



20th Special Operations Squadron deactivates, green hornets say goodbye to Hurlburt

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1st Special Operations Wing Public Affairs

10/23/2008 - **HURLBURT FIELD, Fla.** -- Five decades of Green Hornet history came to a close amid a sea of red scarves when the 20th Special Operations Squadron was deactivated during a ceremony at the Air Park here Oct. 17.

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But while the chapter is closed for now, the squadron will be activated once again in the near future at Cannon Air Force Base flying CV-22's.

"The interesting thing about today is this culture is not going away," said Col. Brad Webb, commander of the 1st Special Operations Wing.

The squadron began as the 20th Helicopter Squadron in 1956 flying H-21 cargo helicopters for Tactical Air Command performing traditional helicopter missions. The H-21s were replaced by the CH-3Es, also known as "Jolly Green Giants", and the squadron deployed to Southeast Asia in 1965 conducting unconventional warfare and special operations missions. In Southeast Asia, they were augmented by UH-1F light utility helicopters and UH-1P gunships, allowing them to not only hover, but to also "sting," whereupon they adopted the nickname "Green Hornet" that still sticks today.

The 20th Helicopter Squadron was deactivated for the first time in 1972, and was reborn at Hurlburt Field in 1976 as the 20th Special Operations Squadron, continuing the unconventional warfare and special operations mission using UH-1N gunships and CH-3Es. The CH-3's were replaced by HH-53's in 1980, giving them longer range and heavier lift capabilities. The squadron's aircraft were replaced two more times, in 1988 to the MH-53J and in 1999 to the MH-53M, bringing more technology and superior avionics with each upgrade.

During their past 32 years at Hurlburt Field, the 20th SOS has conducted operations all over the world, from Operation JUST CAUSE in Panama and Operations PROVIDE PROMISE and DENY FLIGHT in Bosnia-Herzegovina to Operation DESERT SHIELD and Operation DESERT STORM, and of course, Operation ENDURING FREEDOM and Operation IRAQI FREEDOM today.

"This is a day of victory, a day of celebration and a day to reflect the remarkable achievements of the squadron and the Pave Low and on the exciting new chapter of the 20th SOS," said Col. Dennis Pannell, commander of the 1st Special Operations Group.

While the 20th SOS has a rich and proud history, the focus mainly focuses on the operations and the capability of the aircraft, as evidenced by the multitude of battle streamers on the squadron's guidon.

But, according to Lt. Col. Gene Becker, commander of the 20th SOS, the capability of the aircraft pales in comparison to the people who've flown them,.

"Throughout the history of the squadron, the common thread is the people. As the song says, 'only the names have changed,'" said Colonel Becker.

Following the casing of the guidon, Colonel Webb unveiled a plaque naming the 12 Green Hornets who've made the ultimate sacrifice in support of their nation, which will be displayed at the Hurlburt Field chapel.

"We stand here today because of the giants named on this plaque," said Colonel Webb. "This culture will live on in the CV-22, AC-130H, AC-130U and (all of our new and future weapon systems). We stand today on the shoulders of these giants to continue this culture and continue the mission."

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