



Hurlburt immortalizes MH-53 in air park

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12/6/2007 - **HURLBURT FIELD, Fla.** -- MH-53 PAVE LOW IV helicopter 68-10928 is a worldly aircraft.

It has been to Laos and across Western Europe; it has been war-worn and stuck in the mud in Thailand; it has served proudly in the deserts of Iraq. And at a ceremony Dec. 3 it found its final resting place in the Hurlburt Field air park.

The addition of the PAVE LOW to the air park was a meaningful moment for the crews and maintainers who will see their helicopter decommissioned in October.

"If we're going to retire the PAVE LOW, it's going to have a place of honor and that's right here," said Col. Brad Webb, 1st Special Operations Wing commander and MH-53 pilot.

Hundreds of Hurlburt Airmen, community members and three generations of PAVE LOW operators gathered to honor the helicopter, including Air Force Special Operations Command Commander Lt. Gen. Donny Wurster.

General Wurster said there are two groups in the PAVE LOW community, "the crews who love and fear, and the crew chiefs who love and hate this aircraft."

He called the MH-53 a "remarkable piece of equipment" and noted that PAVE LOW Airmen have earned 13 Air Force Crosses and 140 Silver Stars.

The legacy of tail number 68-10928 came to a close in the hands of Maj. Frank Cooper, 20th Special Operations Squadron, who piloted the MH-53 on its final flight July 29 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"It's an honor to have flown these exceptional aircraft, and an even greater honor to have flown the last flight of 928," Major Cooper said.

Major Cooper completed a triad of MH-53 past, present and future, as retired Senior Master Sgt. Andy Straughn, the first ever PAVE LOW flight engineer, unveiled the dedication plaque with Airman First Class David Mitchell, one of the youngest current PAVE LOW engineers.

The PAVE LOW is the 17th addition to the air park, which celebrates the heritage of special operations aircraft throughout history.



This MH-53 PAVE LOW, tail number 68-10928, has been given a new home in the Hurlburt Field air park. A dedication ceremony Dec. 3 celebrated the aircraft's extensive history and addition to the park. (U.S. Air Force photo/Airman 1st Class Sheila DeVera)