



## Air, space power: 40th HS CC shares history, legacy of flying missions

Commentary by Lt. Col. William Thomas  
40th Helicopter Squadron commander

7/9/2007 - **MALMSTROM AIR FORCE BASE, Mont.** -- Airpower at Malmstrom? Absolutely, and it's better known as the 40th Helicopter Squadron.

It is not uncommon for one of our new pilots or flight engineers to arrive on base and ask for directions to the helicopter squadron. The response to their very logical request is often, "Oh, we don't have flyers at Malmstrom anymore." That response often comes just as one of our eight helicopters is flying over, returning from a local mission.



UH-1N Huey helicopter prepares to land at Malmstrom Air Force Base, Mont. (U.S. Air Force photo)

The 40th Helicopter Squadron has a long, progressive history, with its roots coming from deep in the jungles of Southeast Asia. The structure and the mission of the 40th HS has changed dramatically since its inception and has rapidly transformed since the September 11 terrorist attacks, and is the 341st Space Wing's most decorated unit. Here is a brief background of this proud and professional flying organization.

The 40th HS was originally constituted the 40th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron and was activated March 21, 1968, at Udorn Air Base, Thailand. The squadron performed combat search-and-rescue missions throughout the Southeast Asian theater and participated in many intense combat actions including the evacuation of Saigon.

Following the Vietnam War, the 40th ARRS moved to Hill Air Force Base, Utah, where their primary mission for the next 10 years was to provide transportation and support for Hill's bombing ranges. The unit was inactivated in 1987 and was later redesignated the 40th Rescue Flight and activated May 1, 1993, equipped with the UH-1, at Malmstrom.

The mission of the 40th RQF was to provide passenger and cargo transport to and from the missile field and to support the National Search and Rescue Plan. Five years later, the 40th RQF was redesignated the 40th Helicopter Flight, and in October 2005, the 40th HF was redesignated the 40th HS.

How did helicopters first arrive here at Malmstrom? Helicopters were certainly a part of the Montana skyline long before the 1993 40th RQF designation. They first appeared in 1973 following the Vietnam conflict when the Air Force transferred all helicopter units assigned to support the Strategic Air Command to the 37th Air Rescue and Recovery Squadron.

In 1993, the Air Force undertook a dramatic reorganization to better utilize existing resources and to streamline its war fighting capabilities. During this time, all support helicopter units were re-assigned to their host Strategic Missile Wings, and two months later were transferred to Air Force Space Command.

The 40th HS executes a 2,700-hour flying program flying the 20th Air Force's most complex homeland security and helicopter support missions, and is their most diversely qualified helicopter squadron, conducting day and night security missions utilizing night vision goggles, forward looking infrared radar and often operating in remote, mountainous environments with adverse weather.

To date, the 40th HS has saved 367 lives and has logged more than 125,000 accident-free flight hours.

The men and women of the 40th HS are proud of their military heritage, excited about their future and continue to strive to better serve the 341st SW operating under their vision "Anytime Aerospace Excellence."