

Harrier Finds Final Home in Fort Worth Aviation Museum



Retired AV-8B II+ Harrier, BUNO 165357, was inducted into its final landing spot at the Fort Worth Aviation Museum on May 13.

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FORT WORTH, Texas – After years of soaring through the skies, a retired AV-8B II+ Harrier found its new home May 13 at the Fort Worth Aviation Museum, ready to inspire a new generation of aviators and engineers.

A collaborative effort between the AV-8B Weapons Systems Program Office (PMA-257), Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, Marine Aircraft Group 14 and Marine Attack Squadron (VMA) 231 ensured the retired Harrier was demilitarized and safe for display, ready for its new role as a museum exhibit.

VMA-231's Capt. Zach "Yoda" Moore flew the aircraft to the museum initially performing a fly-by at the observation area before vertically landing.

"Of over 40 aircraft [at the Fort Worth Aviation Museum], this is one of the most unique and interesting aircraft to have been flown into our museum," said Ben Guttery, the museum's collections manager. "This aircraft's extensive combat history is very important to us and will be greatly appreciated by the public. The AV-8B II+ will eventually be bookend displayed next to the AV-8A demonstrating the many changes of the Harrier from when it first went into service with the U.S. Marines."

This aircraft, BUNO 165357, originally entered service with the U.S. Marine Corps as a Day Attack variant on Sept. 16, 1985. It was stricken and remanufactured reentering service on June 12, 1998 as an AV-8B Harrier II+. It flew with Marine Attack Squadrons (VMAs) 223, 231 and 542, logging 995 recorded combat flight hours and a combined total of 8,955 flight hours in support of multiple Marine Expeditionary Unit deployments, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom deployments, humanitarian efforts and Request for Forces.

Pablo "Louie" Sanchez, PMA-257 logistics assistant program manager and museum task force lead, said, "The Marine demilitarization crew led by Chief Warrant Officer 2 Neil Vislosky has done a phenomenal job in preparation for this event to include coordination with the Marines of Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 41 and Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 112 at Joint Reserve Base Fort Worth demonstrating professionalism every step of the way to make this a successful event."

According to its official website, the Fort Worth Aviation Museum has the "most touchable warbirds in North Texas" and aims to preserve, inspire and educate. The museum's vision is to celebrate and showcase the people and aviation accomplishments of North Texas, in a museum and science center that can preserve and display our heritage, educate the community, and inspire young people to stay in school and achieve their full potential. Its slogan, "Giving wings to

youth and community through our aviation roots," highlights the importance of Harrier's preservation initiatives.

The AV-8B Harrier II+ is a vertical/short takeoff and landing, light attack jet used by the U.S. Marine Corps, and the Italian and Spanish navies. In service for four decades, its mission is to destroy surface targets and escort friendly aircraft in austere conditions during expeditionary, joint and combined operations.

The platform provides close and deep air support, including armed reconnaissance and air interdiction, and conducts offensive and defensive anti-air warfare. The AV-8B Harrier II+ can operate from carriers and other suitable seagoing platforms, advanced bases, expeditionary airfields and remote tactical landing sites offering versatility, firepower and mobility to effectively counter enemies engaged by U.S. and allied ground forces.