

HMLA-269 Reactivates After 18-Month Hiatus



U.S. Marine Corps Col. David Fitzsimmons, from Pennsylvania and commanding officer of Marine Aircraft Group (MAG) 29, addresses the audience during the reactivation ceremony of Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron (HMLA) 269 at Marine Corps Air Station New River, North Carolina, July 1, 2024. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Staff Sgt. Theodore Bergan)

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION CHERRY POINT, N.C. – Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron (HMLA) 269, 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (MAW), reactivated during a ceremony this morning aboard Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) New River, North Carolina.

HMLA-269, known as “The Gunrunners,” previously deactivated on Dec. 9, 2022, in accordance with Force Design initiatives. Throughout the course of the squadron’s brief deactivation, the Marine Corps conducted analysis on force management in order to ensure that no operational commitments were left unfulfilled. This analysis identified the need for an additional HMLA squadron on the East Coast to provide sustained operational support to II Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF). This change within 2nd MAW represents incremental change to Force Design to meet the conditions described in recent national security and defense strategies.

The reactivation ceremony featured remarks from Col. David Fitzsimmons, commanding officer, Marine Aircraft Group 29, who thanked the various advocates at 2nd MAW, II MEF, and Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, that made HMLA-269’s reactivation possible.

“It was a decidedly somber day when HMLA-269 deactivated,” said Fitzsimmons. “That was certainly reversed today.”

Also present was Lt. Col. Jens Gilbertson, commanding officer,

HMLA-269, who highlighted Marine Attack Helicopter Squadron (HMA) 269's legacy as the Marine Corps' first attack helicopter squadron and recounted the multiple pilots and aircrew within HMA and HMLA-269's history who received the Distinguished Flying Cross. He noted that HMA and HMLA-269 was recognized eight times by the Marine Corps Aviation Association as the Marine Corps' Light Attack Helicopter Squadron of the Year, more so than any other Marine Corps light attack helicopter squadron in history. Gilbertson also recognized the Marines of HMLA-269 who enabled the squadron's reactivation.

"Ultimately, it was up to these Marines to get it done," said Gilbertson. "They have discipline, and they have precision, and that's the same discipline and precision they're going to bring when they maintain and fly our aircraft."

The squadron will resume operating the AH-1Z "Viper" attack helicopter and the UH-1Y "Venom" utility helicopter. Both aircraft are manned, trained, and equipped to fight from the sea into austere environments and confined littoral spaces, and support the Marine Air-Ground Task Force by providing offensive air support, utility support, armed escort, and airborne supporting arms coordination.