

949

**SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA**



**FROM:** Bob Doyle, Sheriff-Coroner-PA

**SUBMITTAL DATE:**  
7/11/06

**SUBJECT:** Approval of the Purchase of a New Eurocopter AS350-B3 Helicopter.

**RECOMMENDED MOTION:** Move that the Board of Supervisors:

1. Authorize the Purchasing Agent to purchase an AS350-B3 helicopter from American Eurocopter for a cost not to exceed \$3,598,409 without securing competitive bids, in accordance with Ordinance 459.4
2. Authorize the Purchasing Agent to work with the County Executive Officer to propose the financing for the purchase of the AS350-B3 helicopter.

**BACKGROUND:** The Sheriff's Aviation Unit currently has a fleet of two Bell OH58A+ ex-military helicopters, three Eurocopter AS350-B3 helicopters and one Cessna 182P fixed-wing airplane. The two Bell OH58A+ ex-military helicopters acquired from the military in 1996, under the 1208 program, are at the end of their lifespan. These helicopters entered into military service in 1969 and 1971 respectively. The military has abandoned their support of the Bell OH58A+ and certifiable parts and service manuals are no longer available. The lack of availability of key parts or components for these aircraft will soon ground them permanently.

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*Janis K Conklin for*  
Bob Doyle, Sheriff-Coroner-PA

<b>FINANCIAL DATA</b>	Current F.Y. Total Cost:	N/A	In Current Year Budget:	N/A
	Current F.Y. Net County Cost:	\$0	Budget Adjustment:	N/A
	Annual Net County Cost:	\$0	For Fiscal Year:	FY 2007-08

<b>SOURCE OF FUNDS:</b> Financing and other funding sources will be explored through local, state, and federal grants.	<b>Positions To Be Deleted Per A-30</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	<b>Requires 4/5 Vote</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**C.E.O. RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE.**

**County Executive Office Signature** *Sally A. Deaton*

Purchasing: *[Signature]*  
Assistant Director

Departmental Concurrence

Policy  
 Policy  
 Consent  
 Consent  
 Dept't Recomm.:  
 Per Exec. Ofc.:

The lead-time for replacing one of these helicopters is a minimum of 18 month, or the first quarter of 2008. Since time is of the essence, the Board on June 27, 2006, during discussion of the FY 2006-07 budget, requested that the Sheriff's Department return with this purchase request.

The Bell OH58A+ ex-military helicopters operate under legal restrictions imposed by federal law and FAA regulations that limit the use of the aircraft. The FAA does not recognize ex-military helicopters as aircraft, therefore, these helicopters fall under the public use category of operations. This has imposed strict operational limitations on the aircraft. The use of the OH58A+ has been relegated to daytime patrol operations only, and the Bell OH58A+ is not suitable for high altitude operations. Further, only mission essential flight crew members are allowed on board the aircraft, simply, our mission requirements have out grown the design capability of the OH58A+ aircraft.

Operating costs are slightly higher for the Eurocopter AS350-B3 (\$340 per flight hour) versus the Bell OH58A (\$325 per flight hour), due to the larger engine and greater fuel consumption of the Eurocopter AS350-B3. Replacing the Bell OH58A+ helicopter with a new Eurocopter AS350-B3 helicopter will enhance our overall operation by streamlining our operations. It will eliminate duplicate costs for training and recency of experience requirements for both pilots and maintenance personnel. Unlike the Bell OH58A+, the Eurocopter AS350-B3 can facilitate carrying people and cargo, and there is sufficient capacity within the aircraft to install a wide array of equipment for enhanced operational capability, e.g. FLIR, Nitesun, Rescue Hoist, Air Conditioning, etc. As a result, some cost in deploying the Eurocopter can be recovered for mutual aid, OES, search and rescue and other reimbursable operations.

**Current Deployment:**

Current scheduling has the OH58A flying 9 shifts per week with the helicopter averaging 4-5 hours flight time per shift. If flown on that schedule continuously for the entire year, the total would be slightly more than 2,100 hours of flight time per year. In actuality, with down time for sick days, vacation, training and other interruptions to service, the average is closer to 800-1,000 hours flight time per year. Sheriff's Aviation has staffing for four flight crews. Our shifts are assigned with one crew assigned to desert patrol. This occurs in the first half of the week (Sun-Wed) on a mid-shift (1300-2300 hours) and one night shift (1700-0200 hours). There is an overlap of desert and county crews on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday each week. Any of the crews may respond to calls anywhere in the county at any time based on need. However, exigent circumstances notwithstanding, the desert flight crew is expected to stay in their primary response area for the duration of their shift.

**Helicopter Selection:**

The Sheriff currently operates three Eurocopter AS350-B3 helicopters. Our experience with the Eurocopter AS350-B3 Astars has proven them to be easily maintained, safe and reliable aircraft. They have shown themselves to be perfectly suited to fulfill the Sheriff's varied missions and are not subject to the restrictions placed on their use, as are the ex-military Bell OH58A+ aircraft.

We conducted extensive research and flight-testing when selecting the Eurocopter AS350-B3 helicopter during the 1999 purchase process. Time and experience have proven the AS350-B3 to be the correct helicopter for our mission. Nothing new has emerged in the industry to change the status of the AS350-B3 as the most effective and capable tool for our use.

Additionally, the updated design of the Eurocopter makes it a much more crashworthy aircraft, providing a much safer environment in which our personnel must work.

**Price Reasonableness:**

The price for the AS350-B3 has increased about \$440,000 from the price the County paid in FY 05-06. This is a result of two factors: a 4% increase by Eurocopter, and the Sheriff's decision to have Eurocopter purchase a number of expensive equipment components, which on the last helicopter purchase we bought directly from the manufacturer and had sent to Eurocopter for installation in the aircraft. While there was cost savings involved in buying direct from the manufacturer, it did create problems when the vendors required payment upon shipment, which was several months prior to the funding of the loan.

Eurocopter charges the same price for its airframe to all law enforcement agencies. Considering that the Sheriff's Aviation Fleet now has three Eurocopter AS350-B3 helicopters, and the maintenance and training involved in overall operation, it would not be cost effective to purchase a helicopter from any other source.

**Operating Costs:**

There will be no operating cost incurred in FY 06-07. However, increased operability and expanded use of the Sheriff's Aviation fleet, especially at night, will necessitate the need for additional staffing and radios which will be addressed in the FY 07-08 budget request.

**Funding Considerations:**

The Sheriff's Department anticipates financing the purchase of this helicopter. However, the Sheriff's Department and the County Executive Office will explore the possibility of securing Capital funding through State and Federal grants, and will look to local revenue assistance for on-going operating costs.

**AS350-B3 HELICOPTER AND SELECTED MISSION EQUIPMENT PRICE LIST**

	<b>PRICE</b>
AS350-B3 Standard Configuration and Airframe Equipment	\$2,206,029.00
Mission Equipment (FLIR, Hoist, Spotlights, Aero Computers)	\$ 750,003.00
Avionics (Communication and Navigational Equipment)	<u>\$ 383,558.00</u>
Subtotal	\$3,339,590.00
7.75% CA Sales Tax	<u>\$ 258,818.23</u>
Total	\$3,598,408.23

In response to the Board's inquiry regarding VIP use of the helicopter, the Sheriff's Department reviewed the Aviation daily flight activity reports for the last six months. The Sheriff's Department found that the Sheriff utilized it twice during this period within the county, including during the press conference to address the high profile jewelry arrest in the desert.

In addition, the Aviation unit provides flights to support major critical incidents and for officials from various governmental agencies. These missions are incorporated into normal flight operations.