HELICOPTER UTILITY SQUADRON ONE

COMMAND HISTORY

Helicopter Utility Squadron ONE (HU-1) was commissioned on April 1, 1948 at the United States Naval Air Station, Lakehurst, New Jersey, under the command of CDR Maurice A. PETERS, USN.

The personnel of HU-1 on commissioning day consisted of ten officers and no enlisted men. These early squadron members were detached from Helicopter Development Squadron THREE (VX-3), which was decommissioned on the same day. The squadron complement was authorized at 17 officers and 122 enlisted men.

HU-1 was to operate as an airborne fleet utility squadron performing those duties for which rotary winged aircraft had proved they were best suited; i.e., air-sea rescue, land search, evacuation, and any general utility missions required. The home port for HU-1 was designated as the United States Naval Auxiliary Air Station, Miramar, California. The Squadron's area of operation was to be the entire Pacific, from pole to pole and as far West as India and Japan.

The number of aircraft allotted by the Chief of Naval Operations to Helicopter Utility Squadron ONE was to be five Sikorsky HO3S-1's and three Bell HTL-2 type helicopters. Plans called for this number to be increased at a later date to eighteen HO3S-1's and three HTL-2's and two HRP type helicopters.

On April 30th the squadron had arrived at USNAAS Miramar minus any aircraft. It received it's first aircraft, an HTL-2, on the 18th of May, 1948.

June 9, 1948, the squadron deployed five helicopters---three Sikorsky and two Bell type, aboard the USS BAIROKO (CVA-115). These planes were used on "Operation Sandstone" at the Atomic Proving Grounds, Pacific Ocean area.

The first rescue performed by HU-1 was made by LTJG (b) (6) [redacted] in July of 1948 aboard the USS TARAWA (CVA-40). The survivor was LCDR (b) (6) [redacted] of Air Group 12, who immediately applied for helicopter training and became HU-1's Executive Officer on 20 September 1948.

In July 1948 Detachment TWO was established at NAS Barbers Point, Oahu, T. H. to provide maintenance and material support of deployed units in the area. They were also to provide utility services for the Navy in the Hawaii area.

The first carrier units to deploy were in the summer of 1948. They went aboard the USS BOXER and USS PRINCETON to participate in summer maneuvers between San Diego and Hawaii and to indoctrinate midshipmen under actual shipboard conditions. The helicopters performed every task from intership transportation to plane-guard and air-sea rescue duty.

HU-1's rapid development continued and its operations included a variety of accomplishments. One demonstration of the whirlybirds capabilities was the delivery of several gallons of ice cream that were dropped to a submarine from a helicopter.

On 30 October 1948, LT (b) (6) and Chief Aviation Pilot (b) (6) (b) (6) set an unofficial distance and endurance record for helicopters using the HO3S-1. They flew from Seattle, Washington to Alameda, California in a time of 10 hours and 17 minutes.

During these early years the pilots and crewman experimented under operational conditions to improve their techniques and skill in handling the helicopter under a variety of conditions.

This practice paid off in the waning days of June 1950. With the attack of the North Korean Communists, on the Republic of South Korea, the United States and most other members of the United Nations were drawn into armed conflict. Among the first units to arrive on the scene was the United States Navy Seventh Fleet including the deployed units of HU-1.

The helicopter, with its unique capabilities of flight, was now to enter a new phase of service under wartime comditions.

Two helicopters of HU-1, operating from the aircraft carrier USS VALLEY FORGE (CVA-45) and the heavy cruiser USS ROCHESTER (CA-124), on 3 July 1950, were the first helicopters to see action in Korea.

On 4 July 1950, an HU-1 pilot made the first rescue of a downed flyer by helicopter, in the Korean Conflict. Apilot from HU-1 participated in the first night rescue performed by a Navy helicopter behind enemy lines in August 1950.

On 25 August 1950, two months from the day aggressor forces created hostilities, HU-1 lost its first whirlybird to enemy gunfire. LTJG (b) (6), O-in-C of Unit Seven, was on a rescue mission near Sarowon, North Korea, when his HO3S (BUNO 122720) became the first HU-1 casualty.

(b) (6) was on a mission to pick up a downed flyer who had taken a refuge on a hilltop. The pilot had been forced to land behind enemy lines and was receiving the direct attention of the North Koreans. While making his approach to the stranded pilot, the North Koreans opened fire on (b) (6) and he was driven away temporarily. He returned for a second try but the downed flyer refused to take the rescue sling and waved (b) (6) away. The North Koreans opened fire again on the helicopter, hitting the gas tank, and (b) (6) was forced to head back toward friendly territory. Landing in the Han River, (b) (6) and his crewman were picked up by a Marine helicopter in a moonlight rescue.

By the end of 1950, after six months of hostilities, HU-1 had expanded its personnel and its operations far beyond any previous six months since its commissioning. Officer personnel increased from 19 to 34, enlisted personnel from 182 to 282, aircraft from 13 to 14...and deployed Units from 2 to 13.

By this time, the personnel of HU-1 had received ten recommendations for awards; eight Air Medals and two Distinguished Flying Crosses.

During this period, Detachment ONE, was aboard the icebreaker USS BURTON ISLAND for a NORPAC cruise. They made two rescues, lost one aircraft, and were disbanded on 3 October 1950 due to the pressing need for helicopters and pilots elsewhere.

DET TWO achieved three rescues during the latter half of 1950, in addition to numerous other assignments, including television flights for Fox Movietone News.

On 8 December 1950, the command of HU-1 passed from the hands of CDR Easton B. NOBLE who had been the CO since 8 September 1949 to his Executive Officer LCDR Dudley S. BILIETT Jr.

The helicopter had now proved itself to the world and to the Armed Forces in particular. The helicopters of HU-1 became a definite morale factor, for the fighter pilots knew that the whirlybirds would arrive to rescue them, in peaceful or hostile locations, with or without air-cover.

With the beginning of 1951, HU-1 was still based at NAAS Miramar, California. DET-ONE was about to be based at its present location, Oppama, Japan, and DET-TWO was well entrenched in its location at NAS Barbers Point, Oaha, T. H. The squadron had its units on deployment aboard the United States Ships, Princeton (CV-37), Bon Homme Richard (CV-31), Sicily (CVE-118, Essex(CV-9), Helena (CA-75), Rendova (CVE-114), Toledo (CA-133, Boxer (CV-21), Los Angeles (CA-135), Bairoko (CVE-115), and Britain's HMS Glory. In addition to this, Unit Eleven was based on the East Coast of Korea.

Not all of the rescues accomplished by HU-1 and Units are to be listed on these pages. So many rescues were routine affairs...at least to all except the rescued person.

LTJG (b) (6) began the rescues of 1951 on 4 January by rescuing two U. S. Infantry men, and one Korean boy from the ice-bound remains of a pontoon bridge across the Han River, 45 miles to the east of Inchon.

On 12 January, (b) (6), AMC/AP evacuated the entire crew of the HMTS Prasae, which consisted of 118 officers and men. The operation took three days and was conducted in enemy territory. The helicopter was frequently subjected to hostile fire. The Thailand ship had gone aground off the coast of Korea during a snow storm.

On 31 March, LTJG (b) (6), operating from the USS ST PAUL (CA-73) rescued two trapped army men, while under enemy fire, approximately 38 miles south of Wonsan, Korea.

On the 12th of April, LT (b) (6) rescued a British Pilot when his Firefly fighter was damaged by enemy fire and he was forced to ditch his plane just off shore of Wonsan, Korea. On the same day, LTJG (b) (6) rescued a downed Royal Navy pilot five miles from Hungham, Korea.

On 13 April, (b) (6), AD1/AP, and crewman, (b) (6), AM3, rescued a Seafury pilot. This rescue took place approximately ten miles inland from Hungham, Korea. The British pilot was pinned in the wreckage of his plane and suffering from a broken leg. He was unable to free the b