

2022 HMLA East Coast Reunion



TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Squadron Histories	.5
Guest of Honor Biography - LtGen Steve Rudder	9
Guest of Honor Biography - MGySgt Mike Magoon	10
Distinguished Guests	11
Our Sponsors	12
Families of the Fallen	13
2022 Reunion Planning Committee	13
Donations	13



The Squadron Histories



Marine Light Helicopter Squadron 167 was commissioned on March 15, 1968, at Marble Mountain Air Facility, Republic of Vietnam. From commissioning date until June 1971, HML-167 would participate in operations against communist forces in the Republic of Vietnam. Flying UH-1Es for the duration of its tenure in Vietnam. On June 21, 1969,

HML-167 dropped the first helicopter bomb. This was accomplished using the Helicopter Trap Weapon (HTW).

In May 1971, HML-167 was the last operating Marine helicopter squadron in the Republic of Vietnam. On May 26, 1971, the squadron held its official stand down, concluding over 60,000 combat flight hours. On June 19, 1971, HML-167 was transferred to MCAS New River, Jacksonville, North Carolina and became a part of Marine Aircraft Group 26, 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing.

In April 1972, HML-167 received the Marine Corps' first UH-1N. HML-167 acquired the additional responsibilities as training squadron and model manager for the UH-1N. On May 16, 1972, HML-167 was transferred to Marine Aircraft Group 29. From 11 to 22 August 1980 personnel and equipment from the squadron deployed throughout Haiti to provide disaster relief after the effects of Hurricane Allen. When Hurricane David and Hurricane Frederic hit the Dominican Republic, HML-167 was on the scene to provide disaster relief from 1 to 17 September 1980.

HML-167 received its first AH-1T Cobras on January 17, 1984 and became HMLA-167 on April 1, 1986. It was the first unit to be officially designated as a Light Attack Squadron with a permanent composite mix of UH-1N and AH-1T Helicopters. Throughout 1986 and 1987, HMLA-167 demonstrated its flexibility. HMLA-167's main body deployed as the Aviation Combat Element (ACE) for contingency MAGTF 2-88 in the Persian Gulf participating in Operation Praying Mantis. MAGTF 2-88 conducted an assault on the Sassan Gas/Oil separation platform complex in response to the Iranian mine attack on the USS Samuel B. Roberts. HMLA-167 also escorted eleven "Earnest Will" oil tanker convoys as well as ten minesweeper transits during its deployment in the Persian Gulf. As 1989 came to a close, HMLA-167 took delivery of its first three AH-1W Super Cobras during a ceremony at the National Helicopter Association's annual convention.

Beginning in June 1990, detachments from HMLA-167 supported 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit during the largest Noncombatant Evacuation Operation (NEO) since the evacuation of Saigon

Saigon with the evacuation of over 3,000 American citizens and foreign nationals from the embattled capital in Monrovia, Liberia. In August, HMLA-167 was recalled for deployment in support of Operation Desert Shield. Six AH-1Ws and sixteen pilots were detached to MAG-29 and subsequently deployed to Saudi Arabia later that month and would remain in theater through the completion of Operation Desert Storm. Separate detachments from HMLA-167 would also participate in Operation Provide Comfort and Operation Encourage Hope in eastern Turkey and northern Iraq during the spring and summer months of 1991.

Detachments from the squadron would eventually begin participating in Operation Provide Promise in the Adriatic Sea during the Balkans crisis. A special purpose MAGTF, formed with a detachment of UH-1Ns, embarked aboard the aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt in response to the continuing crisis in the Balkans. They also supported Operation Southern Watch in the Red Sea during renewed tensions with Iraq. This deployment marked the first time Marine ground and helicopter assets were embarked aboard an aircraft carrier. 1994 saw squadron detachments support Operation Deny Flight off of Bosnia and assisted in the withdrawal of United States forces from Somalia.

On February 28, 1995, the squadron became the first HMLA on the East Coast to receive an AH-1W Super Cobra with the Night Targeting System. This FLIR and Laser designator was a giant leap in technology and capability for the Warriors.

In 2003, HMLA-167 supported Marine Aircraft Group 29 by providing 9 aircraft and 17 personnel to HMLA-269 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. In February 2004 HMLA-167 again deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The squadron deployed 18 AH-1Ws, 9 UH-1Ns, and a small detachment of Marines in January aboard the USS Bataan. On the February 22, all 27 aircraft made the transit from Kuwait to Al Asad, Iraq. This was the home of HMLA-167 for the next six months. During Operation Vigilant Resolve in Fallujah in April 2004, HMLA-167 sent a detachment to help with surge operations from Al Taqaddum. The Warriors also operated from three forward operating bases (FOBs), FOB Al Qaim, FOB Korean Village and FOB Kalsu.

At the same time the Warriors were in Iraq, HMLA-167 had a detachment with the 22nd MEU operating out of Afghanistan. As the Air Combat Element for the MEU, they operated out of Kandahar International Airport, outside of Khandahar, Afghanistan and flew in support of Marine, Army, Special Forces, and Afghan National Army operations in southwestern Afghanistan.

On August 7, 2005 HMLA-167 departed MCAS New River and rejoined MAG-26 in Al Asad, Iraq. This trip to Iraq would be the

third in less than three years for many of the Marines. HMLA-167 redeployed to MCAS New River on March 1, 2006. During this same period, HMLA-167 had a detachment with the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit that operated out of Al Asad during its 6-month deployment.

In August 2006, HMLA-167 departed MCAS New River after only 5 months at home to join MAG-16 in Al Asad, Iraq. HMLA-167 redeployed to MCAS New River in March 2007. The squadron has again deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom leaving MCAS New River on March 11, 2008 for a seven-month tour in Iraq.[4] After only a few months home, HMLA-167 split into two detachments, the main body deploying to Iraq and a small four AH-1W cobra detachment deploying to Afghanistan on February 8, 2009. The squadron would also provide a 4 AH-1W and 2 UH-1N detachment for the 22nd MEU with VMM-263 (REIN) for the first MV-22 MEU from October 2008 to December 2009. On May 3, 2013 HMLA 167 returned to middle east in support of Operation Enduring Freedom by being deployed to Camp Bastion Afghanistan, as well as supporting combat operations at COP Camp Dwyer and COP Shukvani in Afghanistan's Helmand Province. It was also the first time HMLA 167 deployed with the UH-1Y "Yankee". In June 2013 HMLA 167 sent a detachment of four AH-1W cobras to Okinawa to help kick start the UDP deployment cycle again. In November 2013 and December 2013 both the Marines of OEF and UDP returned from their deployments respectively.

In October 2015 a detachment of AH-1W's and UH-1Y's from HMLA-167 joined VMM-162(REIN) of the 26th MEU in a deployment to the 5th and 6th Fleet areas of operation. Also in November 2015 HMLA-167 departed MCAS New River and moved to Okinawa, Japan to take part in UDP 16.1 completing training exercises in Thailand for Cobra Gold 2016 and the Philippines for Balaktan 2016. The Marines on the 26th MEU returned home in April 2016, and the Marines in Okinawa returned in May 2016. In July 2016, as well as July of 2018, HMLA-167 received the Chief of Naval Operations Safety Award.

In May 2019 a detachment of 4 AH-1Ws and 3 UH-1Ys from HMLA 167 joined VMM-365 (REIN) and the 26th MEU. The detachment would deploy in December 2019 to the 6th and 5th Fleet Area of Responsibility in response to increased tensions with Iran. This would be the last deployment for the AH-1W, under the callsign BUZZSAW, as the squadron completed their AH-1Z transition in 2020.



HMA-269 was formed at Marine Corps Air Station New River, North Carolina on February 22, 1971 and activated on July 1, 1971 as the Marine Corps' first designated attack helicopter squadron. Equipped with the AH-1J "Sea Cobra," HMA-269's mission was to provide close-in fire support during aerial and ground escort operations during ship to shore movement and subsequent operations ashore.

In December 1977, HMA-269 took delivery of the first AH-1T (TOW) Cobra. The squadron opened a new era of attack helicopter aviation in early 1979 by being the first Marine Corps squadron to fire the TOW anti-tank missile from an airborne platform.

In the early 1980s, with the addition of the UH-1N to the squadron, HMA-269 became HMLA-269 and expanded its primary mission to include utility helicopter support. Though heavily committed, HMLA-269 maintained its impressive list of firsts; first flight-test of biochemical protective suits in the AH-1T (TOW), first flight test of "fast rope insertion" equipment, first to refine the TOW missile engagement gun and missile radars. Additionally, the squadron participated in the first actual movement of 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing assets in an air contingency drill. In 1986, The Gunrunners achieved yet another first when they fired a Sidewinder air-to-air missile at a target drone over the Island of Vieques, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. These achievements earned the squadron a Meritorious Unit Commendation and selection as the Marine Corps Helicopter Squadron of the Year for 1986. It was common practice during this period to split the squadron into detachments. At one time during 1988 while commanded by LtCol. Christopher B. Stoops, the squadron deployed for the Persian Gulf while simultaneously operating three other detachments in NC and the Caribbean Sea.

In 1990, the Gunrunners deployed to Southwest Asia with twelve AH-1Ws, three AH-1Ts, and six UH-1Ns. These assets participated in a major 4th Marine Expeditionary Brigade exercises during Operation Desert Shield. During Operation Desert Storm, the squadron conducted critical on-call close-in fire support, escort for minesweeping aircraft, Surface Combat Air Patrol, and air intercept operations. Meanwhile, Gunrunner Hueys played a vital role in the raid on Faylaka Island, firing in excess of seventy-five 2.75" rockets at fortified Iraqi positions under NVG low light level conditions.

Following the Gulf War, the Gunrunners continued to support requirements of LF6F deployments, in such areas as Yugoslavia, Somalia, and the Middle East. The squadron also supported

numerous 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing and Marine Forces Atlantic exercises, both in the continental United States (CONUS) and abroad, including exercises in Norway and Puerto Rico. In 1994 the Gunrunners were tasked with providing a detachment on short notice to HMM-264 for Special Purpose MAGTF-CARIB in support of Operation Uphold Democracy in Haiti. One year later, on June 6, 1995, two Gunrunner cobras, assigned to HMM-263 and the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit escorted two CH-53Es from the USS Kearsarge to successfully rescue Air Force Captain Scott O'Grady. During this deployment, HMLA-269 also became the first squadron to deploy the new Night Targeting System on all of its cobras; effectively adding increased combat compatibility to the forward deployed forces. Being named the HMLA Squadron of the Year rewarded the squadron's hard efforts that year.

The squadron also supported detachments with LF6F deployments that supported Operation Assured Response in Liberia. In 1997 the HMLA detachment to HMM-365 supported Operation Silver Wake in Albania and Operation Guardian Retrieval in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In recognition of its hard-earned reputation for setting the standard in attack helicopter aviation, the Gunrunners were designated the Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron of the Year in 1998 by the Marine Corps Aviation Association.

In the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks, The Gunrunners attached to HMM-365 (Rein) with 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit(SOC) flew combat missions in support of Operation Enduring Freedom from Forward Operating Bases Rhino and Kandahar, in Afghanistan. In 2002 The Gunrunners attached to HMM-263 (REIN) with the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit (SOC) flew in Kosovo, the Horn of Africa, Operation Enduring Freedom. In January 2003, The Gunrunners deployed as a squadron in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. HMLA-269 flew nearly 3,000 combat hours in 55 days and maintained 24-hour operations with no personnel losses due to enemy action or mishaps. January 2005 saw The Gunrunners again deploy to Iraq in support of OIF 04-06. During this deployment, The Gunrunners flew more than 5951 hours and 3994 sorties. The squadron celebrated its 35th anniversary on July 1, 2006 with a ceremony at Al Asad airbase in western Iraq. The squadron has completed six deployments to Iraq since 2003 and designated Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron of Year in 2010, 2013 and 2022.



The stand-up of HMLA-467 was part of the Commandant's plan to "grow the force" to better meet the demands of the Long War and the complexities of an evolving global threat. HMLA-467 began as a cadre in April 2008 and began to stand up using aircraft from the reserve squadron HMLA-775. During September 2008, pilots and aircrew from HMLA-467 received their first aircraft from HMLA-775 and flew them to MCAS Cherry Point for the squadron's activation ceremony on October 23, 2008 becoming the first HMLA to be activated in 37 years. Fifteen weeks later, in January, HMLA-467 supported Marine Aircraft Group 31 at Exercise Southern Fury. During the months of September and October 2009, the Sabers supported Enhanced Mojave Viper (EMV) at Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms. During this exercise the Sabers executed day/night close air support, FAC(A), Escort, Command and Control, SCAR/AR, and weapons delivery training, flying 74 total sorties. During Mojave Viper, on October 1, the one-year anniversary of the squadron, HMLA-467 reached Full Operational Capability (FOC). In January 2010, a detachment of UH-1N aircraft deployed with HMH-461 as part of the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit in order to provide humanitarian assistance and disaster response in support of Operation Unified Response following the 2010 Haiti earthquake. In 2010 HMLA-467 Det A attached to the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit and supported HADR operations in Pakistan as well as combat operations in Afghanistan and Libya. In 2011 HMLA-467 Det B was the first east coast HMLA to support the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit attaching to HMM-265 (REIN) and supporting exercises such as PHIBLEX. As a result of force structure reductions, HMLA-467 was deactivated on June 16, 2016.



HML-771 was activated 15 April 1958 at Naval Air Station, South Weymouth, Massachusetts, as Marine Helicopter Transport Squadron 771, Marine Air Reserve Training Detachment, Marine Air Reserve Command. The squadron was redesignated 1 April 1962 as Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 771 and then as Marine Light Helicopter Squadron 771, Marine Air Reserve Training Detachment, Marine Air Reserve Command in 1971.

HML-771 was reassigned during October 1979 to Marine Aircraft Group 49 Detachment, 4th Marine Aircraft Wing, Naval Air Station, South Weymouth, Massachusetts. Marine Aircraft Group 49 Detachment redesignated 1 January 1980 as Marine Aircraft Group 49 Detachment A, 4th Marine Aircraft Wing, Naval Air Station, South Weymouth, Massachusetts.

The squadron participated in Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm in 1991 and was deactivated on 1 August 1994. Unit honors include the Navy Unit Commendation Streamer, Southwest Asia Service 1990 – 1991 Streamer, and the National Defense Service Streamer.



Guest of Honor

Lieutenant General Steven R. Rudder USMC (Retired)



Lieutenant General Steven R. Rudder recently retired from active duty after relinquishing command as the Commander, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Pacific and Commanding General Fleet Marine Force, Pacific in September 2022.

LtGen Rudder is a native of Canton, CT, and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in June 1984. LtGen Rudder previously served as the Deputy Commandant for Aviation, Headquarters Marine Corps.

LtGen Rudder's previous assignments include: Serving in Co B, 3rd Amphibious Assault Battalion; Student, NAS Pensacola, FL, designated a Naval Aviator; HMT-303, AH-1J helicopter training; HMLA-367, Maintenance Quality Assurance Officer and Weapons and Tactics Instructor; unit deployments to Futenma, Okinawa, and Operations DESERT SHIELD/STORM; HMM-161 (REIN), Weapons and Tactics Officer deploying with the 11th MEU(SOC) back to North Arabian Gulf; AH-1 Division Head, Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron One; Operations Officer, HML/A-167; Future Operations Officer, deploying with the 22nd MEU(SOC) to EUCOM and CENTCOM AOR, HMM-261(REIN); Office of Net Assessment, the Office of

the Secretary of Defense serving as Mr. Andrew Marshall's Military Assistant; Squadron Commander, HML/A-167 deploying to EUCOM AOR in support of Dynamic Mix; Senior Watch Officer, OIF, 3rd Marine Air Wing Tactical Command Center; J5 Lead planner for Afghanistan and Pakistan, CENTCOM, Tampa, FL; deployed to Afghanistan, Pakistan and Qatar in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM; Commander, Marine Air Group 26, deploying to Al Asad, Iraq, in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM 9.1; Branch Head of Aviation Expeditionary Enablers (APX), Headquarters Marine Corps Aviation; Legislative Assistant to the Commandant, Headquarters Marine Corps, Office of Legislative Affairs; Commanding General, 1st Marine Air Wing, Okinawa, Japan; deployed Wing to Thailand and South Korea; Director of Strategic Planning and Policy (J5), U.S. Indo-Pacific Command.

LtGen Rudder holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration from Boston University, a Masters of Military Studies Degree from the Marine Corps Command and Staff College, and a Masters of Strategic Studies from the United States Army War College.

Personal decorations include the Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit with Gold Star, Distinguished Flying Cross with Combat 'V', Defense Meritorious Service Medal with Gold Star, Meritorious Service Medal with Gold Star, Air Medal Strike Flight 4, Navy Commendation Medal with Gold Star and Combat 'V', Joint Achievement Medal and Navy Achievement Medal.

Guest of Honor

Master Gunnery Sergeant Michael P. Magoon USMC
(Retired)



Master Gunnery Sergeant Magoon enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1963 and attended boot camp at Parris Island. He attended A school in Memphis, TN and reported to HMM-361 in October 1963 as a Metalsmith. After many deployments and several combat tours he went to the drill field as a drill instructor. He returned to the Fleet in 1976 as a 6042 MOS metalsmith and 6055 Hydraulics technician where he was assigned to lead the flight line at HML-167. It was very unusual to have a metalsmith/hydraulics person in charge of a flight line shop filled with mechanics. Having no previous experience with H-1s, he began to learn all he could and started work to become a plane captain and a crew chief. Eventually he was qualified as a plane captain, crew chief, Collateral Duty Inspector and Quality Assurance representative and was assigned a MOS of 6114, H-1 Mechanic. During his time at HML-167 he went on numerous deployments and participated in the hurricane relief effort in the Dominican Republic.

In 1981 he was transferred to MAG-24 MCAS Hawaii as part of a H-1 detachment assigned to HMM-463 (H-53 squadron) where he continued to fly as a Crew Chief and

NATOPS evaluator. In 1984, he was assigned to HMLA-269 at MCAS New River as the Quality Assurance chief and became the NATOPS evaluator for the H-1 aircraft within MAG-29. Additionally, he was part of the NAVAIR AH-1W Fleet Introduction Team which entailed working with Bell helicopter, other HMLA squadron personnel, NAVAIR and the AH-1 Program Office to manage introduction of the new aircraft to the Fleet.

Master Gunnery Sergeant Magoon was assigned to the Corpus Christi Army Depot (CCAD) in 1988, responsible for the H-1 overhaul activity for the Navy/Marine Corps H-1 Aircraft. His duties included tracking aircraft within the depot, ensuring the A/C met their completion dates, arranging with the Squadrons for delivery/transfer of the overhauled aircraft back to the assigned squadrons. At the completion of his tour at CCAD, he was transferred back to MCAS New River and HMLA-269. Upon arrival, he immediately was directed to draw his 782 gear and board a C-130 for transport to the Gulf and join HMLA-269 which was already on land and would deploy aboard ship for Operations Desert Shield. He spent his last tour with HMLA-269 retiring in April 1993.

When asked what the most important aspect was of being one of the senior Marines, he said it was working with the younger Marines and passing on the knowledge he had attained over the years, instilling in them that using manuals and having someone check their work to ensure that nothing had been missed was the key to mission success.

Personal decorations include Meritorious Service Medal, Air Medal, Combat Aircrew Insignia with 3 stars, Combat Action Ribbon, Good Conduct Medal with 9 stars, Presidential Unit Citation, Navy Unit Commendation Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Navy Achievement Medal, Vietnam Cross of Gallantry, Vietnam Campaign Medal, Vietnam Service Medal with 4 stars, National Defense Service Medal with 2 stars, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, Humanitarian Service Medal with 2 stars, Southwest Asia Service Medal with 1 star and Aircrew wings.

Distinguished Guests

Retired Guests

General James “Tamer” Amos USMC (Ret)
Lieutenant General Thomas “Stash” Conant USMC (Ret)
Lieutenant General Kenneth “Habu” Glueck USMC (Ret)
Lieutenant General George “Trouser” Trautman USMC (Ret)
Major General Robert Dickerson USMC (Ret)
Major General Ross Plasterer USMC (Ret)
Major General Michael “Lancer” Sullivan USMC (Ret)
Major General Randall “Grit” West USMC (Ret)
Colonel E.S. “Slick” Katz USMC (Ret)

Active Guests

Major General Scott “Eggs” Benedict USMC - 2nd MAW
Brigadier General Andrew Niebel USMC – MCI East
Colonel Garth “Slimer” Burnett USMC - New River Air Station
Colonel Richard “Huk” Joyce USMC - MAG-29
SgtMaj Russell Boley USMC - MAG-29
Colonel Douglas “Swami” Sanders USMC - MAG-26
Lieutenant Colonel William “Colon” Powell USMC – HMLA-167 outgoing
Lieutenant Colonel Corey “Diablo” Healey USMC – HMLA-167 incoming
Lieutenant Colonel Ralph “Wolf” Tompkins USMC – HMLA-269

Sammy Phillips, Mayor City of Jacksonville
Jack Bright, Chairman - Onslow County Board of Commissioners
Laurette Leagon, President - Jacksonville-Onslow Chamber of Commerce
Jeff Hudson, Chairman - Jacksonville-Onslow Chamber of Commerce
Scott Smith, Chairman – Military Affairs Committee
Hans Miller, Sheriff - Onslow County Sheriff
Michael Yaniero, Chief of Police - City of Jacksonville

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Individual Sponsors

Colonel Robert C. Whitener USMC (Ret)
Colonel E. S. “Slick” Katz USMC (Ret)
Mr. Jeff Hudson

Families of the Fallen

The Bleskey Family (SgtMaj Bleskey – Patrick, Dan and Dawn - Father)
Abby and Tod Boretto (1stLt Henry Pilger – Father)
Shari Crosby (LtCol Kenneth Crosby – Husband)
Ebbie Cruddas (Capt Kenneth Royal - Husband)
Karen Haworth, Stacey and Brian (Maj Daniel Haworth – Husband)
Haley Johnson (Sgt Ward M. Johnson – Husband)

2022 Reunion Planning Committee

Chairman: Rob “Gimp” Martinez
Secretary: Steve “Honez” Jones
Treasurer: CJ “Krusty” Kunhardt
Programs Co-lead: Scott “Banford” Chellis
Programs Co-lead: Bill “Mo” Morales
Fundraising Chair: Chris “Silk” Stoops
At Large Member: Joe “Guido” Ianniello
167 Warrior Memorial Association President: Scott “Banford” Chellis
269 Gunrunner Alumni Association President: Joe “Mongoose” Yannessa
467 Representative: Colonel David “Spanky” Moore
USMC

Donations

Donations. Our intent for any residual resources that remain after this event will be to use them to establish memorial markers for our Fallen Heroes in the next 18-24 months. The designs and locations of the markers have not yet been confirmed, however, several options are available to us. If you wish to make an additional contribution toward this goal, please send it to: HMLA-269 Gunrunner Alumni Association, Inc. Please use Paypal email: KrustyHMLA269@gmail.com or scan the QRC below:



