

The Navy–Marine Corps Team: Ready to Respond

By RAdm. Dennis V. McGinn, Director, Air Warfare

A tumultuous revolt rocks the tiny Balkan country of Albania. Over 5,000 miles away, another revolt threatens stability and American citizens in Zaire. A state of near anarchy allows armed gangs, criminals and rebels to take control of roads and towns throughout these countries. Law and order is nonexistent and rogues armed with assault weapons are firing indiscriminately in the streets. Civil authority is lost and American lives are at risk. The State Department wants Americans evacuated but does not want U.S. forces to become involved in the internal conflicts. The National Command Authority and the area commanders in chief turn to “America’s 911”—its Naval Expeditionary Forces—to answer the call.

With their embarked combat-ready Marines, CH-46 *Sea Knights*, CH-53E *Super Stallions*, AH-1W *Cobras* and AV-8B *Harriers*, Naval Expeditionary Forces have the flexibility, mobility, sustainability and near-zero “foot-print” ashore to respond to these crises. The value of the Navy–Marine Corps team was demonstrated again in early 1997 when elements of the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit, embarked aboard ships of the *Nassau* (LHA 4) Amphibious Readiness Group, divided their assets to cover noncombatant evacuation operations (NEO) in both Albania (Operation Silver Wake) and Zaire (Operation Guardian Retrieval).

The crisis in Albania necessitated an evacuation of Americans and third country nationals when civil order was lost and the situation rapidly deteriorated. Naval amphibious ships, maintaining a credible, visible presence offshore, were able to monitor the situation closely and respond quickly. Marine and Navy air-

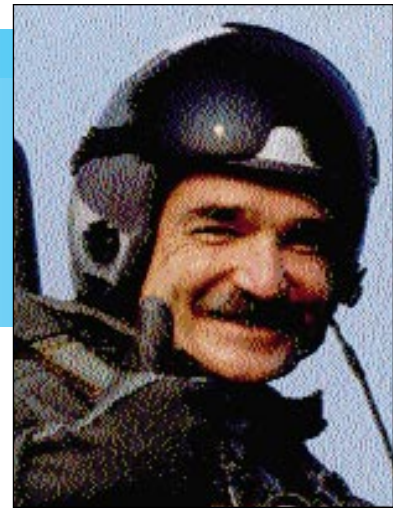
crews and aircraft embarked on these ships provided the nation with a unique immediate response when American lives were threatened. Our on-scene ships and aircraft also were able to provide humanitarian assistance by rescuing Albanian refugees from the overloaded, unseaworthy small boats they were utilizing for escape. This crisis underscored, once again, our nation’s requirement for a force that has the visible presence and sustainability to stay on station and respond quickly to dynamic situations.

After having safely evacuated 889 people from Albania, including 400 Americans, several helicopters from *Nassau* were transferred to *Nashville* (LPD 13) and remained behind with *Pensacola* (LSD 38) to continue Operation Silver Wake. *Nassau* left for the Atlantic coast of Africa on 24 March to be in position should the continuing civil strife in Zaire require an NEO of Americans from that area. *Nassau*’s air group was augmented by longer range MH-53E *Sea Dragons* from Helicopter Combat Support Squadron 4 out of Sigonella, Sicily, giving the air group even more flexibility and providing an ideal platform for evacuation missions in central Africa.



PH2 Brett Siegel

U.S. citizens board an HMM-365 CH-53E *Super Stallion* from a field inside the American Embassy Compound in Tirana, Albania, on 15 March.



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The nearly flawless operations performed by all of these multi-mission helicopters are testimony to our ability to cover a wide spectrum of taskings. Naval Aviation gives our expeditionary forces the unique capability to stand offshore and yet still influence events inland when called upon.

Our nation has no other combat force that can cover 5,000 miles, stay on station indefinitely, self replenish and not impose requirements on other countries. In this era of chaotic peace, naval forces are shaped for crisis response operations. As this issue goes to press, the Navy–Marine Corps team is standing by off the coast of Africa doing its job—forward deployed, on station, combat ready for any contingency and ready to respond.

In December, Marine Helicopter Squadron One celebrates its 50th year as the primary developer of Marine Corps helicopter warfighting capabilities and tactics. The *Nighthawks*’ test and evaluation of equipment and innovative techniques continue to enhance the Navy–Marine Corps teams’ operational success. Bravo Zulu and congratulations to our HMX-1 teammates.

Fly safe! Be the best!





HMX-1: On the Leading Edge

By Lt. Gen T. R. Dake, Deputy Chief of Staff for Aviation (Marine Corps)

sions and aircraft retrievals conducted in the Vietnam War.

The 1970s brought more trials and operational testing. As in previous decades, some of them worked and some didn't. During these years, HMX-1 tested the CH-46E *Sea Knight* and CH-53E *Super Stallion*, as well as modifications for the UH-1N *Iroquois*.

In the 1980s, more formal and rigorous testing was conducted on equipment and weapons carried externally by helicopters. Testing and formulation of procedures for night vision devices also matured.

The eighties also marked HMX-1's initial involvement with the MV-22 *Osprey* tilt-rotor aircraft. During the early 1990s, forward-looking

infrared systems for both the UH-1N and CH-53E went through development and test efforts and are being fielded in our squadrons today.

Throughout the years, HMX-1 and Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron (MAWTS) One have maintained a close relationship. MAWTS-1 was established in the late seventies to train instructors and develop tactics for all of Marine aviation. With the standup of the Commandant's Warfighting Lab (CWL) at the Marine Corps Combat Development Command, Quantico, Va., the Marine Corps continues to move forward in a process designed to improve the way Marines will fight in the future. HMX-1 is playing a vital role in the warfighting lab's Sea Dragon experimentation process during which three advanced warfighting experiments will be conducted over the next five years. Several systems selected by the CWL for inclusion in "Hunter Warrior," the first of these experiments, were tested by HMX-1 earlier this year at training areas in southern California. Using the Sea Dragon process, the CWL can develop new concepts and technolo-

gies to meet future commitments. The time for new developments in Marine aviation has never been better, and we have the organizations necessary to pull it all together: CWL, MAWTS-1 and HMX-1.

Although the MV-22 was not directly involved in Hunter Warrior, its capabilities were represented. The



HMX-1's long heritage of operational testing continues with the MV-22 *Osprey*.

test of this revolutionary aircraft will be one of HMX-1's major responsibilities in the next several years.

Unknown to many, HMX-1 has already conducted two operational assessments on the MV-22 and is finishing up its third to support production of the first lot of aircraft planned for delivery to our operating forces. In addition to pilot testing, HMX-1 enlisted mechanics and technicians have been working side by side with the contractors in the development of maintenance procedures, publications and design from the maintainer's perspective. This effort will ensure that the *Ospreys* we see on our flight lines and aboard ship will be as maintenance friendly as possible.

As I look to the future I can see that, as the Commandant has said, "another golden age of Marine aviation is dawning." Our capability to support testing and experimentation will ensure we capitalize on the valuable ideas of countless Marines in our ranks. HMX-1 has always been and will continue to be on the leading edge of technology, enhancing the warfighting capability of the Marine Corps. *Semper Fi!*



I am pleased that *Naval Aviation News* is featuring Marine Helicopter Squadron (HMX) One in this issue. For 50 years, HMX-1 has held a special place in Marine Corps aviation. As pioneers in developing helicopter tactics, and as warriors entrusted to transport the president of the United States, HMX-1 has a well-deserved reputation for excellence.

Many readers of *Naval Aviation News* are aware of the presidential support mission performed by the squadron. However, I'd like to highlight other contributions made by the *Nighthawks* that benefit the Marine Corps.

HMX-1 is the place where helicopter innovations began and where they continue today in the squadron's Operational Test and Evaluation Department. HMX-1 was formed in 1947 to investigate the capabilities that the helicopter could bring to warfighting.

The early years were spent examining new aircraft, missions and tactics to exploit the full potential of vertical flight. Concepts of ship-to-shore movement by helicopter, vertical assault, external lift of supplies, artillery, heavy equipment, and retrieval of downed helicopters developed during the 1950s. These experiments prepared us for combat operations when helicopters were first used in the Korean War. Test and evaluation of the entire fleet of first-generation turbine helicopters, many of which still serve today, paid off in the landing zones, medevac mis-