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## COMBAT VETERAN HELICOPTER COMING TO MUSEUM OF AVIATION

*The Museum is getting an MH-53 “Pave Low” special operations aircraft (like this one pictured at Wright Patterson AFB, Ohio) which flew in the Vietnam War and most recently in Operation Iraqi Freedom.*



Warner Robins, GA -- One of the largest, most powerful and technologically advanced helicopters being retired from the U.S. Air Force active inventory – the MH-53J/M Pave Low IV -- is being transferred to the Museum of Aviation at Robins Air Force Base. The 37-year-old aircraft is a veteran of combat operations in Southeast Asia, Bosnia and, most recently, Iraq. The aircraft, assigned to the 20<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Squadron at Hurlburt Field, Florida, spent the last eight months deployed overseas supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom. It is due to be flown from Hurlburt Field to Robins AFB on Monday, August 11. Arrival is scheduled for approximately 3:30 pm. The helicopter will eventually be towed down GA Highway 247 to its final resting place in a hangar at the Museum of Aviation.

The aircraft coming to the Museum of Aviation (tail #70-1626) came into the Air Force inventory in 1971 and was immediately deployed to the 56<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Wing in Thailand for missions in the Vietnam War. In 1975 it took part in the Mayaguez hostage rescue incident and in 1996 it helped evacuate U.S. personnel from war-torn Liberia. In 2003 it was part of the first assault mission into Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom. It also took part in the 2004 Battle of Fallujah in Iraq.

The MH-53J/M Pave Low's mission is low-level, long-range, undetected penetration into denied areas, day or night, in adverse weather, for infiltration, exfiltration and resupply of special operations forces. The helicopter has terrain-following and terrain-avoidance radar, forward-looking infrared sensors, an inertial navigation system with global positioning system and a projected map display to enable the crew to follow terrain contours. It also enables the crew to avoid obstacles in adverse weather, making low-level tactical penetration possible.

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The MH-53M Pave Low IV is a J-model that has been modified with the Interactive Defensive Avionics System/Multi-Mission Advanced Tactical Terminal. This system greatly enhances present defensive capabilities of the Pave Low. It provides instant access to the total battlefield situation, using near real-time electronic Order of Battle updates. It also provides a new level of detection avoidance with near real-time threat broadcasts over-the-horizon, so crews can avoid and defeat threats, and replan en route if needed.

Under the Pave Low III program, the Air Force modified nine MH-53Hs and 32 HH-53s for night and adverse weather operations. Modifications included forward-looking infrared, inertial global positioning system, Doppler navigation systems, terrain-following and terrain-avoidance radar, an on-board computer, and integrated avionics to enable precise navigation to and from target areas. The Air Force designated these modified versions as MH-53Js.

The 580<sup>th</sup> Sustainment Group at the Warner Robins Air Logistics Center, Robins Air Force Base, is responsible for the worldwide support and sustainment of all U.S. Air Force helicopters, including the MH-53 special operations fleet.

**General Characteristics:**

**Primary Function:** Long-range infiltration, exfiltration and resupply of special operations forces in day, night or adverse weather conditions

**Contractor:** Sikorsky

**Power Plant:** Two General Electric T64-GE-100 engines

**Thrust:** 4,330 shaft horsepower per engine

**Rotary Diameter:** 72 feet (21.9 meters)

**Length:** 88 feet (28 meters)

**Height:** 25 feet (7.6 meters)

**Speed:** 165 mph (at sea level)

**Ceiling:** 16,000 feet (4,876 meters)

**Maximum Takeoff Weight:** 46,000 pounds (Emergency War Plan allows for 50,000 pounds)

**Range:** 600 nautical miles

**Armament:** Combination of three 7.62 mini guns or three .50 caliber machine guns

**Crew:** Two pilots (officers); two flight engineers and two aerial gunners (enlisted)