On October 17, 2003 nine U.S. Navy Viet Nam era Helicopter Aircrewm en were honored at a North Island Naval Air Station ceremony. All US Navy Enlisted Aircrewm en that participated in Combat Search And Rescue (CSAR) operations, while attached to and serving in certain U.S. Navy helicopter squadrons from October 1965 to February 1973 are now eligible to wear the USMC Combat Aircrew Insignia with one star. Flight crews that fired upon the enemy or were fired upon while conducting Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) operations are eligible. Commanding Officer of HC-3, CDR Matai welcomed and introduced CDR Lloyd Parthem er the moving force behind authorization for this award. CDR Don Hayes, Ret. declared CDR Lloyd Parthem er, “The Best Friend of the US Navy Helicopter Aircrewm en”. McKing Alanis SCPO Ret. represented Congressman Randy “Duke” Cunningham who was rescued by an HC-7 Combat Search and Rescue helicopter off the coast of North Viet Nam in 1972. One of his rescue crewmen HC-7s Tom McCann (not present) is also eligible to wear the Combat Aircrew insignia. Mr. Alanis spoke for the Congressman’s undying support for the Combat Search and Rescue Mission. The CNO Enlisted SAR Model Manager, AFCM (AW/NAC) Frank "Bud" Nelson, USN called all of the award recipients heroes and models for the younger active duty aircrews in attendance. CDR Harry Zinser, Ret., CDR Don Hayes, Ret CDR John Leach, Ret. and the CNO Enlisted SAR Model Manager made the nine presentations.
**AX-1 Rufus E. Carter**, Imperial Beach, CA served in Helicopter Antisubmarine Squadron (HS-2) from 1966 to 1970. Rufus was aircrewman in the SH-3 helicopter armed with M-60 machine guns and Thompson sub-machine guns while conducting Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) operations.

**AT-2 William R. Eddins (AWC Ret)**, San Diego, CA served in Helicopter Antisubmarine Squadron Two (HS-2) from 1968 to 1969, Helicopter Antisubmarine Squadron Ten (HS-10) from 1969 to 1971, Helicopter Antisubmarine Squadron (HS-8) from 1971 to 1975, and again Helicopter Antisubmarine Squadron Ten (HS-10) from 1980 to 1982. He crewed in SH-3 helicopters aboard USS Hornet and on Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) detachments aboard USS Coral Sea, USS Constellation and USS Intrepid armed with M-60 machine guns and .38 Caliber hand guns while conducting Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) operations. He recalled an attempted rescue of a downed Navy F-8 Crusader pilot north of Hanoi who was captured as the helo arrived on scene. The pilot was LT Bender and co-pilot was LTJG Schloz.
AX-2 Paul DeGennaro. Coronado, CA served in Helicopter Antisubmarine Squadron (HS-2) from June 1966 to Sept 1967. Paul was aircrewman in the SH-3A helicopter armed with M-60 machine guns and Thompson sub-machine guns while conducting Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) operations. He shares this most memorable mission; Attempted Night Rescue by Paul DeGennaro. On the evening of May 22, 1967 aboard the USS Kittyhawk (CVA-63) the men of HS-2 SAR DET 1 were at a relaxed state. This was the final day of the SAR DET 1 tour because air operations were secured and the USS Hornet (CVS-12) and the main body of HS-2 would be arriving on station the next morning. Then the 1MC blared “Big Mother standby crew, man your aircraft “. The crew consisted of aircraft commander Lt. (JG) Stephen L Porch, Co pilot Lt (JG) Stuart B. Williams, First crewman AX2 (AC) Paul DeGennaro, Second crewman AX2 Duane A. Shaffer. We launched about 2100 and flew up to North SAR Station. We orbited for a number of hours while they tried to get a fix on downed Air Force pilot, Lt. David L. Baldwin, who punched out in the mountains north of Haiphong. At this point it was about midnight and it was decided that we would in-flight refuel from a DE. This was tricky because our rescue hoist had an intermittent electrical problem and I didn’t want the problem to get worse. We had the DE crew throw us a line and we pulled up the fuel hose with rope. We successfully refueled this way. The downed pilot was located and the OK was given for us to make the rescue. We had two A1 Spads escorting us. We flew at 6000 ft and flew over numerous coastal islands before hitting the mainland. We drew heavy Anti-aircraft fire from the islands. There were shells exploding above us and below us the whole time we were over the island airspace. After flying about 45 minutes we got to the rescue area which was covered with tall trees and at about 5000 ft in altitude. We were communicating with the downed pilot and the A1’s guided us in. We were hovering over tall trees and could not see through them. I clipped a light I took off a Mae West onto the Jungle Penetrator and lowered the penetrator through trees and we waited. At this point we were drawing heavy small arms fire and lost communication with the downed pilot. The aircraft was taking numerous hits. I was knocked over by one bullet going through my shirt and the other crewman took one through the leg. We could not regain communication with the downed pilot and the aircraft started spinning because the rudder controls were damaged by enemy gunfire. Reluctantly we left the area and headed back to the ship. We drew sporadic gunfire until we got to the islands. Our friends on the islands were waiting for us to return and threw every thing they had at us. It was like the 4th July. We landed on the USS Long Beach (CGN 9). A few minutes after landing the self sealing tanks gave out and all the fuel we had left dumped out on the deck of the Long Beach. At first light the next morning another HS-2 DET 1 helicopter commanded by Lt Richard T Daniels went in and successfully made the rescue. With daylight they could see the enemy positions and F4’s were called in to deal with them. It’s amazing what a few well placed cluster bombs can do.
AMS-2 Donald G. Burleson, Cashmere, WA., served in HC-7 from June 1968 – May 1970 and spent a lot of time on Yankee Station as an HC-7 Det 110 H-3 aircrewman. He drove his motorcycle from Washington State to receive his USMC CAC wings and meet with his old shipmates. He recalls the following successful mission:

On 30 August 1968 LCDR Eikel from VA-93 was rescued in daytime combat conditions (HC-7 Rescue #53) by LTJG Jeff Wiant/LTJG P.D. January/ADJ2 Smellie and AMS-2 Donald G. Burleson. A-4 pilot Eikel was shot down 22 miles northwest of Vihn, North Vietnam. The successful rescue was accomplished while receiving small arms fire in a hover and 37mm anti-aircraft fire upon egress to across the beach to a safe landing on USS Sterett DLG-31.

On 7 January 1969 an HC-7 UH-2A/B flight crew; LT Ron Beougher/LTJG Joe Skrzypek/AE-2 Bruce Dallas and ADJ-3 Salsbury were rescued by an HC-7 H-3 in the South China Sea (HC-7 Rescue #63) by LCDR Ken Kirkpatrick/LTJG Egan/AMS-3 Don Burleson and ADJ2 Martinez. Conditions were day routine operations of which Don Burleson describes details about the HC-7 helo going down as “fuzzy” in his memory.
AT-3 Mike Shepherd, Folsom, CA., served in HC-7 from Sept 1970 to June 1973. Mike crewed in the HH-2C and H-3 with Tom Bornes, Mike Harlow, Tom McCann, Matt Symanski and Jerry Donahue on Dets 110, (H-3) and four H-2 CSAR dets off the shores of North Viet Nam. He remembers being armed with .38 caliber hand guns, M-16 rifles, and M-60 Machine Gun and GAU-2A/B minigun. His significant recorded events include the following events:

On 10 Nov. 1972 LT Michael Cobb of VA-93 was rescued in daytime enemy opposed conditions (HC-7 Rescue #124) by LT Lockett/CDR Lamberth/AMH-3 Szymanski and AT-3 Mike Shepherd

On 20 Nov. 1972 LCDR Vincent E. Lesh and LTJG Don L. Cordes of VF-103 were rescued in an IFR Nighttime Combat environment (HC-7 Rescue #126 and #127) by LTJG Dewhirst/LTJG Haggarty/AMH-3 Szymanski and AT-3 Mike Shepherd.

AX-1 Arlie Plemmons (Now AWC RET), Blythe, CA served in Helicopter Antisubmarine Squadron Two (HS-2) in 1961 and 1965, Helicopter Antisubmarine Squadron Ten (HS-10) in 1964 and 1975, CAG(R) 80, then Helicopter Antisubmarine Squadron (HS-8) in 1972, and retired from HS-10. He crewed in SH-3 helicopters in 1966, 1967 and 1969 armed with M-60 machine guns, Thompson .45 caliber machine guns and .45 Caliber 1911A1 side arm. He also recalls a helicopter detachment crossdeck to the USS Forrestal just before the unfortunate fire.

ATC Michael Hogan, San Marcos, CA served in Helicopter Antisubmarine Squadron Six (HS-6) from 1966 to 1968 and Helicopter Antisubmarine Squadron Two (HS-2) from 1970 to 1978 Michael was aircrewm an in the SH-3A, SH-3D and SH-3G helicopters and recalls his Crew Chief Chet Wood.
AT-3 James B. Dorsey, Highwood, MT served in Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron Four (HS-4) in the spring of 1966 flying as crewman in an H-3 Big Mother in the Tonkin Gulf with LCDR Quitquit, LT Dillon and HT-2 L.W. Barnes. They successfully rescued an F-4 Pilot and RIO who both had been rescued a few days earlier by the ships plane guard. He was also crewman on an Apollo 8 mission.

AT-1 Phil Poisson, Imperial Beach, CA served in Helicopter Combat Support Squadron SEVEN (HC-7) from May 1969 to June 1974. Phil was aircrewman in the H-2A/B, HH-2C and HH-3A helicopters armed with M-60 machine guns, GAU2A/B minigun and M-16 automatic rifles while conducting Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) operations in the hostile territory of North and South Vietnam.