

Nov. 27, 1990

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Dear Sirs,

Congratulations on your fine 1990 Membership Directory which I just received. As the Historian of the HA(L)-3 Seawolf Association I wish to make some corrections/additions to our squadrons records.

Firstly I checked over "Section VI-KIA/MIA by Date". Our records agree exactly with the information you provided in this section.

Secondly, and more importantly, I checked over "Section XII-Helicopters Destroyed" and found many omissions. Our squadron was officially commissioned by the Navy in April of 1967 and was decommissioned five years later. We averaged about eight H-1 helicopters destroyed per year so I would estimate that we lost just over 40 aircraft during the five years of squadron operations. Your section XII only lists four H-1 losses total.

I do not have copies of our squadron diaries for 1967 or 1968 but do have them for 1969, 1970 and 1971. I am enclosing the best information I have on our H-1 losses during the latter years. Hopefully we can eventually account for all Navy H-1 losses incurred during the war.

Thanking you in advance for your cooperation in this matter. Keep up the outstanding effort. I applaud you all.

Best Regards,



Don C. Thomson

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Some HA(L)-3 Navy Seawolf H-1 Helicopter Losses
in Vietnam for the years 1969, 1970 & 1971.

- 23 Mar. 1969 "Seawolf 305 destroyed in place by Seawolf 309 and 323 at location VS430 520." LTJG Palowski & ADJ3 Meute killed and Dick Barr wounded. UH-1B.
- 26 Mar. 1969 "Three aircraft destroyed when the ammo dump blew at Naval Support Activity Detachment (NSAD) Dong Tam." LTJG Suhr killed. UH-1B's.
- 23 Apr 1969 "Aircraft destroyed when it hit powerline and crashed near Cu Chi." A01 Gross killed. UH-1B
- 28 Apr. 1969 "Seawolf 320 crashed and burned in Cambodia. Seawolf 305 crashed very nearby at XS 153986. Both were destroyed." LTJG Hart, Castle killed. LTJG Reardon MIA (later changed to KIA) and AN. Page died of burns a few weeks later. VHPA records indicate that one of these UH-1B's was 308603.
- 15 Sep 1969 "Seawolf 302 (Det. 8) crashed and sunk while taking off of the LST Harnett County." AT3 Johnson & ATN1 Arnold killed. UH-1B.
- 14 Dec 1969 "Seawolf 313 Crashed and was destroyed on low level reconaissance mission." AMS1 Johnson killed. UH-1B.
- 1970 A total of eight H-1's were destroyed in 1970.
- 01 Jun 1970 "Sealord 157853 (Navy Bureau No.), an HH-1K or UH-1L crashed and was destroyed while entering the pattern on a post maint. test flight with the tracking crew on board. Lt. Mulcahy, A01 Bowles & AMS1 Frahm killed. At Navy Binh Thuy.
- 13 Aug 1970 Sealord 157856 (Navy Bureau No.) hung skid on PSP outside Flt. Op's at Navy Binh Thuy, flipped over and was destroyed. An HH-1K or UH-1L.
- 15 Sep 1970 (Black Thursday) "Seawolf 312(Det 6) and 313(Det 1) shot down and destroyed at "VC Lake" (VQ 9595)." LTJG Petersen & ADJ3 Ramos killed. UH-1B's.
- 3 Oct 1970 "Seawolf 306 (Army No. 624579) destroyed by fire after crash landing at CaMau." Had engine failure and hit dike after refueling. ATR2 Winters killed. UH-1B.

16 Nov 1970 "UH-1B 6412934 (Army No.) from Det 7 Completely destroyed after hitting dike near NSAD Dong Tam."

26 Nov 1970 HH-1K 157203 (Sealord) "Sunk irretrievably" in Gulf of Thailand returning from an LST. Ran out of gas! 157203 is a Navy Bureau No.

19 Dec 1970 "Seawolf 312 (Army No. 6312929) crashed at WR31242 Southeast of Kien Long. Hit ground inverted." Later determined it had blade failure from blade overhaul errors made at Bell Helicopter in Ft. Worth. LTJG Ortiz and Buzzell and AEC Ratliff and ADJ2 Worth killed.

22 May 1970 Seawolf 302 (Det 6) Destroyed on ground by TacAir after being forced down.

Note: I cannot explain why we have nine aircraft listed here and yet the squadron record states that eight aircraft were destroyed in 1970.

1971 "In 1971 two aircraft were ditched in water, both of which were damaged and unrecoverable. One aircraft was destroyed by an enemy rocket while parked on an LST; one aircraft was destroyed after conducting a hard autorotation; one aircraft crashed while inserting troops; one crashed while hoisting in water; and another, probably due to material failure, disintegrated in mid-air. Casualties included four killed, six injured, while six aircraft were totally destroyed." This is from the 1971 Command Hist.

Note: From the last sentence "six aircraft were totally destroyed" apparently one of the seven aircraft mentioned earlier in the paragraph was not considered totally destroyed. Neither of the two that "crashed" are particularly likely candidates as following information will verify.

17 Feb 1971 UH-1B 638745 (Army No.) ditched in Gulf of Thailand after takeoff from the U.S. Hunterdon County (AGP 838). "The aircraft was damaged and deemed impractical to recover."

8 Mar 1971 UH-1C 6600540 (Army No.) "Experienced an engine failure and autorotated to four feet of saltwater at YS 0172." It was hooked out to Solid Anchor and later flown or hooked to Binh Thuy. "Structural damage made repair impractical."

7 Apr 1971 "UH-1B 6413990 (Army No.) Crashed and rolled over during practice ^{Auto} at Ca Mau airstrip (long Strip)."

28 May 1971 "UH-1B 013939 (Army No.) Destroyed when hit by a 75 MM recoilless rifle on the deck of the YRBM-21" (Yard Barge Medium-21)

I have a photo I took of this chopper the morning

after it was hit an although there is some damage to the nose it didn't look anything like "destroyed". It looked more like Delta or perhaps Charlie damage to me.

- 28 Aug 1971 "Seawolf 316, UH-1M 000616 ditched at XR710775 due to enemy fire. Destroyed to prevent possible enemy use of systems." Seawolf 313 (Army No. 015077 was also involved in this action and it's not possible from the wording to tell for certain which was destroyed.
- 20 Sep 1971 Seawolf 322 62-4602 (Army No.). This aircraft slung a blade and disintegrated in the air in Hau Nghia Province. It was later determined that this accident was caused by another error in blade overhaul by Bell Helicopter in Ft. Worth. The blade spars were scored with a hack saw during overhaul.
- 18 Oct 1971 Sealord 11 listed as a UH-1K is in error. It had to be a UH-1L or HH-1K. "Damaged beyond repair at WO 229651. It was lifted back to Binh Thuy."

I have no information on any losses that occurred during the early months of 1972 as the squadron was decommissioning. I suspect that there were few if any losses during that period.

Final Note: All UH-1B, UH-1C and UH-1M helicopters flown by the HA(L)-3 Seawolves were Army aircraft. Our Sealord aircraft were our slicks and they were all Navy UH-1L's and HH-1K's. The Army models were operated as gunships.

The above information above was drawn from the Squadron Command Histories for the years 1969, 1970 and 1971 with additional comments from my personal recollections.

Prepared on 27 Nov. 1990 by:

Don C. Thomson

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