

HM-14 Squadron Makes its Final Flight in MH-53E Helicopter



An MH-53E Sea Dragon, attached to the “Vanguard” of Helicopter Mine Countermeasures Squadron takes off from the Ford-class aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford’s (CVN 78) flight deck, June 16, 2022. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Jackson Adkins*

NORFOLK, Va. – The World-Famous Vanguard of Helicopter Mine Countermeasures Fourteen (HM-14) flew the final flight of the squadron in Norfolk, Virginia, on Dec. 8, said the squadron’s commanding officer, Cdr. Nicklaus Smith, in a release.

After nearly 45 years of service, flying the RH-53D and the MH-53E, the Vanguard are officially de-activating in July 2023. The sailors of HM-14 have served and flown on every continent in the world over their 45-year history and have been a part of numerous critical military operations. With the Navy’s decision to develop and field new technologies and approaches to mine countermeasures, to include a family of manned and unmanned systems, the MH-53E Sea Dragon is entering its final years of service.

HM-14 is the first of the Navy’s two operational MH-53E squadrons to disestablish, ending a run of 45 years of service to the country. Throughout its history, the squadron underwent numerous changes to its manning and structure and even introduced a new helicopter, but always remained steadfast to Norfolk, Virginia.

Some of HM-14’s aircraft and personnel will be absorbed by sister squadron HM-15.

The tens of thousands of sailors who called HM-14 home have served the community well, and many have permanently called Hampton Roads home. The final sailors of HM-14 have finished strong over the last year few years, winning the Battle E award in both 2020 and 2021.

“There is no greater honor than serving our fellow citizens of the USA, and doing it maintaining and flying the world’s biggest and most powerful helicopter! We have so much fun doing what we do, and playing a small part in maintaining freedom in America and around the world!” Smith said. “I’m so proud of all the sailors of the Vanguard, both past and present, who have served with distinction. Our alumni have attained MCPON [master chief petty officer of the Navy] and Admiral, but I’m most proud of the young men and women who gave blood, sweat and tears, in challenging environments across the world, and kept the Big Iron flying!”