearly 200 flight hours and completed 75 missions during their time afloat.

HM-15 is commanded by Steven J. Richey, Commander, USNR.



*Official US Navy photo*  
*Two Mh-53E Sea Dragons from HM-15 prepare to launch from the USS Kearsarge in support of RONEX-03 in the Gulf of Mexico.*

**HM-15 BLACKHAWKS VALIDATE LHD PLATFORM AS VIABLE MINE WARFARE COMMAND SHIP DURING RONEX-03-1**

***By LTJG Vince Spozio, HM-15 PAO***

Since the decommissioning of the USS INCHON (MCS 12) in June of 2002 the Navy has been void a dedicated command and control vessel for mine countermeasure operations. As a result the Navy has begun testing "vessels of opportunity" or ships in their interdeployment cycle to fill the current gap left by the INCHON.

The first of these such ships, the USS KEARSARGE (LHD 3), arrived at Naval Station Ingleside, TX on October 15<sup>th</sup> as the host MCS base of operations for RONEX-03 mine countermeasures (MCM) exercise conducted in the Gulf of Mexico from 15-30 OCT 2002. The availability of USS KEARSARGE in the role of MCS allowed the Navy to evaluate all facets of the MCM Triad (Air, Surface, and Under water assets) to be exercised collectively from a single and dedicated support platform toward a common objective.

Upon dropping its brow at Naval Station Ingleside, TX, the KEARSARGE and Helicopter Mine Countermeasures Squadron Fifteen (HM-15) quickly orchestrated the on-load of airborne mine countermeasure (AMCM) weapon systems and the necessary logistical equipment to support a full deployment of the AMCM squadron. In addition to all the supporting gear and equipment, eight Sikorsky MH-53E Sea Dragon helicopters and 400 personnel from HM-15 embarked USS KEARSARGE during the two-week exercise and evaluation period. RONEX 03-1 allowed the Navy to evaluate the KEARSARGE with two main primary objectives:

- (1) Provide support for AMCM flight and well deck operations as directed in support of Commander Mine Countermeasures Squadron Two's (COMCMRON TWO) concept of operations for RONEX-03.
- (2) To evaluate the performance of the LHD platform as a dedicated mine-warfare command ship in support of AMCM operations.

Both of these objectives were successfully achieved due to the collective efforts of the HM-15 BLACKHAWKS and USS KEARSARGE.

Under the review of Admiral Natter, Commander U.S. Atlantic Fleet, and Admiral Dawson, Commander U.S. Second Fleet, HM-15 superbly conducted AN/AQS-14A Side Scan Sonar mine hunting and well deck launched MK-105 sled magnetic mine sweeping missions as directed by COMCMRON TWO. In carrying out these missions, HM-15 flight crews tallied 124 flight hours. These 124 hours resulted in 270 miles of ocean being hunted or swept for marine mines. In addition to carrying out its AMCM missions during the exercise, HM-15 completed the first-ever MK-105 sled operations from an LHD.

The HM-15 BLACKHAWKS are a combined active duty and reserve squadron based out of Naval Air Station Corpus Christi, Texas. Commanded by CDR Steven J. Richey, HM-15 boasts over 600 personnel with a compliment of 11 MH-53E helicopters and multiple mine countermeasure sensors and weapon systems. The BLACKHAWKS train and prepare to be deployed anywhere in the world within 72 hours should the need for their services arise.