

**Report of the Chief Constable to the Chair and Members  
of the Strategic Air Support Panel  
12<sup>th</sup> May 2011**

**Executive & Presenting Officer: Mr David Pickard, Assistant Chief  
Constable (Territorial Operations)**

**Status: For information**

**Air Operations Unit Performance Update**

**1. Purpose**

1.1 This report is to provide Members with an update on the performance and finance of the Air Operations Unit.

**2. Recommendations**

2.1 That Members note the contents of the report.

**3. Reasons**

3.1 During the period January to March 2011, the aircraft has flown for 198 hours, attended 545 incidents and made 107 arrests. In the same period in 2010 the aircraft flew 212 hours, attended 689 incidents and made 86 arrests. This was a similar trend in the last report which also showed we were attending fewer incidents but were making more arrests.

3.2 A selection of highlighted incidents, from this period are shown below:

Hartlepool District

- On 14<sup>th</sup> January, the aircraft deployed to assist units to find two males who had abandoned a car in Allerton Close after stealing number plates from another vehicle. Acting on information from a dog section officer, the crew located the two males, directed officers to their location and they were arrested.

- On 19<sup>th</sup> January, the aircraft was targeted by a youth with a powerful laser which was shone repeatedly at the aircraft from an address in Gray Street. The crew identified the premises and officers were directed. The male was arrested.
- On 7<sup>th</sup> February, the aircraft deployed to a burglary at Corus in Hartlepool. The crew identified 3 suspects making off towards Greatham. Two suspects hid in a farm complex and the third ran up a track. Officers were directed to their locations and all 3 were arrested.

#### Middlesbrough District

- On 22<sup>nd</sup> January, the aircraft was deployed to search for a male who had threatened to kill a female with a knife. The male was located, ARV officers were directed to his location and he was safely arrested.
- On 11<sup>th</sup> January, the aircraft was deployed to a report of a suicidal male threatening to jump from the Metz Bridge. The male was located, officers were directed and downlink provided to control room. The male was safely talked down.
- On 14<sup>th</sup> March, the aircraft deployed to a report of two males trying to steal a car in Oldbury Grove, Hemlington. Officers arrived and arrested one male as the aircraft was travelling; the second suspect went to ground. The crew found the second male hiding under a patio table in someone's back garden. Officers were directed to his location and he was arrested.

#### Redcar and Cleveland District

- On 17<sup>th</sup> January, the aircraft was en-route back to the airfield when they self deployed to a pursuit at Newton under Roseberry towards Pinchinthorpe. The two occupants abandoned the vehicle and ran across fields, eventually hiding in a plantation near Flatts Lane. The aircraft contained them, and directed dog section and other officers onto their location and they were arrested.
- On 2<sup>nd</sup> January, the aircraft was deployed to locate a vulnerable suicidal male on railway lines in Saltburn. The male was located by the aircraft in the grounds of a school and officers were directed to him; after a long foot chase, he was detained.
- On 5<sup>th</sup> March, the aircraft crew provided digital downlink images for the control room supervision regarding a major fire at Old Hall Farm in Lackenby. This allowed the control room to best allocate resources and liaise with other services with up to date information.

#### Stockton District

- On 22<sup>nd</sup> January, the aircraft self deployed to an assistance call at the Griffin public house after a large fight had erupted. Cover and downlink was provided until enough officers arrived to deal with the situation safely.
- On Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> February, the aircraft deployed to a major incident when an emergency was declared at Conocco Phillips. Staff had reported feeling unwell due to a suspected leak. The aircraft provided downlink for the command room as they managed the incident, assisting in an eventual safe resolution.

- On 25<sup>th</sup> March, the crew overheard a stolen van with a tracker activation travelling from the Darlington area into our force. The crew located the van, with trailer and ride-on-mower still attached in Eaglescliffe. Officers were directed and two suspects were arrested.
- 3.3 The above incidents have been chosen to highlight the work of the helicopter. These types of incidents are happening every day around the Force and the helicopter is having a significant positive impact on many areas of policing.
  - 3.4 Over the last 3 months, the staff on the unit have been familiarising themselves with the new sophisticated role equipment on the helicopter. This training has predominantly taken place on the ground to save flying hours.
  - 3.5 The training and preparation that took place prior to the aircraft arriving was vital and has assisted greatly. This can be seen by the performance figures which show a 25% increase in arrests compared to the same period last year. However, it needs to be borne in mind that this is only a short comparison period, but is very encouraging.
  - 3.6 Following delivery of the aircraft there was a problem with the FLIR camera system, similar to the problems which originally delayed Cleveland accepting the helicopter in December. After several weeks of problems and testing, it was discovered that the problem was in a wiring loom fabricated by Eurocopter. As a result a complaint was raised, which has been successful and has resulted in Cleveland receiving an extra two months of free maintenance and also extended warranty on the FLIR system. The saving for Cleveland is over £20,000.
  - 3.7 The revenue budget for 2010/11 was very tight and came in slightly over budget as expected. However, this will be covered by the carry over from previous year which was specifically requested for this purpose.
  - 3.8 There have been some maintenance issues with our leased hanger facility at the airport which are hopefully going to be addressed by the airport. An issue may arise if these repairs are not completed satisfactorily and we may have to seek other hangarage solutions.
  - 3.9 Appendix A details the performance statistics and flying hours. The use of the aircraft has resulted in the equivalent of 142,311 officer hours being saved across the Force during January to March. This would equate to a cost saving of approximately £1,707,732 compared to officers on the ground being deployed to the same incidents. However, it should be noted that by using the aircraft we are able to undertake a greater number of searches, many of which we would be unable to undertake without the helicopter.
  - 3.10 During the period we have received 3 letters of appreciation and no complaints.

## **4. Implications**

### **4.1 Financial**

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

### **4.2 Diversity and Equal Opportunities**

There are no diversity or equal opportunities implications arising from this report.

### **4.3 Human Rights Act**

There are no Human Rights Act issues associated with this report.

### **4.4 Sustainability**

There are no sustainability issues associated with this report.

### **4.5 Risk**

There are no risks arising from this report.

## **5. Conclusions**

5.1 The new helicopter has been a big success story for the Force and we now operate one of the most advanced police helicopters in the world. The deployment of the aircraft to incidents across the force area continues to deliver significant results.

5.2 On 12<sup>th</sup> April the Force and Authority launched 'Helicopter Watch' which provides information to the public regarding the work of the police helicopter. The site will be updated daily to give details of operations the helicopter has been involved in and where in the Force area it has been. 'Helicopter Watch' can be accessed via both the Force and the Authority's websites.

Sean Price  
Chief Constable