

STINGERS SUPPORT MULTIPLE DETS

By Maj. David Bussel



From flying over the oil fires during Operation Desert Storm to the current global war on terrorism, Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron (HMLA) 267 has supported both the First Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF) and III MEF by providing light attack assets to each Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU). The squadron deploys detachments to each of the three WESTPAC MEUs and supports each 31st MEU based in Okinawa, Japan.

HMLA-267 originated in February 1944 as VMO-5 flying the OY-1 Sentinel in support of combat operations in the Pacific, specifically the Iwo Jima campaign and the occupation of Japan, and was deactivated in 1946. With the upswing of the Vietnam War, VMO-5 was reactivated in December 1966 at Camp Pendleton, Calif., flying the UH-1 Huey and the OV-10 Bronco as part of the 3d Marine Aircraft Wing. The squadron was redesignated HML-267 in March 1968. In February 1982, the Stingers began flying UH-1Ns along with AH-1J Cobras. In February 1987, the squadron was redesignated HMLA-267, and began to receive its first AH-1W Super Cobras.

Upon return from OIF in May 2003, the squadron deployed to Okinawa, Japan, as part of the Unit

Deployment Program (UDP). At that time the Stingers had a 15th MEU detachment deployed and were preparing to gain a 13th MEU detachment from another squadron within Marine Air Group 39. Meanwhile the squadron had to create an imaginative course of action to support the UDP, requiring three deploying MEU detachments and two additional MEU detachments per calendar year. The Stingers' recent detachments include the 15th MEU (December 2004–July 2005); 31st MEU (April–December 2005); 13th MEU (July 2005–February 2006); and 11th MEU (November 2005). Another det to the 31st MEU began in December 2005, and will be completed in July.

Additionally, the squadron was tasked with the Alert Contingency Marine Air Ground Task Force (ACM). This program had not been utilized in more than two years, and an extensive review, update, and resurrection of every part of the ACM contingency plan was required. HMLA-267 reviewed all references and guidance from higher headquarters and recommended changes that would ultimately be fashioned into a new 3d Marine Aircraft Wing ACM order. The Stingers were prepared to transition in a two-week period from normal operations

The HMLA-267 Stingers fly the AH-1W Super Cobra, facing page, and the UH-1N Huey. Right, the author's division of Cobras returns from a 19-hour mission in Iraq on 23 March 2003. Below, one of the division's Cobras waits for ordnance to arrive at a newly developed forward arming and refueling point in southern Iraq during the extended mission, which began the previous afternoon as the unit was called upon to support Marines fighting in the battle for An Nasiriyah.



to ready-to-deploy within 52 hours, while simultaneously preparing multiple MEU detachments.

The Stingers' meticulous preparation for the ACM included developing a plan of action and milestones; a unit density list; load plans for both the C-5 Galaxy and C-17 Globemaster; and a complete rewrite of the ordnance package. Squadron personnel also completed a nuclear-biological-chemical confidence exercise and academic classes necessary for short-notice contingency operations for a broad spectrum of possible missions across a very large theater of operations. Additionally, the Stingers developed a squadron single-source, electronic database to track squadron personnel as well as tactical and maintenance

designations. The database was instrumental in the preparedness of the squadron while assigned the ACM responsibility but also was a key factor that enabled the squadron to prepare for the continuing departure of multiple Marine Expeditionary Unit detachments.

While tasked with diverse tasks and missions, HMLA-267 continued to build an impressive record. From October 2004–October 2005, the squadron amassed 5,024 flight hours, and on 17 September 2005 achieved 30,000 mishap-free flight hours.

The Stingers' operational assignment provides the capability for the Marine Corps to meet its attack and utility helicopter requirements in support of the war on terrorism. Squadron personnel have welcomed the



challenge given them in supporting each western Pacific MEU detachment as well as each Okinawa-based 31st MEU, and will continue to fulfill this mission into the foreseeable future. The Stingers' record of pride and professionalism demonstrates the application of their motto, "Anytime, Anywhere." ✈️

Maj. Bussel is the XO of HMLA-267.

As part of the Unit Deployment Program, the Stingers operate from Okinawa, Japan, and deploy dets to the 11th, 13th, 15th, and 31st MEUs. During the current deployment to the 31st MEU, Maj. Coulman and 1st Lt. Schuck prepare for takeoff in their AH-1W, above, while UH-1N crew chiefs and pilots pose with a squadron Huey, right.

