

Vipers and Heavy Haulers Return Home from Indo-Pacific Deployment



MARINE CORPS AIR STATION MIRAMAR, UNITED STATES

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MARINE CORPS AIR STATION MIRAMAR, Calif. – The Marines and Sailors of Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron (HMLA) 169, and Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron (HMH) 462, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, returned from deployments in support of the Unit Deployment Program and 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, to their home stations of Marine Corps Air Station Camp Pendleton and MCAS Miramar, California, respectively, earlier this

month.

The HMLA-169 "Vipers" and HMH-462 "Heavy Haulers" demonstrated adaptability and versatility by task-organizing their squadrons into elements for two different deployments each.

The Heavy Haulers also attached the remaining third of their squadron to Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron (VMM) 163, yielding a reinforced assault support squadron, which supported a bilateral exercise and relief efforts in the Philippines this summer.

UDP enhances the United States' forward presence and provides a consistent and rapid response capability. The program aims to maintain combat readiness, deter aggression, and strengthen alliances and partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region. UDP reinforces the Marine Corps' ability to rapidly maneuver to key maritime terrain, establish resilient air command and control, and generate aviation combat power from distributed locations.

The 31st MEU is the Marine Corps' only permanently forward-deployed MEU, and is the nation's expeditionary force in readiness in the Indo-Pacific region.

The Vipers' UH-1Y Venom and AH-1Z Viper aircraft, and the Heavy Haulers' CH-53E Super Stallions operated across the Indo-Pacific, demonstrating the operational reach of Marine aviation.

They participated in exercises including Marine Aviation Support Activity, Talisman Sabre, Fuji Viper, Super Garuda Shield, and Korean Marine Exchange Program, and conducted training in Okinawa including a variety of flight operations and qualifications; maritime integration; and joint and Marine Air-Ground Task Force integration.

“The Vipers executed an aggressive campaign that emphasized distributed operations across the Indo-Pacific theater,” said Lt. Col. Thomas Duff, commanding officer of HMLA-169. “We utilized strategic airlift, amphibious shipping, and self-deploying detachments to support five bilateral exercises and enhance interoperability with our partners in the region.”

The Vipers and Heavy Haulers played a key role in fostering relationships with allies and partners in the region, demonstrating a forward presence in the Indo-Pacific, and enhancing capabilities for mission sets across the range of military operations.

“Mobility is an identified challenge in the Western Pacific, specifically in the First Island Chain, that is crucial for the United States to promote regional stability and strengthen alliances with partner nations while in Great Power Competition,” said Lt. Col. Jonathan Bryant, commanding officer of HMM-462. “Over the past seven months, the Marines and Sailors of HMM-462 met this challenge head-on by continuously demonstrating the Marine Corps’ ability to conduct long range assault support and heavy lift operations for III MEF as the Stand-In-Force in INDOPACOM.”

Marines and assets from 3rd MAW, the largest wing in the Marine Corps, are constantly forward-deployed in support of operations and training around the globe. Ready to fight tonight and win, 3rd MAW is poised to respond when called upon.