

Camp Pendleton squadron trains for emergency situations

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MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP PENDLETON, Calif.(June 21, 2007) -- Marines with Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 364, Marine Aircraft Group 39, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, fly missions every day in garrison to train for upcoming deployments. Pilots and aircrew conduct several important training exercises daily and work extensively with other units aboard Camp Pendleton and surrounding Marine Corps bases.

Many of the Marines that train with the Purple Fox squadron often don't have opportunities to fly aboard CH-46 Sea Knight Helicopters. Pilots and aircrew must prepare the units they work with to be ready for situations when the two units would be working together while deployed to Iraq.

"The Marines we work with from other units must be capable and confident to work with the pilots and effectively communicate what kinds of situations are occurring on the ground," said Capt. Jason M. Vrable, pilot, HMM-364. "We use communication procedures that are precise, and it is important for the Marines to understand how these things work so we can come get them when an emergency happens."

The pilots and aircrew use radio equipment that receives signals from Marines on the ground. When a unit is deployed and an emergency situation occurs, a unit must radio to pilots what kind of an emergency is occurring and what kind of treatment is needed.

An emergency communication report read over the radio is called a nine-line casualty evacuation report. Marines on the ground radio these reports in along with grid coordinates and locations. Nine lines of details in the report outline the severity of the accident, allowing Marines to choose which medical facility or treatment to use.

"The 'Golden Hour' is a medical term we use to define how long a person has to get medical treatment before an injury becomes severe and life-threatening," said Capt. Brian P. Santucci, pilot, HMM-364. "We always respond and rush someone to a medical area before this time passes."

The pilots and aircrew constantly train with a ground element to shorten the amount of time spent retrieving Marines during emergencies. Pilots such as Santucci and Vrable must be able to maneuver a helicopter as quickly and safely as possible to transport the injured to medical-care units.

Crew chiefs aboard the helicopters must also constantly be on their toes, not only to rescue injured Marines, but to make emergency repairs to the helicopters as well. The crew chiefs aboard the Sea Knights must be versatile, as they often transition from situations such as rushing a patient to care, to grabbing a wrench from a tool box and repairing a malfunctioning brake.

Purple Fox pilots fly several times weekly and maintain scheduled flight and training hours. The Marines often take their flight operations to other nearby bases to train with other units as well.

The squadron pilots also conduct training exercises and troop transportation missions, picking up other Marines and taking them to their point of contact on the ground to help conduct special operations.

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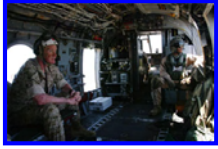
Photos included with story:



A CH-46 Sea Knight flies above the California desert during a training mission. Photo by: Lance Cpl. Chris T. Mann



Brig. Gen. Richard P. Mills, commanding general, 1st Marine Division, climbs aboard a CH-46 Sea Knight helicopter at Camp Pendleton June 14. One of the main tasks of Marine Wing Support Squadron 372 is troop transport. In Iraq, transporting injured Marines can be the most vital job of the squadron. Photo by: Lance Cpl. Chris T. Mann



Brig. Gen. Richard P. Mills, commanding general, 1st Marine Division, enjoys a smooth ride aboard a CH-46 Sea Knight helicopter. Teamwork is the most vital tool to keep the birds flying, with each Marine doing his job and watching his comrade's back. Photo by: Lance Cpl. Chris T. Mann



A CH-46 Sea Knight Helicopter flown by pilots from Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 364, Marine Aircraft Group 39, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, is seen from the window of another CH-46 during joint-unit training at Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, Calif. June 14. Photo by: Lance Cpl. Chris T. Mann
