



Hawg Heaven

Photography by Rick Llinares



At Moody AFB, Ga., airmen hone CAS and CSAR to perfection.

Moody AFB, Ga., in Valdosta near the Florida border, is one of the Air Force's most diverse bases, hosting fighter and rescue units. The 23rd Wing comprises A-10 Warthogs, HC-130J Combat King and HC-130N/P King refueling aircraft, and HH-60 Pave Hawk combat search and rescue helicopters. The pairing of fighters and helos is deliberate: A-10s often protect CSAR forces on a rescue or recovery operation, and the units have opportunities to practice this essential coordination by being based with each other. Most of the Moody aircraft are seasoned vets with years of hard wear, and USAF is either thinking of or actively moving toward retiring them, but members of Congress so far remain unconvinced—particularly about the A-10.

Here, a pair of 74th Fighter Squadron A-10Cs pull a hard turn, while the lead aircraft pops flares. The A-10 can carry a wide variety of stores, and these Warthogs carry a typically varied payload, including air-to-air Sidewinder missiles, air-to-ground Maverick missiles, BDU-33 practice bombs, rocket pods, and a Litening targeting pod.





1|1 Over the Grand Bay Bombing and Gunnery Range, SSgt. Jay Bossy fires a .50-caliber machine gun from the gunnery window of an HH-60G Pave Hawk assigned to the 41st Rescue Squadron. *1|2* Security forces SrA. Randall Williams (left) and A1C Taylor Cyr stand guard in front of an HC-130J, the newest type. *1|3* Pararescuemen—often called PJs, for short—simulate the rescue of a downed airman on the range.



1 On the Moody flight line, SSgt. Mario Ortiz Jr., A1C Cameron Miller, A1C Alex Trillana, and A1C Wesley Yeary (l-r) discuss maintenance of an HC-130J of the 71st Rescue Squadron. The tankers extend the range of rescue helicopters into and out of the battle zone. *2* A four-ship of A-10Cs of the 74th Fighter Squadron line up for takeoff. The shark mouth and "FT" tail code—seen in photo 3—are reminders of the unit's heritage from World War II as part of the "Flying Tigers" 23rd Fighter Group. *3* A *Pave Hawk* hovers above the runway as an A-10 taxis past. *4* A1C Joseph Wilson and SSgt. Randy Jones of the 41st Aircrew Flight Equipment Unit preflight gear for an HH-60 crew, including insulated flight suits and radio headsets. *5* SrA. D. Martin gets ready to hook an air conditioner to a 71st Rescue Squadron HC-130J prior to an engine run.



111 A-10Cs of the 74th FS pop flares and bank hard, revealing the “false canopy” painted on the aircraft’s underside to confuse enemies about the aircraft’s attitude. **121** In the A-10’s “teeth” is its unique weapon—a 30 mm cannon designed to shred armored vehicles. The thunderous roar of the A-10’s gun is often enough to send enemies fleeing. **131** SSgt. Jean Vega Guilbe (left) watches for bad guys after his Pave Hawk sets down during an exercise at Grand Bay. At right is Capt. John Tucciarone. **141** Ortiz removes intake covers from an HC-130J in preparation for a mission.



1



4



2



3



1



2



4



3

1|1 A parajumper is hoisted by a 41st Rescue Squadron HH-60G Pave Hawk on the Grand Bay complex. PJs must be skilled in parachuting into dangerous terrain, providing paramedic care to the injured, defending themselves and their charges with small arms, and in operating equipment aboard the

Pave Hawk. Many USAF decorations for valor during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have gone to parajumpers, whose motto is "That Others May Live." 1|2 A menacing brace of A-10s line up for the camera. Designed for Cold War battle against hordes of Soviet tanks, A-10s have been involved in almost every US conflict

since Desert Storm in 1991, sometimes surviving heavy battle damage. 1|3 TSgt. Ryan Goedde inspects and preps a .50-caliber gun on a 41st Rescue Squadron Pave Hawk. The corrugated tube directs casings away from sensitive gear on the aircraft. *1|4* A crew chief carries safety pins pulled before an HC-130J mission.



1



2



4



3

11 TSgt. Mike Shepherd (left) and A1C Sterling Vaughan work on an A-10C engine on the Moody flight line. *12* Capt. Eric LaPrade prepares to taxi an A-10 to takeoff. The A-10C got several substantial upgrades in recent years. The “C” indicates this aircraft received a digital upgrade

that allows more sensors and weapons to be carried. A number of A-10s have also been rewinged. *13* SrA. William Bennett (left) and MSgt. Jeff Craig repair the engine on a Pave Hawk of the 347th Rescue Group. *14* Three pararescuemen take up defensive positions on the Grand Bay

range after fast-roping from a Pave Hawk. Downed airmen are treated with suspicion and must give correct challenge words before getting a lift back to safety, to prevent imposters from coming aboard the aircraft.



1



2



3



4

11 Bossy (left) and Vega Guilbe sit in the back of a *Pave Hawk*. The cramped quarters of the *HH-60* has long been suboptimum for rescue work, and USAF has tried to replace the type a couple of times, once with a much larger *CH-47* derivative. The next CSAR platform will be only moderately larger. *12* An *A-10C* strikes a fearsome pose, sporting *Maverick* missiles. Though the *A-10* is officially the *Thunderbolt II*, the moniker “*Warthog*” has been proudly borne by *A-10* pilots and crews for decades. *13* A *Pave Hawk* crew shows off the specialties of the talent onboard: pararescuemen, pilots, and a gunner. *14* *A-10s* of the 74th FS release flares as they break away. *A-10s* are back in action in Iraq, conducting strike and close air support missions against *ISIS* targets. If the combined rescue team must go into action, they’ll be well-prepared from their time in Georgia. ✪