



# MH-53M Pave Low IV

## Tail Number 68-10928 Dedication Ceremony



**Monday, 3 December 2007**

## HISTORY OF 68-10928

Aircraft 928 is most famous for her participation in the Mayaguez Incident and the Assault on Koh Tang Island, where her crew earned the Silver Star. On 15 May 1975, Knife 22 (928) took part in the effort to infil 253 marines to the USS Holt and Koh Tang Island. At 0600L Knife 22 sustained major battle damage. With one engine inoperable, damage to the main rotor blades, the instrument panel shot out and numerous bullet holes, Knife 22 went down on the Thai coast. At first, it was thought 928 was in Cambodia, and work was started to strip and destroy the aircraft. Later when crews learned 928 was actually in Thailand, they began recovery efforts. When the aircraft was pulled out of the mud, the nose gear and cockpit floor were jerked out. After much hard work, 928 was rebuilt. 928 has also taken part in numerous other missions to include saving a team of 6 during an emergency exfil on 2 Dec 1970, and as the lead aircraft in the effort to recapture the city of Saravane, Laos, on 28 July 1971. As of late, 928 has flown extensively in combat over the skies of Iraq in support of the Global War on Terrorism.

When 928 was assigned to the 601<sup>st</sup> TASS in Sembach, Germany, it was known as the "Head Hunter" because of the artwork on her avionics door. The crew chief SSgt. Paul Richardson had the artwork accomplished by the commissary butcher at Sembach. 928 was well known in the European air show circuit and was featured in a news article entitled "The Monster Did It", referring to the artwork, when 928 had to depart a show early and flipped a lighter aircraft on to its propeller. The Revell Company featured the famed nose art as a decal for one its CH-53C models.

In June of 1981, 928 flew in Paris and Versailles in support of President Reagan at the G7 Summit. She flew the first ever approach and landing on the Versailles Palace grounds. 928 also accompanied Mrs. Reagan to the American Cemetery at Omaha Beach for a Memorial Service on 6 June 1981.

## AIR PARK DEDICATION PLAQUE INSCRIPTION

In May of 1980, the Air Force's newly operational fleet of nine HH-53H Pave Low combat search and rescue helicopters was abruptly transferred to the special operations forces in response to the failed Iranian hostage rescue attempt highlighting the lack of dedicated long-range vertical lift platforms. Throughout the 1980s, the Pave Low fleet grew to 41 helicopters and expanded beyond the 20th Special Operations Squadron at Hurlburt Field to include the 21st and 31st Special Operations Squadrons in Europe and East Asia, as well as a dedicated training squadron, the 551st Special Operations Squadron at Kirtland Air Force Base. The MH-53H evolved into the MH-53J with the fleet expansion and Pave Low development culminated with the fielding of the MH-53M in the late 1990s. During its operational life, the red-scarved men who flew the Pave Low and the maintainers who cared for them conducted countless missions of national importance. Of strategic significance, they executed important roles in the invasion of Panama in 1989; led the first missions into Iraq in 1991 and 2003; rescued a downed US pilot in Iraq in 1991; evacuated the American Embassy in Liberia in 1996; led the successful rescue missions for both US pilots shot down in Serbia in 1999; conducted the longest-ever helicopter rescues at sea in the North Atlantic in 1989 and 2002; flew daring raids in Afghanistan in 2001-2002; seized strategic oil pumping facilities in Iraq in 2003; and continued to lead scores of dangerous missions in Iraq from 2003 until the end of Pave Low operations. Fitting of the rich history of the beloved "steel horse," during the sunset of her service life, the MH-53 and her crews flew in combat for the final seven years of its heroic service.

This tail (68-10928) flew its final mission in Iraq in defense of America against sworn enemies of the United States.

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