

# FLIGHT JACKET

MCAS Miramar, Calif. July 4, 2008



Pic By Air Force Staff Sgt. Hector Garcia

**NAVAL AIR STATION LEMOORE, Calif.** – Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 465 arrives at Lemoore Naval Air Station as CH-46 Sea Knight Helicopters stand ready to deploy and fight the Northern California fires on July 1st. Marines with Marine Medium Helicopter Training Squadron 164 and Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 268, Camp Pendleton, Calif., Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 465, Miramar, San Diego, Calif. are at the air station to help with the fires.

## Wing aids firefighting efforts

CPL BRANDON ROACH  
Combat Correspondent

**NAVAL AIR STATION LEMOORE, Calif.** – More than 50 Marines and sailors with 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing helicopter units joined forces with Naval and Air Force units to battle the blazing inferno that is engulfing the Northern California mountain ranges July 2.

Three CH-53E Super Stallions loaded with more than 40 Marines with Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 465, "The Warhorses," met up with Marines from Marine Medium Helicopter Training Squadron 164 and Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 268 at the air station Tuesday afternoon to provide support to California and Federal Firefighters.

The medium helicopter squadrons, brandishing the CH-46E Sea Knight, left Marine Corps Air Station Camp Pendleton June 28 after California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger requested the help of California based military services.

"3rd MAW is providing medium and heavy lift rotary wing support to U.S. Northern Command and the National Fire Center," said Lt. Gen. Samuel T. Helland, I Marine Expeditionary Forces commanding general in an operations order dated June 8.

Since the 2006 Southern California Wildfires destroyed more than 38,000 acres of land including parts of Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Marine helicopter pilots and crew chiefs have spent countless hours training to most effectively help extinguish any fires that may threaten homes and families in the state.

"We have logged more than 110 hours training for situations just as this," said Capt. Eric Minn, CH-53E pilot with HMH-465. "We are very confident that we will be very effective in helping subdue these fires before they destroy anything else."

As the Marines landed on NAS Lemoore they unloaded the helicopters and began to prepare them for the long workdays ahead.

"We had to ensure the systems were all good and paint (numerals on) the aircraft orange to ensure that we are seen inside the thick smoke made by the fires," said Capt. John Gilmore, a CH-53E pilot with HMH-465. "We also met with the California and Federal Fire Departments and the Department of Forestry to learn about where we will fly and how we will fight the fires."

After the aircraft were checked over, the Marines were released from their duties to rest up for the upcoming battle against the blazes.

"I am proud to be a part of the firefighting efforts," said Cpl. Matthew A. Sherrill, a CH-53E crew chief with HMH-455. "The work I am putting in could potentially save a family's home, land or lives. That is the biggest reward I get for the long hours I will be putting in."

The Marines will continue to help until the fires are contained.