

HMX-1 Celebrates 60 Years

Established on 1 December 1947 at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Va., Marine Helicopter Squadron 1 was the first U.S. Marine Corps helicopter squadron. From its beginnings as a test bed for helicopters to its presidential support mission, HMX-1 has maintained the highest levels of airmanship and helicopter maintenance for 60 years.

Begun as an experimental unit tasked with testing and evaluating military helicopter capabilities and tactics, HMX-1 conducted the first airborne ship-to-shore troop lift in May 1948. The squadron conducted numerous experiments during its early years to include the spotting of artillery fire, rotary wing ordnance delivery, command and control, antisubmarine warfare, aircraft camouflage, instrument flying techniques, search and rescue, and heavy lift operations, as well as working with manufacturers on modifications and developments in helicopter design.

Today HMX-1 supports a variety of missions, the most well known being the executive support mission, which focuses on the President of the United States, but also includes movement of other senior members of the government and visiting heads of state. The first president to fly on a Marine helicopter was Dwight D. Eisenhower on 7 September 1957. He required rapid



transport, which HMX-1 successfully provided with a UH-34 Seahorse. Shortly thereafter, it became common practice for HMX-1 to fly the president between the White House and Andrews AFB, Md., where Air Force One is stationed. In 1976 the Marine Corps was assigned the sole responsibility of providing helicopter transportation to the president. During the past 30 years the presidential support mission has taken the squadron to nearly every major city in the United States, as well as to more than 30 countries on 6 continents, including Mongolia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Vietnam, and Indonesia. HMX-1 conducts this very unique mission




with its VH-3D and VH-60N helicopters, which were specifically designed and equipped to accommodate the president's safety and communications needs.

HMX-1 conducts operational testing and evaluation (OT&E) of new and legacy systems destined for use by Marines operating the CH-46E Sea Knight, CH-53E Super Stallion, and UH-1N Huey helicopters as well as the Marine Corps' aircrew systems. During 2006 the OT&E Department assisted in the operational testing of the UH-1Y, participated in the development of the CH-53E cockpit upgrade, and began participation in the developmental design of the CH-53E replacement, the CH-53K. They tested the new forward firing chaff and flare dispensers on the CH-46E as well as four separate joint service chemical/biological aircrew systems and the Aircrew Wireless Intercom System for the CH-46E.

HMX-1 also provides rotary wing transportation and training to Marine Corps units, like The Basic School, which teaches infantry tactics to newly commissioned lieutenants. The squadron conducts this mission with its CH-46E and CH-53Es, which are nearly identical to helicopters currently in use by USMC operating forces.

For 60 years HMX-1 has well and faithfully served the United States. From its early days of experimentation with military helicopter aviation, to today's presidential support mission, the Marines, sailors, and support personnel of Marine Helicopter Squadron 1 have worked to keep alive the proud tradition of providing the best service possible in Marine rotary wing aviation.

Interested in joining Marine Helicopter Squadron 1? Call S-1, 278-4382 (dsn) or 703-784-4382 (comm). 

Facing page, top, President George W. Bush returns a salute while boarding Marine One. Facing page, bottom, an HMX-1 CH-46E Sea Knight tests forward firing chaff and flare dispensers. Below, Marine One lands next to another VH-60N at the Uruguayan president's retreat in Montevideo during President Bush's Latin American tour in March.

