

## PAVE HAWK Mission in Iraq Saves Special Ops Personnel

Air Force HH-60G helicopters from the 310th Rescue Squadron launches from forward deployed location in Iraq.

A U.S. Air Force combat search and rescue team saved the lives of two critically wounded U.S. Army special operations soldiers despite severe weather conditions on April 6 about five miles south of Baghdad.

After contacting the Joint Search and Rescue Center at a desert air base in the Arabian Gulf region, the Special Operations Command Rescue Coordination Center coordinated and executed the emergency evacuation of the special operations ground troops.

Two HH-60G PAVE HAWK helicopters and two A-10 Thunderbolt IIs launched from an air base in southern Iraq, and an HC-130P King refueler launched from another air base in the region. The JSRC also had two A-10s, already airborne on a separate mission, roll in to help cover the helicopters. Additionally, U.S. Army helicopters from a nearby base were put on alert status in case backup firepower was needed during the evacuation.

As the team flew to the evacuation site, the aircrew of the PAVE HAWK helicopters learned the soldiers were in critical condition. They coordinated with a special operations MC-130E Combat Talon I to meet them at An Najaf, 75 miles south of Baghdad, to set up a patient transfer transload from the helicopters to the fixed-wing aircraft. The MC-130E had a flight surgeon and two medical technicians on board to treat and stabilize the wounded en route to an advanced medical facility.

Those involved in the operation were able to overcome the blowing sand and dust, which allowed about a half-mile of

visibility, and a flying ceiling of only 3,500 feet to recover the wounded soldiers and transfer them to the MC-130E at An Najaf.

The soldiers were transferred to a hospital in Kuwait, where it was determined that they have a 95 percent chance of survival thanks to the joint efforts of the Air Force, Army and special operations forces.