

AH-1Z Viper Aviation Mishap near Imperial Gables, California



A U.S. Marine Corps AH-1Z Viper assigned to Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron (HMLA) 369, Marine Aircraft Group 39, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, flies during a Helicopter Outlying Landing Field training event at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, California, Aug. 5, 2025. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Seferino Gamez)

The following statement from the 3rd MAW was released on Oct. 17, 2025:

At approximately 7:05 p.m. PDT Oct. 16, 2025, an AH-1Z Viper assigned to Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron (HMLA) 369, Marine Aircraft Group 39, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, experienced an aviation mishap during routine operations near an unpopulated area of Imperial Gables, California. The crew

of two pilots were transported to separate hospitals for medical treatment. The first pilot was transported to Pioneers Memorial Hospital, Brawley, California, and is confirmed deceased. The second pilot was transported to Desert Regional Medical Center, Palm Springs, California, and is in stable condition.

Maj. Gen. James B. Wellons, the commanding general of 3rd MAW, issued the following statement, "It is with profound sadness that I share the loss of a Marine from 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing and the "Gunfighters" while conducting a training flight in support of the Marine Corps Weapons and Tactics Instructor Course. This Marine made the ultimate sacrifice, and we are forever grateful for his selfless commitment and willingness to go into harm's way. To the family, friends, and loved ones of our fallen Marine, we send our deepest condolences and offer our unwavering support during this time of grief."

As a matter of policy, we will not release the identity of a deceased service member until 24 hours after all next of kin notifications have been completed.

Though we understand the inherent risks of military service, any loss of life is always difficult. The 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing stands firm in its commitment to supporting the families, friends, and fellow service members of our fallen Marine.