

**History of US Navy  
Combat Search and Rescue  
&  
Attack Helicopters**

**So That Others May Live**



# HU-1

## NAVY HELICOPTER SQUADRON ONE

- Helicopter Combat Support Squadron ONE (HC-1), was the oldest combat search and rescue helicopter squadron in the Navy. Originally designated Helicopter Utility Squadron ONE (HU-1), was established at Naval Air Station Lakehurst, New Jersey in 1948 as the Navy's first operational helicopter squadron. In 1951 the squadron was moved to NAS Miramar.
- The squadron's primary mission of air-sea rescue remained unchanged throughout the years. During the Korean Conflict, HU-1's pilots and aircrew men were among the first into combat and pioneered new techniques of personnel rescue from behind enemy lines; a mission designated as "Combat SAR".

# First Navy helicopter pilot awarded the Medal of Honor

Photo # NH 48364 LtJG John K. Koelsch

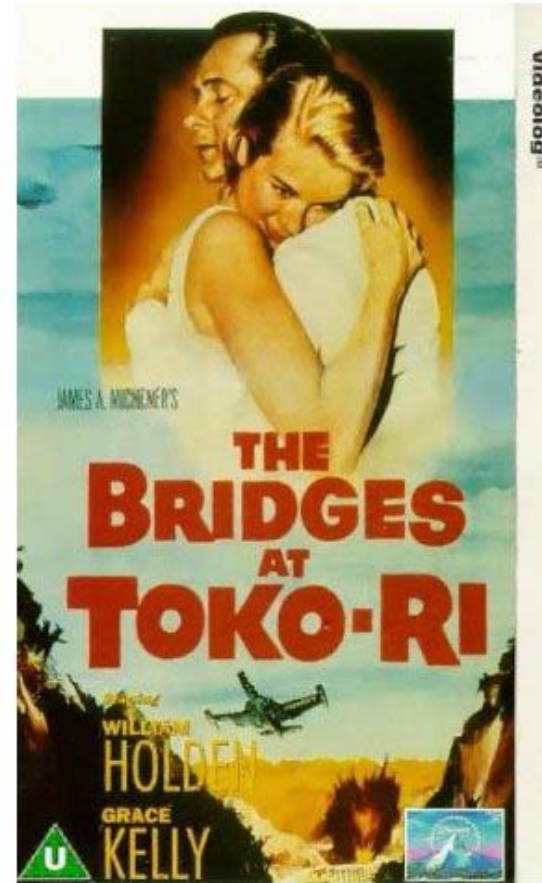


LTJG John Koelsch, one of HU-1's pilots, was decorated with the Nation's highest award, the Medal of Honor for his "extraordinary heroism in action against enemy aggressor forces in Korea." Shot down during a rescue attempt in Korea LTJG Koelsch set the example while in captivity which became the basis for the Code of Conduct, the set of standards adopted in 1955 to guide All-American Prisoners of War.



# THE TRUTH BEHIND THE FICTION

- *The Bridges at Toko-Ri* is a 1953 film based on a novel by James Michener about a Korean War pilot assigned to bomb a group of heavily defended bridges. It was made into a motion picture by Paramount Pictures and won the Special Effects Oscar at the 28th Academy Awards. It follows the book of the same title emphasizing the lives of the pilots and crew in the context of a war that seems remote to all except those who fight in it. The goal of the mission is set above everything else and the heroes perish as victims of fate. The novel and film are based on a true story about the raid on the Toko-ri bridges. However, in the real story the airmen portrayed survived the crash and rescue attempt but were captured by North Korean soldiers. At the time Michener reported the incident in the news (and before he novelized the Toko-ri war dispatches), he believed the men to have been killed.



THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY WASHINGTON

The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting the  
NAVY CROSS



to

LIEUTENANT (JUNIOR GRADE)  
JOHN WILLIAM THORNTON  
UNITED STATES NAVY

"As pilot of a helicopter ... in action against enemy aggressor forces near Wonsan, Korea, on 31 March 1951 . . . Lieutenant (Junior Grade) Thornton volunteered for the dangerous mission of rescuing a key intelligence unit trapped on a high ridge behind enemy lines. Undaunted by the hail of small arms fire from the fast converging hostile forces, he gallantly refused to be evacuated and continued to direct the hovering helicopters as they hoisted three men into their aircraft and departed. After requesting one of the rescue pilots to return to the area with guns and ammunition, he was last seen firing his rifle at the enemy besiegers.

# Code of Conduct

- LT Duane Thorin as an HU-1 pilot who came up through the enlisted ranks was also captured during the Korean War. During one rescue attempt, Lt Duane Thorin fell captive on 8 February 1952. He escaped from a POW camp in July, 1952, but was recaptured. Repatriated in September, 1953, he was tasked by COMNAVAIRPAC to produce classified analysis of communist purposes and techniques in their treatment of POW's and develop a training program for survival, escape and evasion, and resistance in event of capture, which eventually became the "Code of Conduct".

# Early Rescue Helicopters



HUP-2 landing on the deck of a carrier



Sikorsky HO3S

H-19



# Helicopter Combat Support Squadron One

“So That Others May Live”





# Helicopter Combat Support Squadron One

- Helicopter support squadron One was redesignated on July 1965 as Helicopter Combat Support Squadron ONE (which more accurately described the mission of the command).
- Until 1967, HC-1 was the largest and most active helicopter squadron in the Navy. From Antarctic-bound icebreakers to attack carriers on patrol in the South China Sea, HC-1 covered an extended area encompassing nearly 50 million square miles. Search and rescue remained its primary mission.
- Throughout HC-1's history the squadron made over 1679 rescues.

# Vietnam Combat Search and Rescue

- Deployed aboard Navy destroyers and cruisers the squadron deployed one plane detachments for support off “Yankee Station” North SAR.
- Most of the rescues North of the “Red River” were accomplished by Navy helicopter pilots.
- In 1967 HELSUPPRON ONE was divided into the following four different squadrons:
  - Helicopter Attack (Light) Squadron THREE ( famous Seawolf gunships) since disestablished,
  - Helicopter Combat Support Squadron THREE (vertical replenishment),
  - Helicopter Combat Support Squadron FIVE (LAMPS Training) since redesignated HSL-31 and subsequently disestablished, and
  - Helicopter Combat Support Squadron SEVEN (Logistics Support and Combat SAR) since disestablished.

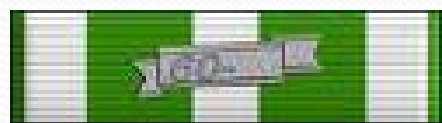
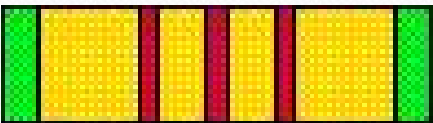


HELICOPTER COMBAT SUPPORT SQUADRON SEVEN

# SEADEVILS

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# Helicopter Combat Support Squadron 7



## SEADEVILS

September 1, 1967 to June 30, 1975

The ONLY DEDICATED COMBAT SEARCH & RESCUE SQUADRON

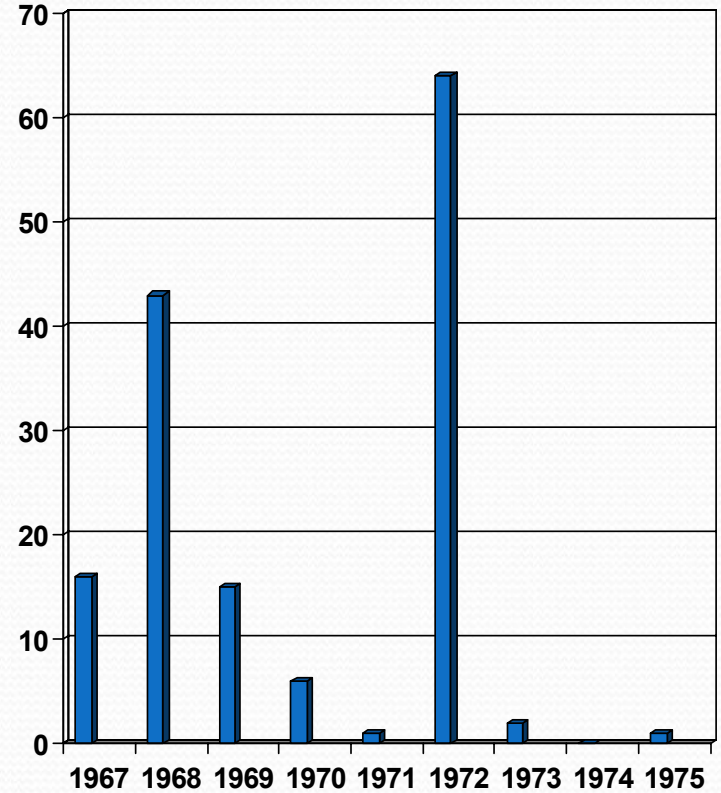
**CONTINUALLY On Yankee Station 2215 Days (6 years - 1 Month)**

**Det 110 On Yankee Station 2045 Days (5 years - 7 Months)**



# RESCUES

• 1967	11 Missions	16 Rescues
• 1968	27 Missions	43 Rescues
• 1969	8 Missions	15 Rescues
• 1970	6 Missions	6 Rescues
• 1971	1 Mission	1 Rescue
• 1972	36 Missions	64 Rescues
• 1973	2 Missions	2 Rescues
• 1974	0 Missions	0 Rescues
• 1975	1 Mission	1 Rescue



148 combat rescues

# Vietnam War Congressional Medal of Honor Recipient



On June 19, 1968, Lassen, then a 27-year-old lieutenant flying a UH-2 Seasprite, embarked on a mission to recover two downed naval aviators whose plane had been shot down deep in North Vietnamese territory. Upon reaching the hilly terrain where the aviators were hiding, Lassen made several attempts to recover the aviators, but dense tree cover, enemy weapons fire and intermittent illumination frustrated his efforts. Lassen turned on the landing lights of the helicopter, despite the danger of revealing his position to the enemy. After the pilots made their way to the helicopter and with his bullet-riddled helicopter dangerously low on fuel, Lassen evaded further antiaircraft fire before landing safely at sea onboard a guided missile destroyer with only five minutes of fuel left in the helicopter's fuel lines. The account of the rescue was logged as a successful, routine search and rescue mission.

Clyde E. Lassen, in the cockpit of his UH-2 helicopter, and his crew after his rescue of the two F-4 pilots.

# Clyde Lassen and Det 104 Crew



**MEDAL OF HONOR**—Lt Clyde E. Lassen, USN, in cockpit of UH-2, poses with members of HC-7's Detachment 104. Lieutenant Lassen received the Medal of Honor after the hazardous rescue of two F-4 pilots whose aircraft was downed at night over North Vietnam. (USN photo)

Clyde E. Lassen, in the cockpit of his UH-2 helicopter, and his crew after his rescue of the two F-4 pilots

# UH-2A Sea Sprite “Clementine”





# HH-3A “Big Mother”

*Don Baker : , California*



# North SAR



# North Vietnam (Red River)



# HA(L) - 3 SEAWOLVES



**US Navy Helicopter Attack (Light) Squadron Three Seawolves,  
Vietnam 1966-1972**

**Most decorated Navy squadron of the  
Vietnam War**

# UH-1B Gun Ship



The Seawolves were part of quick reaction force that provided gunship support, medical evacuations, rescues when needed throughout the Delta.

# In Country Shipboard Operations



- Rescue and Medivac operations were a daily occurrence for the Seawolves. Many of the medical evacuations and rescues were conducted under fire. It was such a common occurrence no statistics were kept.
  - One documented incident; in 1970 a detachment conducted 12 rescue operations in 6.6 hours.
  - Another rescue was written up in the Navy times as unprecedented.

NAVY TIMES

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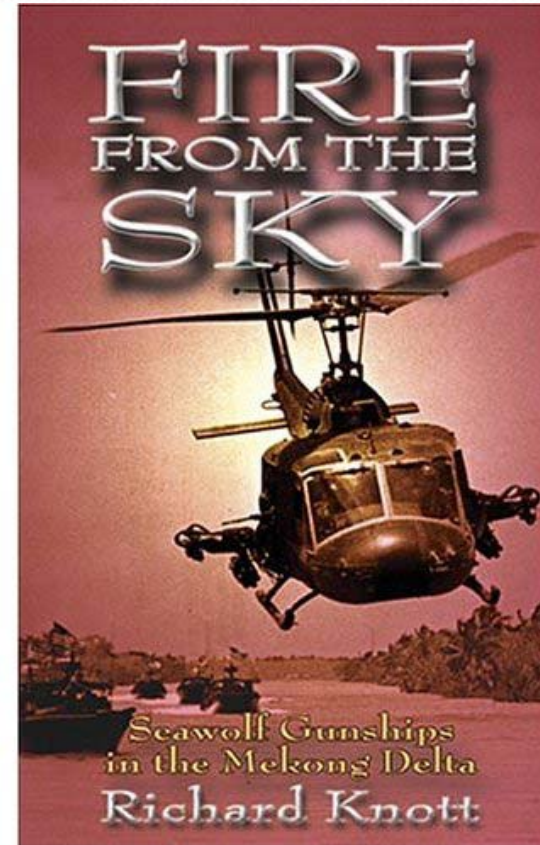
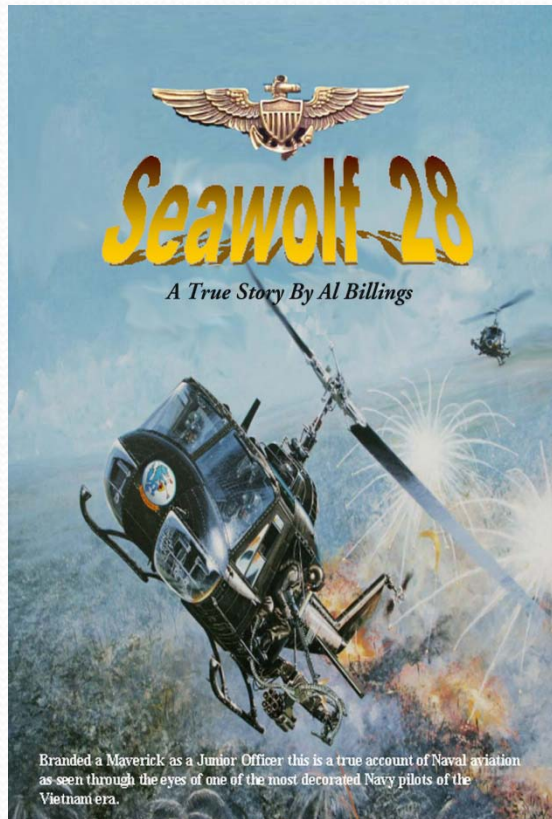
## Navy Helicopter Rescues 2 Wounded off River Boat

SAIGON—A daring rescue by a Navy Scawolf helicopter was credited with saving two seriously wounded PBRs for an up-date on the commander, ordered all ordnance dropped overboard to lighten the load and make room for the

# UH-1B Weapon Systems



# Books on the Seawolves





# Iraq War



## Helicopter Combat Support Special Squadron (HCS-5) Firehawks

The "Firehawks" of Helicopter Combat Support Special Squadron 5 deployed to Iraq in March 2003, the first time the unit had mobilized and deployed since Operations Desert Storm/Desert Shield. HCS-5 was the first naval air squadron deployed to Iraq, HCS-5 was redesignated HSC-85 "High Rollers" in 2006 and still maintains its mission of Combat Search and Rescue. HCS-4 was disestablished in the same year.

# Future of Navy Combat SAR

