

Marine CH-53Ks Partner with Navy to Test Future Force Operating Concepts



U.S. Marine Corps Pfc. Zackary Riffle with Combat Logistics Battalion 24, Combat Logistics Regiment 2, 2nd Marine Logistics Group waits for a CH-53K King Stallion to take off during a Helicopter Support Team operation at Tactical Landing Zone Albatross on Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, Nov. 19. *U.S. MARINE CORPS / Lance Cpl. Meshaq Hylton*

ARLINGTON, Va. – In a first for the Marine Corps, Marines from Marine Operational Test & Evaluation Squadron One (VMX-1) conducted over-the-horizon heavy lift and troop transport ship-to-shore operations aboard CH-53K King Stallions over the Atlantic Ocean, Nov. 19-21, Headquarters Marine Corps said Dec. 3.

These exercises are a critical component of the Marine Corps' future force operating concepts, such as expeditionary

advanced base operations and distributed operations.

"We are excited to continue advancing the commandant's vision of the future force by partnering with the Navy and finding ways to optimize how we operate and thrive in a strategic competition environment," said VMX-1 Commanding Officer Col. Byron Sullivan. "We remain the nation's naval expeditionary force, ready to fight in any clime or place at any time."

VMX-1, evaluating the King Stallion's ability to meet program specification for the over-the-horizon heavy lift evolution, tested the King Stallion's capability to transport a 27,000-pound light armored vehicle (LAV-25) from the Wasp-class amphibious assault ship USS Iwo Jima (LHD 7) to a landing zone ashore. The troop transport evolution evaluated the King Stallion's ability to move troops over the horizon to a location ashore and return to ship without refueling, covering as much as 220 nautical miles roundtrip.

Combat Logistics Battalion 24 and 2d Battalion, 2d Marines from Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, provided personnel and equipment to assist VMX-1 with their testing, and sailors from the USS Iwo Jima assisted VMX-1 with shipboard and flight deck operations.

The Marine Corps is progressing through initial operational test and evaluation (IOT&E) of the CH-53Ks prior to fielding them to the Fleet Marine Force. The pilots, maintainers, and contractors of VMX-1, the squadron tasked with conducting operational test and evaluation of Marine Corps aviation platforms and systems, play a significant role in shaping the tactics, techniques and procedures of CH-53K utilization. Additionally, VMX-1 personnel will put the aircraft through rigorous evaluations in order to determine its suitability and effectiveness before arriving to the fleet.

"We have the most professional and capable individuals maintaining the aircraft and are also appreciative to the

Blue-Green Team, who demonstrate the superb ability to operating harmoniously,” said VMX-1 CH-53K Detachment Operations Officer Maj. Joshua Banks.