



USS Aries PHM-5: Return to Key West, Florida Presentation for City of Key West Commissioners 11 April 2024



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Outline

- What is USS Aries (PHM-5) ?
- What was the original mission for PHMs?
- Historical significance of PHM Squadron homeport in Key West
- Why should USS Aries be brought home to Key West ?



What is USS Aries (PHM-5)?

Characteristics (as designed and constructed):

Length: (foils extended): 133 feet

Beam: (less foils): 28 feet

Draft: (foils up): 7.2 feet (foils down): 23.3 feet

Displacement: Approx. 255 tons full load

Complement: Officers 4 Enlisted 19

Hullborne Propulsion: Two 1600 horsepower diesel engines with two water jet propulsors // Speed: 11 knots, calm water

Foilborne Propulsion: One 18,000 horsepower GE LM-2500 marine gas turbine w/waterjet propulsor // Speed: 48 knots/55 mph Sea State 5 (wave height 10 ft)

History:

Builder: Boeing Marine Systems – Seattle, WA

Awarded: October 20, 1977 Keel laid: January 7, 1980

Launched: November 5, 1981 Commissioned: September 18, 1982

PHM Squadron Key West Operations: 1980 – 1993

Decommissioned: July 30, 1993

Current location: USS Aries Museum – Gasconade, MO

Web: <http://www.ussaries.org/>



USS Aries (PHM-5) Museum

Gasconade, Missouri



**Diesel & pump
machinery room**



**Gas turbine machinery
room**



EOS



Captains stateroom



Crew head



Crew mess



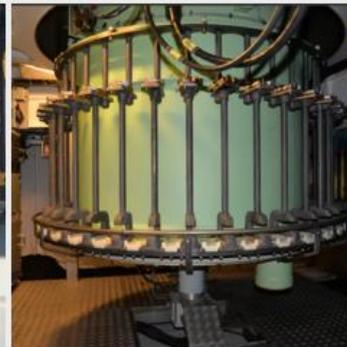
Galley



Pilot House



CIC



76 MM Magazine



Foils hydraulics



Passageway

USS Aries (PHM-5) Museum Gasconade, Missouri



Habitability Spaces

PHM – Original Mission

- NATO identified need for relatively small, fast ships to counter Soviet/Warsaw Pact high-speed missile boats (including hydrofoils) in the early 1970's.
- Primary operational areas: North Sea and Baltic Sea
- NATO analysis led to agreement among the US, West Germany and Italy in 1972 for design, development and acquisition of the PHM.
- Germany and Italy later built other, smaller monohull fast patrol boats or hydrofoils.
- Program strongly supported by Admiral Elmo Zumwalt, U.S. Navy Chief of Naval Operations (CNO). PHM to play a major role in his "high-low mix" vision for USN shipbuilding program.

Historical Significance of PHM Squadron Homeport in Key West



- USS Pegasus (PHM-1) homeported initially at Little Creek, VA in 1979.
- In 1980, PHM-1 homeport was shifted to Key West for Caribbean Basin fleet operations while awaiting delivery of PHMs 2-6.
- PHMs 2-6 and shore-based, transportable PHM Mobile Logistic Support Group (70 ISO 8ftx8ftx20ft containers, 4 officers, 150 enlisted) were delivered to Key West over the next three years, with the full squadron (PHMRON TWO) constituted in Spring 1983. PHMs also provided on-call assist to the USCG for counter-drug ops.

Counter Drug OPS

- ❖ **3% of Navy Ships Accounted for 30% of Navy-assisted “Busts”**
- ❖ **225,000 Lb MJ, 12,000 Lb Cocaine**
 - ❖ Street Value \$1.2 Billion
- ❖ **Received 22 Unit Awards from USCG**
- ❖ **PHM is: “Superior Platform, . . . The Most Effective Surface Asset . . .” (in Many Counter Drug Scenarios)**
 - Commander USCG District 7 (AUG ‘92)

PHM Operations

- ❖ **WAR - Grenada**
- ❖ **Battle Group Workups**
 - ❖ Usually “Orange Force”
- ❖ **Port Visits**
 - ❖ East Coast/Carib/GOM Ports
- ❖ **Developed Fast Ship Tactics**
 - ❖ With USN and Foreign Navies
- ❖ **Trial Deployments**

Historical Significance of PHM Squadron Homeport in Key West

VIP's Visit

PHM's Show Their Capabilities

By JOC (SW) Fred J. Klinkenberger Jr

PHM's of the newly formed Patrol Combatant Missile Hydrofoil Squadron TWO (PHMRON TWO) and their base in Key West, Fla., were recently toured by the Chief of Naval Operations and several other high-ranking naval and JCS officers. As part of the tours, the unique foilborne operation of these modern surface warfare ships was demonstrated.

During the busy week in Key West, CAPT Frank G. Horn, COMPHMRON TWO, hosted GEN John W. Vessey, USA, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; ADM James D. Watkins, Chief of Naval Operations; ADM Wesley C. McDonald, Commander in Chief Atlantic; VADM Thomas H. Kilcline, COMNAVAIRLANT; and BGEN Walter D. Filmore, USMC, Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans, Policy and Joint Exercises at CINCLANT. The distinguished visitors were also given tours of Naval Air Station Key West's facilities and briefed by RADM Ralph R. Hedges, Commander, U.S. Forces Caribbean.

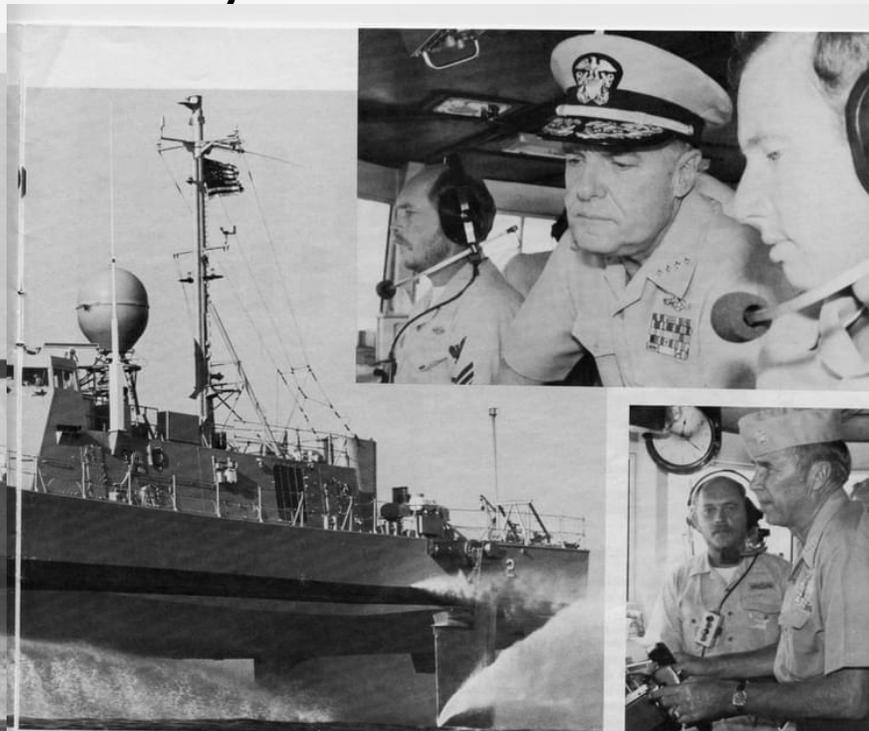
During his midweek visit, ADM McDonald broke his flag as CINCLANTFLT in an afloat unit for the first time aboard USS *Taurus* (PHM 3) prior to getting underway for the Key West operating area. *Taurus*, CDR Walter S. Slocum commanding, also hosted GEN Vessey and ADM Watkins during the week. USS *Aquila* (PHM 4), commanded by CDR David Lee, hosted BGEN Filmore.

►► RADM Ralph R. Hedges (right), Commander U.S. Forces Caribbean, and BGEN Walter D. Filmore (center), USMC, discuss PHM capabilities with CAPT Frank G. Horn, COMPHMRON TWO, aboard USS *Aquila*, (PHM 4). Photo by PH2 Phyllis J. Moorhead.

► Aboard USS *Taurus* (PHM 3), JCS Chairman GEN John W. Vessey (foreground) is briefed by the ship's commanding officer, CDR Walter S. Slocum. Photo by PHAN Rick Trinite.



▲ Foilborne configuration of a PHM is demonstrated by USS *Hercules* (PHM 2) during sea trials. *Hercules* and USS *Gemini* (PHM 6) will join PHMRON TWO in Key West later this month.



►► CNO ADM James D. Watkins is briefed by LT Mark Uhron (right) at the OOD station on the bridge of USS *Taurus* (PHM 3). LT Uhron is explaining controls and input; in the background is helmsman GMG1 R.B. Adams. Photo by PH2 Phyllis J. Moorhead.

►▲ Breaking his flag as CINCLANTFLT in an afloat unit for the first time, ADM Wesley C. McDonald mans the controls of USS *Taurus* (PHM 3) during his visit to Key West. Photo by PH2 Phyllis J. Moorhead.



Historical Significance of PHM Squadron Homeport in Key West

PHMRON TWO at Key West

Getting it Together



PHM sailors call it "going foilborne"—the speedy movement when the 230-ton PHM hull is on the foils and lifted above the turbulent seas.

Operating out of Key West, Fla., the six fastest ships in the U.S. Navy are together for the first time in PHM Squadron TWO, CAPT Frank G. Horn commanding. CAPT Horn and the crews of the PHM's are eager to demonstrate what he calls the squadron "ability to be a reliable, powerful element of Navy seapower wherever we are ordered to operate."

"Operating successfully," CAPT Horn emphasizes, "is the big pay-off for all our other efforts in building, equipping, training, and maintaining this squadron of new ships. Therefore, we are moving aggressively to prove and further develop our at-sea techniques and multi-ship tactics. Some of the operational techniques that are basic doctrine for larger, slower ships," says CAPT Horn, "have to be tested and validated for PHM's. For example, what's the best UNREP speed? How do we tow? Get towed? Like all other surface ships we are also going to AUTECH to accurately determine our tactical measurements. We are developing a mature, proven body of sea skills of the kind that every Navy ship class has."

The Commodore continued, "As we operate, some things have already become apparent. For instance, the PHM's excellent sea-keeping characteristics in heavy weather. Another example: although the PHM at sea period was designed to be five days followed by two days of upkeep, current experience indicates that a 10 day at sea period at slow speeds while hullborne is well within our capability—excellent for surveillance patrol missions. Obviously the longer you are at higher speeds, the fewer days you have at-sea. Here at the

squadron level, we see how we could dramatically increase our on-station time and operating range when operating with a ship capable of providing hydrofoils with fuel."

CAPT Horn was warming to his subject and moved to the windows in his office that overlooked the PHM pier to which the hydrofoils were moored. Looking out at a PHM maneuvering to moor alongside, he went on, "Concurrently, we are boring in on the questions that are in the category of tactics. Some are absolutely basic such as firing doctrine—single and multi-ship—at various speeds, at various targets from various formations. Others involve development of screens, cooperative effort with friendly ships and aircraft, and so on. The guiding idea in all this is to exploit our small radar cross-section, our high speed and our big punch. We are a fast, small, elusive ship that can provide the surface Navy with a potent punch and act as a force multiplier.

Returning to behind his desk CAPT Horn continued, "We have also developed concepts of operation, including some deployment of the squadron outside of Key West. Of course, individual PHM's have already done some of that—gone to GITMO, Roosevelt Roads, Pearl—but we are talking about something more demanding that will require support from our Mobile Logistics Support Group (MLSG). That kind of operating will increase our nuts and bolts understanding of the kinds of problems deployments bring and how to best solve them. We need this kind of experience if we are to achieve our designed capability to employ the squadron wherever we are needed—if we are ordered to do so one morning! We certainly have an area, the Caribbean basin, that offers a full mission right now and an excellent position to practice our surface warfare skills."

But operations will not succeed without reliable ships and systems. The PHM maintenance plan calls for a quarterly two-week IMAV. For a six ship squadron this means five ships could be available with one in IMAV all the time. Peacetime operations, however, are expected to allow more time for upkeep and RAV's. As with all ship or aircraft classes, there is heavy emphasis in PHMRON TWO on achieving and maintaining high reliability.

A key factor in PHM operating reliability is the side-by-side effort by the ship's crew and the Mobile Logistics Support Group that together provide PMS and IMA level repair capability for the ships. The MLSG works from 74 transportable, specially constructed vans, now located on the same pier to which the PHM's are moored, LCDR Jay D. Lose, officer in charge, points out that "PHM ship's" company can walk over here and together we can tackle material problems with a minimum of wasted time and motion. We and the crews are one team with one thing in mind—keep 'em sailing—or flying if you prefer!"

Thirty-four of the MLSG vans are devoted to the repair department and provide 21 different services from gas turbines to fire control. Twenty-three other vans are used for supply department functions including spare part storage, issuing and receiving, laundry and ship's store. The remaining 17 vans are devoted to administrative needs including personnel support, disbursing, sick bay post office and the like. A squadron commander's communications center will offer capability of particular importance should the squadron and MLSG be deployed.

Recent MLSG manning changes have increased the total of enlisted men to 182. LCDR Lose confidently expects "the PHM class maintenance to really move out" as the additional assistance comes aboard. Meantime, when any question on maintenance is raised, a regular part of any answer includes two ideas that reflect the squadron's team spirit: "Cross training and cross decking help a lot in understanding and solving our material problems" and "we all know each other and so we try harder."

PHM sailors like their capable high stepping ships and Key West duty—and the retention rate proves it since the squadron lays claim to being the top retaining squadron in the navy. Anxious to demonstrate their value to the fleet, surface warfarers in PHMRON TWO are sharpening their cutting edge.

PHM Squadron TWO

COMPHMRON TWO—CAPT Frank G. Horn
Chief Staff Officer—LCDR Christopher H. Rossbach
OPS Officer—LT Roger W. Coldiron
Officer in Charge of Mobile Logistics Support Group
—LCDR Jay D. Lose

USS Pegasus (PHM 1)—CDR Thomas H. Berns
USS Hercules (PHM 2)—LCDR Thomas G. Corcoran
USS Taurus (PHM 3)—CDR W. Scott Slocum
USS Aquila (PHM 4)—CDR David M. Lee
USS Aries (PHM 5)—LCDR Carl E. Weiscopef
USS Gemini (PHM 6)—LCDR David Carlson

U.S. and Soviet Hydrofoils Compared

The Soviet Navy has two major classes of hydrofoils—28 *Turya*-class submarine chasers and 14 *Matka*-class patrol boats (antiship mission). Two other hydrofoils, the *Sarancha* and *Babochka*, have been built as prototype hulls. Of these boats, only *Sarancha*'s foil system is similar to that of our Navy's PHM's. The other three classes have a single fixed foil forward.

The Soviet hydrofoils are armed with an assortment of weapons including ASW torpedoes, antiship missiles, surface-to-air missiles, 76mm, 57mm and 25mm guns, and a 30mm galling gun for antiship missile defense. In addition, the *Turya*-class PC's are fitted with a variable depth sonar for ASW. Eight *Turya*-class submarine chasers have been transferred to Cuba since 1979.

	Pegasus	Turya	Matka	Sarancha	Babochka
Length	133 ft.	129 ft.	129 ft.	148 ft.	164 ft.
Beam	28 ft.	27 ft.	28 ft.	33 ft.	28 ft.
Displacement	231 T	250 T	215 T	280 T	400 T
Guns	76mm	twin 57mm twin 25mm	76mm 30mm	30mm	30mm (2)
Torpedoes		4			8
Missiles	8 Harpoon		2 SS-N-2C	4 SS-N-9 2 SA-N-4	
Speed	40+	42	40	45	50-55
Crew	21	30	33	35	45

Historical Significance of PHM Squadron Homeport in Key West

El Terror Gris Que Vuela The Gray Terror that Flies

By LCDR David M. Snyder USN(Ret.) and LT Mike Woronowski



Small, swift, and deadly—each of the Navy's patrol combatant missile hydrofoil ships (PHM) packs the offensive punch of guided missile frigates many times its size. These ships literally fly through the water at speeds of better than 40 knots.

"We're unique in the Navy," says CAPT Stephen H. Hamilton, Commander, PHMRON TWO, the Navy's only hydrofoil squadron. The ships, plus their mobile logistics support group, make up "an organization designed to be totally mobile." The squadron, in effect, has its own mobile, mini-naval base that can be moved from place to place as the need arises.

While most people are familiar with the legendary PT boats of WWII fame, these modern ships represent a quantum leap in speed, agility, and fire power from their wooden-hulled ancestors. Each ship carries eight deadly Harpoon anti-ship missiles and a 76mm rapid fire gun that can fire 80 rounds per minute. They are powered by a gas turbine engine similar to those used on DC-10 jumbo jet aircraft—the LM 2500. In fact, the ship's bridge resembles the cockpit of an airplane.

The six ships in the squadron, USS Pegusus (PHM 1), USS Hercules (PHM 2), USS Taurus (PHM 3), USS Aquila (PHM 4), USS Aries (PHM 5), and USS Gemini (PHM 6), carry crews of 24 sailors each—4 officers and

20 enlisted men. Their mobile group, with 6 officers and 166 enlisted, provides all the maintenance, administrative and logistics support of a small Navy base. Housed in 88 vans, the support group is designed to be moved by sea or air to any remote location to provide backup for sustained operations whenever and wherever the ships are needed.

During peacetime, the squadron operates from its homeport at Key West, Florida. They patrol the Straits of Florida between Florida and Cuba, the Yucatan Channel between Cuba and Mexico, and the waters around the Bahamas to assist the U.S. Coast Guard in its drug interdiction efforts. The six ships of the squadron have been responsible for 35% of the "drug busts" in which the Navy has assisted the Coast Guard. When on drug interdiction patrol, each ship carries a Coast Guard law enforcement detachment (four to five men) that does the actual boarding, searching, and arresting.

PHM's are particularly well suited for drug interdiction operations. With their great speed and reliability, they can search a large area to visually identify numerous radar contacts and quickly board those ships and craft that provoke suspicion. CAPT Hamilton states, "What these ships can do with their aggressive crew—chasing armed smugglers through the Florida Straits in



▲ Closing in quickly from the horizon, these three PHM's are a frightening sight to the drug smugglers of the Caribbean. From left to right are USS Aquila (PHM 4), USS Gemini (PHM 5), and USS Aries (PHM 3). The same qualities which make them so effective in the battle against drugs give them an equally formidable presence in a wartime scenario.

► USS Hercules (PHM 2) performs a high speed starboard turn. The foils on these ships allow them to "fly" through the water at speeds exceeding 40 knots.

the dead of night at speeds well in excess of 40 knots—are the most combat-like and realistic operations in the Navy today, with the exception of the Persian Gulf. Additionally, by taking more than 1500 pounds of cocaine and 206,000 pounds of marijuana off of America's streets, this squadron's ships contribute greatly to the moral and physical well-being of our nation."

Drug interdiction operations usually consist of a PHM working with Coast Guard ships and/or aircraft. Unless they have reliable intelligence or an assigned patrol area, PHM commanders have the option of picking their own hunting ground. During 1987, PHM's seized, interdicted or destroyed ten vessels involved in drug smuggling in the Florida Straits. This fact is well known to the smug-



gles of South Florida. LT Terry Bickham, a Coast Guard law enforcement officer with extensive experience, says, "Without a doubt, drug smugglers fear PHM's more than any other law enforcement ship. They even have a name

PHMRON TWO is currently involved in an actual deployment. Taurus (PHM 3), Aries (PHM 5), and Gemini (PHM 6) deployed to the Caribbean Sea on 12 Feb. Of the 88 vans that make up PHMRON TWO mobile logistics support group (MLSG), 33 were loaded aboard the USS Lafayette County (LST 1194), CDR Leo J. Farned, III commanding, and shipped to the island of Grenada to accompany the three PHM's. The vans were offloaded pier-side by a 10-ton cargo boom and then towed by truck to a compound from which they could operate. The 60-man MLSG detachment will provide support to the three PHM's for the duration of their Caribbean operations.

Several distinct mission areas are being tested during the deployment. The PHM's are conducting drug interdiction operations with the Grenadian Coast Guard. PHMRON TWO will also be evaluating its self-sustainability in remote locations. Additionally, the squadron is conducting a six-week sea-basing exercise in which it will station eight of the MLSG vans on board USS Newport (LST 1179), CDR William R. Graner commanding, and operate the PHM's at sea without land-based support.

The deployment is the first of its kind for the PHM's. "Essentially, we are evaluating our ability to operate out of a remote location while training to fulfill our wartime role," says PHMRON TWO chief staff officer, LCDR Bob Kutcher. "This deployment involves the most ships, the longest duration and the greatest distance from homeport than any operation in the past."

The PHM's are entering a new era.



▲ Cocaine seized by the Coast Guard detachment embarked aboard USS Hercules (PHM 2) sits on the Key West pier ready to be turned over to law enforcement authorities. 1064 pounds were confiscated in this seizure.

they are ideally suited for special operations or denying enemy access to crucial choke points along vital sea lanes.

The ships' small crew size means that each crew member has greater responsibilities. "We have every sailor performing multiple tasks," says CAPT Hamilton. "The small number of crew members means that each individual not only has to pull his own weight he also must help the next guy."

OS2(SW) Roger T. Williamson agrees. "I've known since I was 10 years old that I wanted to be a sailor, and this ship gives me the opportunity to do it all." Petty Officer Williamson, who is assigned to Taurus, continues, "Because of the ship's size, we must all do work outside our specialties. I handle lines, order supplies, stand security watches and help navigate."

"On board Hercules, everyone pulls together," adds ENS Lauren Charbonneau, the ship's assistant combat systems officer. "We are kept very busy because we have to do all the things that larger ships do, but with a lot fewer people."

"Because the ships are supported by their own dedicated mobile logistics support group, there is a squadron-wide esprit de corps that bonds the sea-going sailors to the shore-based support team," says CAPT Hamilton.

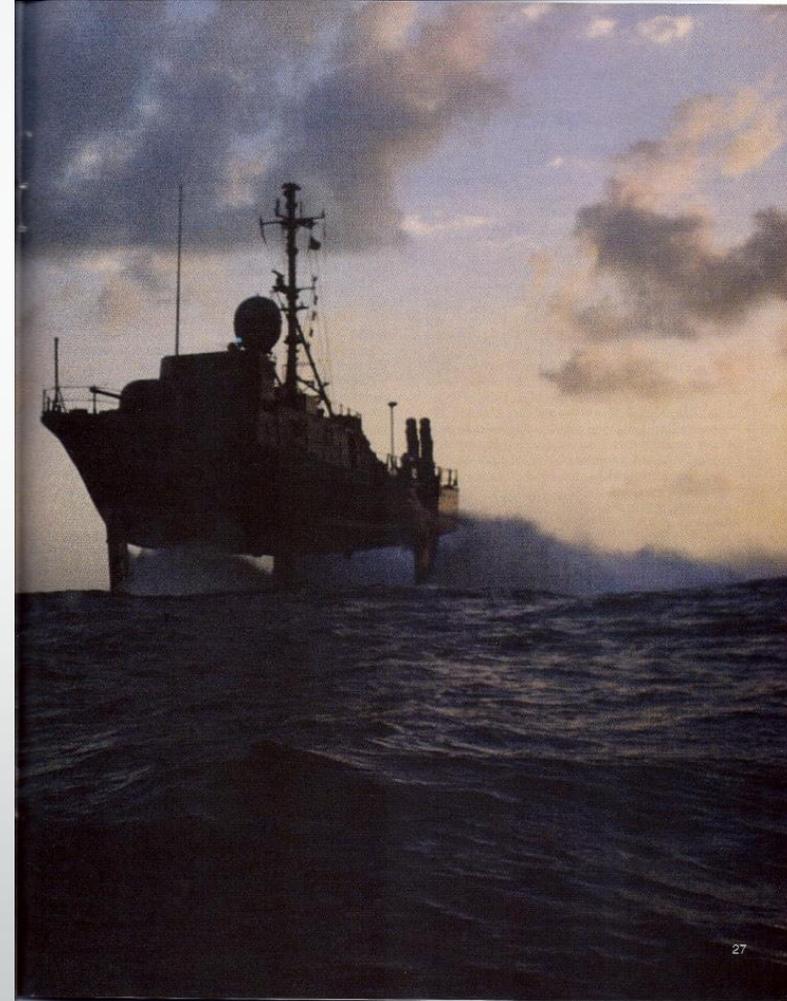
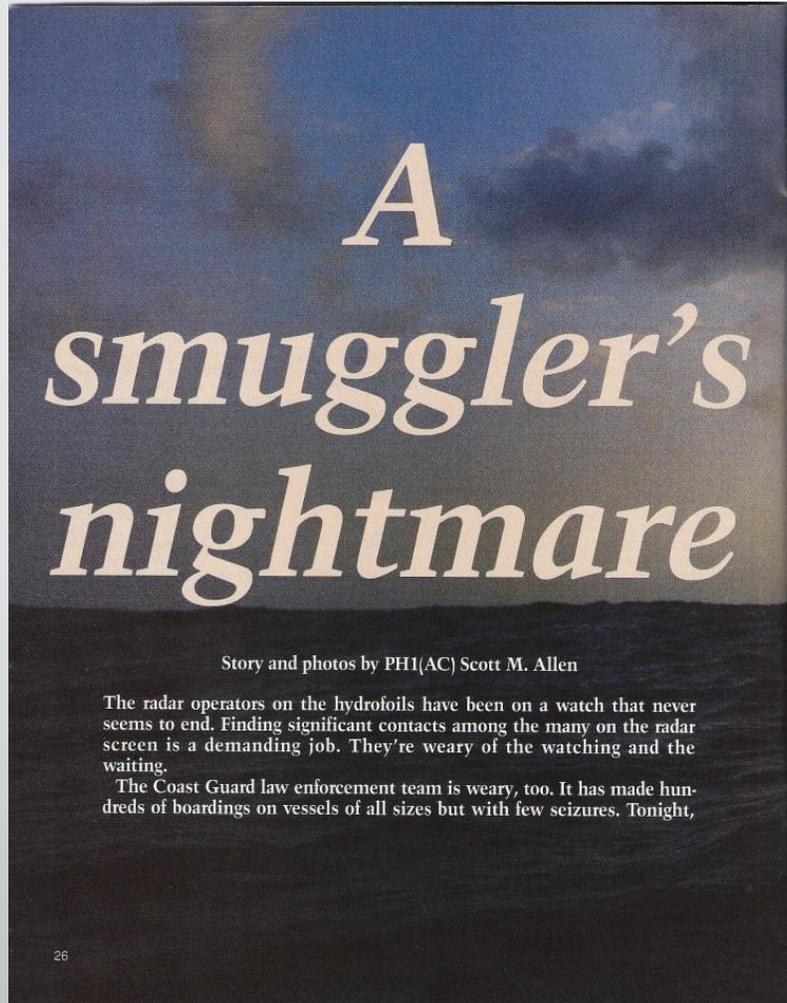
"All these sailors are knowledgeable, spirited and well-groomed. I'm proud of this squadron. They embody the qualities that any area commander would like to have on his ships or piers."

for the PHM, "el terror gris que vuela," which translated to English means "gray terror that flies." PHM's are an intimidating force with a no-nonsense role in enforcing the law at sea.

The war on drugs is becoming more sophisticated. Narcotic traffickers have taken extensive steps to keep the smuggling pipelines open. Some of their efforts resemble those of a wartime scenario—employing numerous counter-surveillance measures, decoys, and aerial warfare and their home port location, the PHM's are often the focal point of these efforts. The knowledge that a PHM just might be conducting drug interdiction operations in a particular area is enough to empty waters once teeming with smuggling activity. OPSEC, COMSEC, and OPDEC are taken very seriously in the PHM community.

When not performing drug interdiction operations, PHM's are frequently called upon to oppose major fleet combatants in fleet exercises. In wartime, the ships can form a highly mobile anti-ship and anti-aircraft screen for a large task force, darting out ahead of the bigger ships to disable hostile units waiting to pounce on the force. With their tactical advantages of speed, high sea state stability, exceptional fire power and shallow draft,

Historical Significance of PHM Squadron Homeport in Key West



Historical Significance of PHM Squadron Homeport in Key West

A smuggler's nightmare

however, will be different. Air and surface units will coordinate to interrupt a drug air drop. The question on everyone's mind is this: Will tonight's efforts be enough to get the drugs and arrest the people involved in drug trafficking?

With the establishment of Joint Task Force 4, headquartered in Key West, Fla., the efforts of the Navy, Coast Guard, Air Force, U.S. Customs Service, Drug Enforcement Administration, and Federal Bureau of Investigation were enhanced to interdict and capture drug traffickers. Tonight they have the opportunity to demonstrate how they work as a team.

The Navy hydrofoils USS *Taurus* (PHM 3) and USS *Gemini* (PHM 6), Coast Guard cutters USCGC *Sitkinak* (WLB 1329) and USCGC *Padre* (WLB 1328), take to the seas while Navy E-2C aircraft and U.S. Customs *Blackhawk* helicopters take to the sky. Aboard each ship is a Coast Guard law enforcement detachment consisting of four enlisted and one officer. Their mission — to detect,

"Aircraft coming in very low on my port bow. Five flashes followed by a flare bearing zero nine zero. This is the drop right here!"

and apprehend drug traffickers trying to bring illegal drugs into the United States.

The sky is overcast on a hot, muggy Florida night somewhere off the coast south of Key West. The seas are calm as *Taurus*, *Gemini* and the Coast Guard cutters head to the rendezvous site.

The crew on *Taurus* is tense with anticipation. The captain of *Taurus* waits on the bridge for instruction from the on-scene commander for the operation.

The officer of the deck and the helmsman eagerly await orders to go foil-borne and intercept the suspect vessel. The Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment officer, responsible for coordinating operations between the captain of the hydrofoil and the on-scene commander, accompanies the skipper on the bridge.

Suddenly, the 01-level lookout spots a low-flying aircraft off the starboard bow. At the same time, the combat information center, responsible for tracking both surface and air contacts, reports to the captain that an aircraft just below the cloud cover is bearing zero nine five.

Officer of the Deck: Roger, zero nine five.
Captain: Strobe lights on my port beam. Five, six,

seven... 13 flashes from a low-flying aircraft.

Drug runners in airplanes will coordinate with drug smugglers in "go-fast" boats who pick up drugs being dropped. Go-fast boats are commercial speedboats drug smugglers use because of their speed and maneuverability.

OOD: One, two, three strobes bearing one zero zero. At the same time, the 01-level lookout reports a small boat directly below the strobes and a Navy E-2C aircraft reports a small air contact heading in the direction of *Taurus*.

Several minutes later, there is a change in the aircraft's pattern.

OOD: Aircraft coming in very low on my port bow. Five flashes of light followed by a flare bearing zero nine zero. This is the drop right here! There's another flare.

Combat: According to our air search radar, the plane is at five and one half miles at a speed of 100 knots.

"The aircraft is coming in low, directly at the suspect vessel — man, I can see this clear as day," said the 01-level watch as he looked through infrared binoculars.

LEDet officer: They're probably going to drop the bales now. There they go, we have splashdown. It looks like they are using Chem-lights on the bales so the go-fast crew can see them.

At this time, the on-scene commander orders a delay to give the smugglers ample time to pick up the drugs. The interdiction team wants both the smugglers and the contraband, giving it the evidence needed for a bust.

Lookout: The pick-up vessel is moving toward the packages. There must be 10 to 20 bales in the water.

The excitement is building on *Taurus*.

Gunner's mates are standing by in bullet-proof vests and helmets. M-60s are mounted and loaded on the 01-level, both port and starboard, in case there is a need to defend themselves. The law enforcement team members anxiously wait to make a boarding.

Sitkinak decides to make the first move by approaching the suspect vessel from the south. Once the people aboard the suspect vessel see *Sitkinak*, they are likely to

A smuggler's nightmare

head north, right into *Taurus* and *Gemini*.

Word comes from the on-scene commander that if the "go-fast" boat makes a break toward *Taurus* it is to be intercepted immediately.

Combat: Captain, radar contact bearing zero eight zero at six miles. Radar shows extensive cloud coverage. We are heading right into the storm.

LEDet officer: *Sitkinak* reports 10 to 20 bales have been fished out of the water by the suspects.

According to the law enforcement officer, there are about 10 kilos of cocaine per bale.

Suddenly, the on-scene commander orders the U.S. Customs *Blackhawk* helicopters to illuminate the go-fast boat. Two very bright beams of light pierce through the pouring rain and light up the suspect vessel.

LEDet officer: The suspect vessel is on the run. On-scene commander has instructed the *Taurus* to go foil-borne and move in on suspect vessel. This is it guys, the chase is on!

OOD: All hands stand by for foil-borne operations. No one is allowed on the main deck without the express permission from the officer of the deck. Fifty percent foil-borne turbine.

Helmsman: Fifty percent foil-borne turbine, aye. "We are going to be in a tail chase from the get-go," said the captain, as the 265-ton ship raises up out of the water onto her foils.

OOD: Left full rudder.

Helms: Left full rudder, aye.

OOD: Steady course zero five seven.

Helms: Zero five seven, aye.

OOD: Hang on 01-level. Follow that helo, baby!

Amid the driving rain, the hydrofoils began their pursuit. The only way to keep sight of the go-fast boat is the U.S. Customs *Blackhawk* helicopters and the radar on *Taurus* and *Gemini*.

LEDet officer: We have them on our port bow. Don't lose sight of them.

Lookout: The rain is really coming down out here. It's hard to keep sight of them.

Captain: Stay with that helo.

OOD: I got port running lights off my bow, that's the guy right there. Left full rudder.

Helms: Left full rudder, aye.

The hydrofoil takes a hard left bank and the crew grabs anything bolted down to keep from falling.

OOD: Roll out.

Helms: Roll out, aye.

Taurus and *Gemini* continue to zigzag through the water at speeds exceeding 40 knots, in response to the highly maneuverable go-fast boat. The crew's adrenaline is pumped up. For most of them, it's their first drug interdiction.

Lookout: There's a Chem-light in the water. There's a bunch of them attached to the bales.

LEDet officer: *Sitkinak*, *Sitkinak*, this is *Taurus*. We are passing a whole stream of Chem-lights. They're dumping the bales.

OOD: Right full rudder.

Helms: Right full rudder, aye.

OOD: Roll out.

Helms: Roll out, aye.

The officer of the deck orders combat to mark the latitude and longitude of the Chem-lights so they can come back and pick up the bales.

Combat: Target is heading zero-nine-zero at 40 knots. We are 10 miles and closing.

The two *Blackhawks* continue to illuminate the go-fast boat as it zigzags through the water for more than 15 minutes. The more the boat zigzags, the more *Taurus* and *Gemini* close in.

Suddenly, the illumination of one of the helicopters disappears.

Lookout: I lost one of the *Blackhawks*. It just disappeared.

LEDet officer: Helo down, helo down, *Gemini* lookout reports to the on-scene commander that one of *Custum's* *Blackhawks* has gone down.

Combat: Captain, I have a surface contact at three-four-zero.

Captain: That could be the helo.

LEDet officer: On-scene commander has changed

JUNE 1990

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A smuggler's nightmare

Taurus's mission to search and rescue. Investigate the surface contact at three-four-zero.

OOD: Left full rudder.

Helms: Left full rudder, aye.

OOD: Roll out.

Helms: Roll out, aye.

The mood of *Taurus's* crew quickly changes from excitement to extreme concern. They know they will have to work

quickly because there is no telling the condition of the helicopter crewmen. The weather condition for search and rescue is not favorable and the only illumination is from the ship's spotlight.

Lookout: Captain, we are passing debris on our port side. It may be from the helo. I have more Chem-lights off my port bow at about one mile — that could be survivors.

Captain: Officer of the deck, land the ship.

OOD: Land the ship.

The ship comes to an abrupt stop, as it settles into the water.

Helms: Ship is hull-borne.

Lookout: Captain, I've got the crewmen in sight off the port bow at 500 yards. They're grouped together waving Chem-lights, but no sign of the helo.

The officer of the deck calls away the small boat detail for search and rescue operations. All nonessential personnel are ordered to remain clear of the main deck while conducting rescue operations.

Captain: Let's get those guys on board as quickly as possible.

Within minutes of the helicopter's disappearance, *Taurus* is on scene and has recovered five crewmen, but the co-pilot is still missing.

LEDet officer: *Sitkinak*, *Sitkinak*, this is *Taurus*. We have recovered five crewmen from the water. There is still one missing. Request search assistance from any units in the area of operation.

Meanwhile, the chase of the drug smugglers continues. *Gemini* reports the drug smuggler's go-fast boat has lost its engines. *Gemini* gets within a half mile before the go-fast restarts its engines. She is in hot pursuit at one-half mile.

Gemini runs beside the suspect vessel for more than 10 minutes, but the crew of the go-fast boat refuses to stop. After using every means possible to get it to stop, *Gemini* requests permission from the on-scene commander to fire warning shots and disabling fire. A few minutes later, *Gemini* cancels that request.

As *Gemini* cuts in front of the go-fast's bow, a wall of water kicked up by the hydrofoil's water jet floods the go-fast's engines. The suspect vessel stops dead in the water.

The Coast Guard law enforcement team boards the vessel, apprehends three suspects on board. No contraband is found on the vessel. Coast Guard cutter *Padre*, however, retrieves three bales of cocaine from the water. The remaining bales sink before they can be picked up.

The search for the missing helicopter crewman continues through the night and for several days after the incident, but to no avail. It is a sad ending to an otherwise successful mission. The loss of George Saenz, the co-pilot of the U.S. Customs' helicopter, is a bitter reminder of the risks and the challenges faced by drug interdiction teams trying to stem the flow of illegal drugs into the United States. □

Allen is a photojournalist for All Hands.

"We are passing debris on our port side. It may be from the helo. I have more Chem-lights off my port bow at about one mile."

During the past 18 months, the Navy, along with Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachments and other agencies have prevented more than 163,517 pounds of marijuana, hashish and cocaine from reaching the streets of the United States.

Recently, for example, USS *Fairfax County* (LST 1193) seized 143,000 pounds of marijuana in a two-month period. In the last 10 months, P-3 squadrons, along with ships such as USS *Robert Bradley* (FFG 49), *Blakely* (FF 10), *Dale* (CG 19), *Biddle* (CG 34) and *South Carolina* (CGN 37) have seized a total of 3,808 pounds of cocaine and hashish.

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ALL HANDS

Historical Significance of PHM Squadron Homeport in Key West



LCDR Carl Weiscopf, USN, Commissioning Commanding Officer, USS Aries (PHM-5), receives Conch Republic flag at “Welcome to Key West” ceremony (Dec 1982)

See CNN interview with Commodore Frank Horn, USN (1983):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zzZnK3XTc6s>

Historical Significance of PHM Squadron Homeport in Key West

10:21 AM Thu Jun 13

keysnews.com

TODAY IN KEYS HISTORY



Photo from the Dale McDonald Collection

On this date in 1993, the U.S. Navy Hydrofoil Squadron, shown off Key West in the 1980s, sailed from the Southernmost City for the last time.

Why should USS Aries be brought home to Key West ?

- PHM Squadron history: Navy fleet operations as well as on-call assistance to the USCGC for counter-drug ops.
- Available pier space near USCGC Ingham and much smaller above waterline profile compared to USCGC Ingham



- USS Aries is registered as a non-profit 501(c)(3) museum ship and has USCG certification as a recreational vessel, capable of operation with passengers.
- Large number of visitors/proximity to cruise port offers significant potential for tourism revenue.
- US Navy League chapter interest (potential source of Sea Cadet volunteers)
- Expected support from Naval Station Key West

USS Aries (PHM-5) Museum Gasconade, Missouri

- Website: <http://www.ussaries.org/>
- USS Aries Hydrofoil Memorial, Inc., is a non-profit organization created specifically for the preservation, and rehabilitation of the only remaining Patrol Hydrofoil Missile (PHM) Ship and is a member of the Historic Naval Ships Association and the International Hydrofoil Society.
- The Aries is quite complete and utilizing the original MTU diesels, she is capable of getting underway hullborne. The museum's goal is to return her to flying condition.
- Aries is USCG registered as a recreational vessel.
- Over the years the museum mission has expanded to include other hydrofoils both military and civilian, domestic and international. The fleet of hydrofoils has grown to over 7, including, many of which have been restored to flying condition. This includes the 1960's era Boeing-built *LITTLE SQUIRT* test craft.



USS Aries - Location in Key West



USS Aries PHM-5 in Key West



Adjacent to USCGC Ingham Museum



← PHMs at Trumbo Point, Key West with Mobile Logistics Support Group (MLSG) - 1980s

Truman Annex – Planned location for PHMs prior to decommissioning in 1993 →



USS Aries (PHM-5) Historical Photos



PHM-1 *USS Pegasus*

Commissioned: 9 July 1977



PHM-3 Series Follow Ships

- *USS Hercules PHM-2*



- *USS Taurus PHM-3*



PHM-3 Series Follow Ships

- *USS Aquila PHM-4*



- *USS Aries PHM-5*



PHM-3 Series Follow Ships

- *USS Gemini PHM-6*



Way Ahead

- Obtain support from city commissioners and permission to proceed
- Obtain US Navy approval
- Determine preferred Key West location for USS Aries
- Develop cost estimate and timeline for moving USS Aries from Gasconade, MO to Key West

Q&A

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