



309th Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Group



309 AMARG

Renewing the Force...

Vol. 3 Issue. 7

Supplement to the Desert Lightning News

September 3, 2009

WANTED by the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office

Former Marine HH-1N will be "deputized" for California fire suppression, search & rescue, and drug eradication

Members of the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office took a road-trip worth remembering when they visited the 309th Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Group a week ago to "extradite" a recently-retired U.S. Marine Corps HH-1N helicopter.

"For a little more than the cost of gas, we acquired a \$6.5 million piece of equipment as the result of a transfer by the General Services Administration and the U.S. Navy," said Sergeant Alex Tipolt, Aviation Unit Supervisor for the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's department.

Stationed at Camp Pendleton before retiring to 309 AMARG in Jan. 2009, HH-1N (Huey), Bureau No. 158286, flew maritime special operations and command and control missions, proving its versatility and capability as an assault transport, aero-medical evacuation and search and recovery platform in varying weather conditions.

"After reassembly and a few minor adjustments, we expect the airframe to be airborne by October," said Tipolt. "And, once deployed, our aviation unit will use the helicopter for wilderness search and rescue efforts; fire suppression; and marijuana eradication. I expect we'll also use it for tactical insertions by our S.W.A.T. team, and with Santa Barbara's off shore islands it'll definitely prove useful in ocean and over water rescues."

The Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office now operates two OH-58 helicopters, a Cessna 206 and is currently restoring a UH-1 "Super Huey."

According to Sr. Deputy George DeLuca, a ten-year veteran of the unit and pilot for the department, this is the first law enforcement agency in the U.S. to own and operate a HH-1N model helicopter.

"This is a real ground breaking experience for law enforcement and our department is setting a real precedence with this acquisition," said Mr. DeLuca. "And to think it all began with a phone call simply looking for a spare Huey N-type helicopter nose. The timing was apparently right and the Navy was retiring the exact type of air frame we wanted and needed," added the deputy.

Prior to withdrawal, an AMARG reclamation team prepped the aircraft for a safe overland transport to California.



A former U.S. Marine HH-1N helicopter prepares to head west to the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office in Santa Barbara, Calif. The helicopter will be utilized for wilderness search and rescue efforts, fire suppression, and marijuana eradication.

"We drained all of the hydraulic fluids and fuels and provided the appropriate transportation paperwork," said Mr. Timothy Moore, a reclamation work lead for the 577th Commodities Reclamation Squadron (577 CMRS).

Col. Tom Schneider, the commander of 309AMARG watched as crews from the 578th Storage and Disposal Squadron (578 SDS) lifted the

helicopter off the desert onto the department's flatbed.

"The Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office appreciated getting this additional asset for firefighting and search & rescue efforts," said Colonel Schneider. "There's also a possibility the department may withdraw a second helicopter next year as well."

"Extreme thanks to everyone here at the Air Force's 309 AMARG; and special thanks to Chief Joe Kuykendall, Mr. Tim Horn, and Mr. Anthony Mazzone, from the Navy's Inventory Control Point," said Tipolt. "Acquiring this helicopter is phenomenal, and it's going to increase our department's capabilities on behalf of the people of Santa Barbara County!"

It was definitely an "all-grins and thumb's up" moment for the department, as evidenced by Sergeant Tipolt's comments

Mr. Tipolt also wishes to add a "special thanks" to Sheriff Bill Brown, Commander Laz Salinas and Sr. Deputy George DeLuca, Office of the Sheriff, County of Santa Barbara in Santa Barbara, Calif. for their instrumental efforts in initiating and allowing the transfer.

AH-1 parts help keep Forestry Service’s helicopters fighting...to suppress fires

Seven Army AH-1s (Cobras), preserved here since 1995, provided more than \$1 million worth of critical parts to the United States Department of Agriculture’s United States Forestry Service (USFS) in July.

Authorized for removal by the U.S. Army and the Defense Reutilization and Marketing Office (DRMO), the high-dollar parts, primarily helicopter engines, transmissions and drive shaft assemblies, will directly support two USFS “Firewatch” helicopters, former U.S. Army Bell 209 AH-1 Cobra attack helicopters retrofitted with a combination of new technologies for small fire detection.

Mr. John Browning, contract representative for Firewatch and DynCorp International Program Manager, traveled to AMARG to physically review and retrieve the helicopter parts. DynCorp is responsible for all aviation, both fixed-wing and

helicopter, maintenance and repair for the USFS.

“Equipped with forward looking infrared (FLIR) systems and low-light color cameras, these Firewatch helicopters allow fire crews to see hotspots the size of a quarter from 8,000 feet in the air. By “dropping” laser markers we can identify exact location of the hot spots with Lat/Long position,” said Mr. Browning.

With a datalink, the Firewatch helicopters relay information via real-time video and topographical maps to firefighters on the ground and in command and control centers, pinpointing aerial drop areas, therefore keeping fires smaller and less destructive. For a demo video and more information, go to www.firewatchcobra.com.

“By withdrawing these parts from helicopters stored here at AMARG, we’re able to keep the cost down for the Forestry

Service,” said Mr. Browning. “For around \$35K, we pulled more than \$1 million worth of parts.”

“We can put these parts we’re reclaiming right back into service on the Firewatch helicopters with just a minimal inspection,” said Browning, impressed with the way the aircraft were preserved for the last 14 years.

Mr. Browning praised workers of the 577th Commodities Reclamation Squadron, the 309th Support Squadron’s Woodmill, and Mr. Rob Raine, an AMARG Workloader, for their outstanding customer service, dedication and professionalism.

Being in the middle of fire season, Mr. Browning was working within an extremely limited time frame.

“These workers went way above and beyond the call of duty for myself and the Department of Forestry,” he said.



Advertising

AGE facility gets safer, friendlier containment area thanks to self-help crew

A talented crew of three, assigned to the 309th Support Squadron (309 SPTS) here, recently completed modifications to a secondary spill containment pad located in AMARG's Aerospace Ground Equipment (AGE) storage facility.

The pad performed well as originally designed; however, the height of the barriers presented a problem for equipment drivers when parking heavily laden bowzers in the containment area, a mandated environmental requirement.

The abrupt elevation of the containment area's entry point curbed ease of access, damaged tires and the steep angle between the tow vehicle and the bowser made unhitching a difficult and strength-challenging task.

Enter AMARG's self-help "can-do" crew who revamped the ramp in less than two-weeks. The existing curb was removed with a 90-pound jackhammer, and a new curb formed and poured.

The new design was engineered by Mr. Larry Benkert, a heavy

equipment operator for 309 SPTS's engineering flight.

"For around \$800 in materials we now have a much safer way to park and store AGE's bowzers," said Mr. John Atkinson, engineering equipment operator supervisor for 309 SPTS.

This was the twelfth self-help job the crew has completed since the beginning of the year and it doesn't appear that they are slowing down. Job number thirteen, a re-do of damaged sidewalks to allow for more fluid

movement of tool boxes in the preservation area (Flush Farm), was finished last week.

Containment curb (inset photo) prior to the "user friendly" modification by AMARG's self-help team.

Below, the newly designed entry point allows for a smooth, easy transition into spill containment area. Members of the self-help team are Mr. John Atkinson, Mr. Larry Benkert, and Mr. Ray Samorano, all assigned to the 309th Support Squadron's Engineering Flight.



Advertising

Advertising