

Just a few words about the Seawolves

By [Dick Knott](#) (author of "Fire From The Sky")

The Navy's Helicopter Attack Squadron (Light) Three or HA(L)-3 for short was also known as the Seawolves. It was the Navy's only attack helicopter squadron ever. It operated exclusively in the Mekong Delta in nine, two-aircraft detachments. The detachments operated from ships in the rivers and off the coasts and from airfields and makeshift camps throughout the Delta. The squadron was established "in country" to provide rapid response air support to the Brown Water Navy but, as it turned out, engaged in air support of any friendly outfit that called for help. A significant part of their time was spent inserting and extracting Navy SEALs, often under heavy fire.

The Navy had no attack helicopters or trained attack helicopter pilots or gunners at the beginning of the Vietnam War and had to borrow UH-1Bs from the Army. While Navy helicopter pilots were given Huey training by the Army in the U.S., that service was also temporarily tasked to form a unit to fly from Navy ships in support of the river patrol forces. It was under the command of Army Captain Duane R. Brofer. He and Army Warrant Officer David Anderson came up with the name Sea Wolves (two words). They flew from the *Belle Grove* (LSD-2) and the *Tortuga* (LSD-26).

As the first Navy attack helicopter pilots arrived in Vietnam, they were assigned to Army squadrons for combat OJT. They were completely integrated into the Army squadrons and served with them until the first Navy detachments were formed. HA(L)-3 was established at Vung Tau in May 1967 although four Navy detachments had already been operating on their own in the Delta for some time prior to that date.

I interviewed a number of Army pilots who were involved in the early effort to get the Sea Wolves started and the book includes their recollections. Both Army and Navy pilots involved in these early "Seawolf" operations were very complimentary about each other.

The Seawolf Association is a very active group with a large reunion every two years. It is a great bunch made up of pilots, door gunners and other squadron members. Their next reunion is in Reno, Nevada in June. The current president is Jack O. Williamson, 357 Oleander, Lemoore, CA 93245. Phone # is (559) 924-2912. E-mail is jackjr@cnetech.com