



New MH-53M helicopter exhibit opens at the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force

by Rob Bardua
National Museum of the U.S. Air Force

7/8/2008 - **DAYTON, Ohio** -- Several high ranking officials from Air Force Special Operations Command, industry and the community recently joined personnel from the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force for the official opening of the museum's new MH-53M Pave Low IV helicopter exhibit.

Air Force special operations forces used the Sikorsky MH-53M to covertly enter enemy territory. Capable of operating at day or night or in bad weather, these helicopters conducted long-range, low-level missions to insert, extract, and resupply special operations forces.



DAYTON, Ohio - Sikorsky MH-53M Pave Low IV on display in the Cold War Gallery at the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force. (U.S. Air Force photo)

The museum's MH-53M Pave Low IV helicopter, serial number 68-10357, carried the command element during the mission to rescue American prisoners of war from the Son Tay prison camp near Hanoi, North Vietnam in 1970.

After Vietnam, it flew in many more combat engagements including Operation DESERT STORM and Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. After 38 years of service, its final flight was a combat mission in Iraq on March 28, 2008.

From Iraq, the aircraft was transported to the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force in Dayton, Ohio.

"It's fitting that this aircraft's last mission was flown in combat before it was placed on permanent display at the museum," said Lt. Gen. Donald C. Wurster, commander of Air Force Special Operations Command and an MH-53 pilot. "These machines are born to combat and have proven themselves time and time again."

Flown in nearly every contingency since the Vietnam War, the MH-53 has proved to be extremely durable and highly decorated.

"We checked the records and found that this fleet of only 72 aircraft has racked up a combat record of 140 Silver Stars; an average of two Silver Stars per airframe over their lifetime," said Lt. Gen. Wurster. "It is hard to believe that any other aircraft in Air Force history could have such a remarkable and compelling story of heroism."

National Museum of the U.S. Air Force visitors will be able to learn more about the MH-53M's heroic story now that the aircraft is on permanent display in the museum's Eugene W. Kettering Cold War Gallery.

According to museum director Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Charles D. Metcalf, it is only appropriate that the MH-53M have an honored place within the museum.

"The MH-53M stands as a representative of not only its own rich history, but also as a record copy off which we will launch countless stories of the men and women who have built, flown, crewed and maintained these aircraft," said Metcalf. "We are honored and privileged to have this responsibility."

In September 2008, the remaining MH-53s in the Air Force inventory will be retired, completing this helicopter's long and distinguished Air Force career.

The National Museum of the United States Air Force is located on Springfield Pike, six miles northeast of downtown Dayton. It is open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. seven days a week (closed Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day). Admission and parking are free.

-30-

NOTE TO PUBLIC: For more information, contact the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force at (937) 255-3286.

NOTE TO MEDIA: For more information and/or photos, contact Rob Bardua at the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force Public Affairs Division at (937) 255-1386, or visit <http://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil/factsheets/factsheet.asp?id=12439>.