

18th December 2008

Uncle Sam's Christmas Bonus

The Royal Air Force Museum Cosford yesterday took delivery of an extra special Christmas gift from the United States Air Force, its latest exhibit - the Sikorsky MH-53 Pave Low helicopter.

The helicopter arrived at 1.00pm in an RAF C-17 aircraft from 99 Squadron, flown by Captain, Wing Commander Simon Edwards, Co-Pilot, Squadron Leader Keith Hewitt and Air Loadmaster, Squadron Leader Dave Thompson. Perfect weather conditions meant the landing took place on time and without a glitch.

The MH-53 will enjoy a short period of conservation and refurbishment in the Museum's Michael Beetham Conservation Centre before taking its rightful place in Cosford's multi-award winning National Cold War Exhibition in Spring 2009.

The RAF Museum is now home to the only MH53 Pave Low helicopter in the UK. One of only 41 MH53Js used by American Special Ops Forces in the first Gulf War – the main role of the helicopter was Combat Search and Rescue in Iraq and Bosnia-Herzegovina as part of the United Nations Task Force supplying not only military assistance but also humanitarian aid in both arenas.

Alex Medhurst, General Manager says:

"Witnessing the C-17 flying in yesterday was spectacular. There was a real excitement amongst Museum staff at its arrival and the sheer number of enthusiasts who came to watch, demonstrates the significance of the landing and the delivery of our new helicopter, the Pave Low".

It took almost one hour to safely unload the MH-53. When safely on its way to the Conservation Centre, the C-17 took flight back to Brize Norton, at approximately 3.30pm.

The Royal Air Force Museum Cosford is open daily from 10am – 6pm. Entry to the Museum and parking are FREE. For further information, please call the Royal Air Force Museum on 01902 376200 or visit the Museum website www.rafmuseum.org.

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Notes to Editors

- Captain, Wing Commander Simon Edwards took command of 99 Squadron in May 2008. This is his second C-17 tour having previously been Flight Commander Operations. He has

also flown C-130Ks and is a Tucano QFI. Prior to taking command of the Squadron he completed ACSC followed by a tour in MOD DJtCap as the AT / AAR SME.

- Co-Pilot, Squadron Leader Keith Hewitt joined the RAF in 1968 as an Apprentice Radar Fitter and has also spent time working in Air Traffic Control. Following pilot training he flew the Jetstream, Vulcan, Bulldog, VC10 and C-17. A member of the initial cadre of pilots trained on the C-17 he remains 99 Squadron's most experienced pilot having amassed 4760 hrs on type.
- Air Loadmaster, Squadron Leader Dave Thompson is 2IC 99 Squadron. This is his second C-17 tour, having previously been part of the initial cadre of aircrew that helped to introduce the aircraft into RAF service. An Air Loadmaster, he has also flown on C-130K and Tri-Star aircraft.
- Royal Air Force Museum, Cosford, Shifnal Shropshire, TF11 8UP
- Photos available on request
- Open daily between 1000 – 1800 (Last admission 1700)
- Free admission and parking
- For further information and all media enquiries please contact Karen Crick on 01902 376 208 or karen.crick@rafmuseum.org