

Bell AH-1W “SuperCobra”

The Hickory Aviation Museum’s Bell AH-1W SuperCobra, Bureau Number 161017 is on loan from the National Museum of Naval Aviation. HMLA-269 “Gunrunners” flew the helicopter over to HAM from MCAS New River, NC after it was flown during the sundown ceremony for the SuperCobra in January 2020. Coordinated by Kregg Kirby.



Role	Attack Helicopter
National origin	United States of America
Manufacturer	Bell Helicopter
First flight	AH-1J 1969
Introduction	AH-1W 1986
Retired	N/A
Status	In Service
Primary users	United States Marine Corps Republic of China Army Turkish Army Islamic Republic of Iran Army
Produced	1970-1980s
Number built	1,271
Propulsion	2x GE T700-GE-401 Turboshaft Engines
Unit cost	US\$10.7 million

The Bell AH-1W SuperCobra is a twin-engine attack helicopter based on the United States Army’s single engine AH-1 Cobra. The twin Cobra family, itself part of the larger Huey family includes the AH-1J SeaCobra, AH-1T Improved SeaCobra, and the AH-1W SuperCobra. The AH-1W, the backbone of the United States Marine Corps attack helicopter fleet for decades, is being replaced by the next generation Bell AH-1Z Viper.

General characteristics

Crew: 2 (Pilot and Co-Pilot/Gunner (CPG))

Length: 58 ft (17.7 m) (with both rotors turning)

Rotor Diameter: 48 ft (14.6 m)

Height: 13 ft 9 in (4.19 m)

Disc area: 1809 ft² (168.1 m²)

Empty weight: 10,200 lb (4,630 kg)

Max. takeoff weight: 14,750 lb (6,690 kg)

Powerplant: 2 × General Electric T700-GE-401 Turboshaft Engines

Shaft Horsepower: 1,690 shp (1,300 kW) ea

Fuselage Length: 45.7 ft (13.9 m)

Stub Wing Span: 10.9 ft (3.28 m)

Performance

Maximum speed: 190 kts (218 mph, 352 km/h)

Combat radius: 317 nmi (365 mi, 587 km)

Service ceiling: 12,200 ft (3,720 m)

Rate of climb: 1,620 ft/min (8.2 m/s)

Armament

- 20 mm M1973 3-barrel Gatling cannon in the A/A49E-7 turret (750 rounds ammo capacity)
- 2.75 in (70 mm) Hydra 70 or APKWS II rockets – Mounted in LAU-68C/A (7 shot) or LAU-61D/A (19 shot) launchers
- 5 in (127 mm) Zuni rockets – 8 rockets in two 4-round LAU-10D/A launchers
- TOW Missiles – Up to 8 missiles mounted in two 4-round XM65 missile launchers, one on each outboard hard point
- AGM-114 Hellfire missiles – Up to 8 missiles mounted in two 4-round M272 missile launchers, one on each outboard hard point
- AIM-9 Sidewinder anti-aircraft missiles – (total of 2)

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Operational history

United States

During the closing months of the United States' involvement in the Vietnam War, the Marine Corps embarked the AH-1J SeaCobra assigned to HMA-369 (now HMLA-369) aboard the USS DENVER (LPD-9), USS CLEVELAND (LPD-7), and later the USS DUBUQUE (LPD-8), for sea-based interdiction of the Ho Chi Minh Trail in North Vietnam in the vicinity of Hon La (Tiger) Island. These were termed Marine Hunter-Killer (MARHUK) Operations and lasted from June to December 1972.

Marine Cobras took part in the invasion of Grenada, during Operation Urgent Fury in 1983, flying close-support and helicopter escort missions. Two Marine AH-1Ts were shot down and three crew members killed. The Marines also deployed the AH-1 off the coast of Beirut, Lebanon in 1983, during that nation's civil war. The AH-1s were armed with Sidewinder missiles and guns as an emergency air defense measure against the threat of light civil aircraft employed by suicide bombers.

USMC Cobras provided escort in the Persian Gulf in the late 1980s while the Iran-Iraq War was ongoing. The Cobras sank three Iranian patrol boats while losing one AH-1T to Iranian anti-aircraft fire. USMC Cobras from the USS SAIPAN (LHA-2) flew "top cover" during an evacuation of American and other foreign nationals from Liberia in 1990. During the Gulf War, 78 Marine SuperCobras deployed, and flew a total of 1,273 sorties in Iraq with no combat losses; however three AH-1s were lost to accidents during and after the combat operations. The AH-1W units were credited with destroying 97 tanks, 104 armored personal carriers and vehicles, and two anti-aircraft artillery sites during the 100-hour ground campaign.

Marine Cobras provided support for the US humanitarian intervention in Somalia, during Operation Restore Hope in 1992-1993. They were also employed during the US Invasion of Haiti in 1994. USMC Cobras were used in U.S. military interventions in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, and assisted in the rescue of USAF Captain Scott O'Grady, after his F-16 was shot down by a SAM in June 1995.

AH-1 Cobras continue to operate with the U.S. Marine Corps. USMC Cobras were also used in operations throughout the 1990s. USMC Cobras have also served in Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and in Operation Iraqi Freedom in the conflict in Iraq. During the March 2003 Iraq Campaign, 46 of 58 USMC Cobras took battle damage, mostly from infantry-type weapons. While new replacement aircraft were considered as an alternative to major upgrades of the AH-1 fleet, Marine Corps studies showed that an upgrade was the most affordable, most supportable and most effective solution for the Marine Corps light attack helicopter mission so the four bladed AH-1Z Viper is now becoming operational.

https://military.wikia.org/wiki/Bell_AH-1_SuperCobra