



NEWS RELEASE

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MUSEUM OF AVIATION DISPLAYS HELICOPTER THAT FLEW IN THREE WARS

Visitors to the Museum of Aviation in Warner Robins, Georgia can say hello to a Super Jolly Green Giant that weighs over 30,000 pounds. Capable of flying in total darkness and finding its way into and out of dangerous hostile territory, the giant is a 38-year-old MH-53 special operations helicopter that has been around the world from Thailand to Europe to Iraq and has seen combat action in three wars.



The large Air Force Sikorsky special operations helicopter now hovers 15 feet above the floor of the Museum's Century of Flight Hangar – in tribute to the thousands of hours it spent conducting long-range, low-level missions to insert, extract, and resupply special operations forces. In its dark gray paint scheme and with guns pointing out the back and side, it still looks as ominous as it did when it flew its last combat mission in Iraq in late June of 2008.

Before flying in Iraq, the aircraft took part in combat operations in Southeast Asia and Bosnia. 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 saw action in the 2004 Battle of Fallujah in Iraq. The aircraft was last assigned to the 20th Special Operations Squadron at Hurlburt Field, Florida, and spent its last eight months on active duty deployed to Iraq. In August of 2008 it was flown to Robins Air Force and towed down GA highway 247 to the Museum to be retired.

MH-53 helicopters were originally HH-53 “Super Jolly Green Giants” used by the U.S. Air Force in the Southeast Asia War. Over the years, however, they received many upgrades and improvements. After the 1960s, they were completely re-skinned and had their engines and rotors replaced. Along with these improvements came a new designation, MH-53 (“M” for Multi-mission and “H” for helicopter).

The most significant enhancement to the Super Jollies was the Pave Low program, which modified them for operating at night or during bad weather. Equipped with forward-looking infrared (FLIR) sensors, inertial global positioning systems (GPS), Doppler radar navigation systems, and terrain-following and terrain-avoidance radar, the MH-53 could fly clandestine, low-level missions in any weather, day or night.

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)

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