



RHUMB LINES

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Helicopter Contributions to the Maritime Strategy

“As early as Korea and Vietnam, commanders began to exploit the tremendous capability helicopters provided. While the equipment has modernized, the strong warrior ethos and reputation for timely, flexible response across a myriad of mission sets has remained constant throughout the Navy’s helicopter community today.”

– Vice Adm. Al Myers, Commander, Naval Air Forces/Commander, Naval Air Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet

In terms of personnel and airframes, rotary-wing aviation is the fastest growing community in naval aviation. By 2020, helicopter pilots will account for greater than 50 percent of all naval aviators. The range of mission sets provided by Navy helicopters in support of the Maritime Strategy has made them a vital asset to the fleet.

Maritime Security and Sea Control

- The addition of helicopters [extends the actionable range](#) of naval vessels hundreds of miles beyond the reach of their guns and small boats.
- The first drug interdiction made by a [MQ-8B Fire Scout](#) vertical take-off and landing unmanned aerial vehicle occurred during a routine test flight, earlier this year, while deployed with [USS McInerney](#) (FFG 8) and in coordination with a U.S. Coast Guard law enforcement detachment.
- Helicopters are an integral part of [anti-piracy](#) efforts around the Horn of Africa. Embarked helicopter detachments are often the first on the scene.

Forward Presence

- Helicopters from [HSC-84](#), a Navy reserve squadron, provide special warfare support in Iraq, while [naval air ambulance detachments](#) provide MEDEVAC services to troops on the ground.
- Maritime strike helicopters, deployed as an integrated part of [carrier air wings](#), are providing vital anti-submarine, anti-surface warfare and [search and rescue](#) (SAR) assets to carrier strike groups deployed around the world.
- [Mine clearance](#) helicopters are forward deployed to potential chokepoints to help maintain critical sea lanes of communication.

Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief

- Helicopters from [HS-4](#) aboard USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76) delivered more than 47,000 lbs of supplies to Carnival Cruise Ship [C/V Splendor](#) after an engine casualty disabled the ship in the waters off Mexico.
- [Helicopters](#) from [USS Peleliu](#) (LHA 5) and the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit conducted relief efforts in support of the Government of [Pakistan](#) following historic floods, contributing to the rescue of 10,051 people and overall delivery of 1,895,038 pounds of [relief supplies](#) to citizens affected by the severe flooding.
- Helicopters carry the majority of support to humanitarian aid and disaster response missions. [Navy helicopters](#) provided relief and comfort to the people of Haiti by airlifting more than three million pounds of food, water and [other supplies](#); conducting more than 1,600 [medical evacuations](#) and ferrying more than 10,000 passengers following the devastating earthquake.

Key Messages

- From littoral combat ships to hospital ships to aircraft carriers, the Navy designs its fleet with the capability to land helicopters, recognizing the versatility and flexibility that rotary aircraft provide.
- When America calls on the Navy, its helicopters are often the first ones crossing the beach from the sea.
- Rotary-wing aircraft, both manned and unmanned, will continue to play a vital role in the Maritime Strategy.

Facts & Figures

- There are 36 active helicopter squadrons in the fleet.
- When an aircraft carrier conducts flight operations, a helicopter is almost always the first to take off and the last to land as the primary SAR asset.
- A single MH-60R can carry up to three Mk 50 Mod 0 torpedoes or four Hellfire missiles, an advanced sonar suite, and a rescue swimmer.