

5040 HELICOPTER SQUADRON



MISSION

LINEAGE

5040 Helicopter Squadron

STATIONS

Elmendorf AFB, AK, 15 Jul 1969-30 Sep 1975

ASSIGNMENTS

WEAPON SYSTEMS

H-21

HH-3, 1966

COMMANDERS

Lt Col G. F. Fisher, #1971

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

A new patch was needed and Captain Duane "Smoke" Daily, a talented young officer, rose to the

task. The design incorporated the blue sky at the top with the stars of the Big Dipper, which was part of the Alaska State flag. The round white "top of the world" showed our location in the far North with white snows of the glaciers. The yellow "swing" wings of the great flying bird represented the helicopter. In the bird's strong talons were the Lifesaving ring of rescue and the square box of supplies that we carried to the remote radar sites.

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

The 5040th Helicopter Squadron was activated at Elmendorf AFB, Alaska (AAC) in 1969. The unit began with H-21B helicopters and pilots that had been assigned to the 21st Operations Squadron, 21st Composite Wing, Alaskan Air Command, at Elmendorf AFB, Alaska.

HH-3E Jolly Green Giants were assigned to the 5040th Helicopter Squadron in April 1970. The helicopters, tail numbers 69-5800 through 69-5812, arrived directly from the Sikorsky Aircraft Factory. All were capable of aerial refueling. The HH-3Es replaced the HC-21s, which were phased out of AAC's inventory. The last one, tail number 53-4362, was donated to the Alaska Transportation Museum.

The 5040th Helicopter Squadron was tasked with supporting remote Early Warning Radar Sites and performing Search and Rescue operations in interior Alaska. They were also responsible for "Rescap" for the F-4's of the 43rd Tactical Fighter Squadron stationed at Elmendorf AFB. They stood TDY Alert with the fighters at Eielson AFB, Galena AB, and King Salmon AB, Alaska. The HH-3E helicopter was an excellent aircraft for these tasks because of its speed, cargo capacity, long range in-flight refueling and water landing capabilities.

During the 1971 spring floods in interior Alaska, the 5040th H-3's flew many long hours evacuating and rescuing people from the outlying villages along the Yukon and Koyukuk Rivers in central Alaska.

On 25 July 1971, a 5040th flight crew participated in the longest over water rescue for a land-based helicopter. The 10 1/2 hour mission, requiring 3 air-to-air refuelings, took them over 450 miles out to sea to pickup a Korean merchant seaman with acute appendicitis and take him to a Kodiak Island hospital where successful surgery was performed. (Entered into the Congressional Record by Alaska Senator Nick Begich).

One of the favorite sidelights of the 21st Ops and 5040th was "Operation Santa Claus". The pilots gathered donations and the wives assisted in sacking up candy, fruit and other goodies that were then flown to the villages on the Alaska Peninsula near Christmas time. A volunteer to be "Santa" was found among the enlisted men at King Salmon and dressed appropriately. As the helicopter flew over the village, SCHOOL WAS OUT as the eager children ran out to see Santa Claus and get their bag of goodies

The 5040th HES was responsible for countless rescue missions in and around Cook Inlet and throughout the interior of Alaska. In the first two years of service, the Squadron flew over 10,000

hours.

The HH-3s remained assigned to the 5040th Helicopter Squadron until 30 September 1975, when they were transferred to the 71st Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron as part of an effort to consolidate all Air Force rescue helicopters to the Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service. The 5040th, an AAC unit, was inactivated shortly afterward.







USAF Unit Histories
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Sources
Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.