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DEPARTMENT OF  
POLICE

ARTURO VENEGAS, JR.  
CHIEF OF POLICE

CITY OF SACRAMENTO  
CALIFORNIA

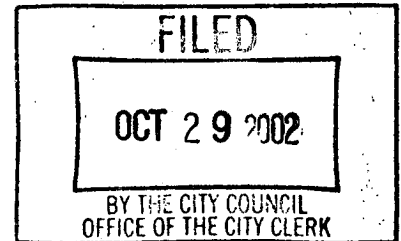
October 29, 2002  
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City Council  
Sacramento, California

Honorable Members in Session:



**SUBJECT** POLICE DEPARTMENT AIR SUPPORT UNIT

**LOCATION AND COUNCIL DISTRICT** Citywide.

**RECOMMENDATION**

For Council information only.

**CONTACT PERSON:** Arturo Venegas, Jr., Chief of Police - 433-0800

**FOR THE COUNCIL MEETING OF** October 29, 2002

**SUMMARY**

This report provides information on the Air Support Unit of the Sacramento Police Department.

**COMMITTEE/COMMISSION ACTION**

None.

**BACKGROUND**

The mission of the Sacramento Police Department is to work in partnership with the community to protect life and property, solve neighborhood problems, and enhance the quality of life in our city. The Department promotes pro-active problem solving to address the causes of crime and other

community issues. Further, The Department has established a national reputation as a professional law enforcement agency that is on the cutting edge of Community Oriented Policing and Problem Solving. One of the tools that the Department utilizes in its mission is its Air Support Unit, which is recognized as having two of the best equipped police helicopters in the nation.

In 1995, the Department received seven (7) United States government surplus helicopters. All of these helicopters required varying levels of refurbishment and inspection. To provide funding for an air support program, three helicopters were sold for \$311,000 in 1996. After being refurbished, Air One was put into service in 1997. Additionally, in collaboration with the Sacramento County Sheriff's Department (SSD), the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Support Unit was created. This unit included one sergeant and two officers from the Department. In 1998, a third officer was added to the staffing and a night vision camera was added to Air One. In 1999, Air Two was placed into service.

In 2000, the Air Support Unit received \$670,000 from the Citizens Option for Public Safety grant. With this funding, the Department purchased a new FLIR 7000 night vision/color camera and video down link equipment for the aircraft and the communication center, moving map systems, on board computers, VHS video recorders, and an additional Night Sun search light. With the addition of this equipment, the Sacramento Police Air Support Unit became the first agency in Northern California with the ability to transmit video to ground based receivers in patrol vehicles and command posts as well as to Police facilities.

In 2001, the Department entered into a partnership with the California Department of Justice (DOJ) to acquire hangar space with its aircraft. This space is adjacent to the SSD hangar. The Department utilized this opportunity to explore private contracting for maintenance and executed an agreement with Horizon-San Joaquin Helicopters. This resulted in a higher level of maintenance with significantly reduced costs. Downtime due to scheduled maintenance and mechanical problems has been reduced by 84% and maintenance cost per flight hour has decreased more than 50% from \$110.31 to \$46.67.

In our continued efforts to lower expenses, the Department recently purchased a 2,000 gallon fuel tanker. The Department had previously relied on fuel from SSD, however, due to its purchase of new, less fuel efficient helicopters, we were advised that SSD could no longer provide fuel for our Department. With the purchase of the new fuel tanker, a fuel support agreement was executed with Travis Air Force Base. This allowed us to maintain the military rate of \$1.01 per gallon as opposed to the commercial rate of \$2.35 per gallon.

In 2001, the Air Support Unit handled over **2,200** calls and were the first responders **984** times while canceling ground units **338** times. Through September 30, 2002 the Air Support Unit has handled over **3,200** calls and were the first responders **1405** times while canceling ground units **455** times.

Since 1997, the Air Support Unit has played a crucial role in the Department's efforts to fight crime and apprehend criminals. An example of this unit's benefit to the community occurred on the night of September 8, 2001 through the early morning hours of September 9, 2001. Former Burns Security Guard Joseph Ferguson had murdered four people in the city of Sacramento with an AK 47 assault rifle. Ferguson had made threatening telephone calls claiming he wanted to kill more people than

alleged mass murderer Nikolai Soltys. Officers Greg Brown and David Trujillo, who were operating Air1 that night, provided assistance to ground units by observing Ferguson and broadcasting valuable information on his movements while Ferguson discharged a tremendous numbers of rounds. Due to their support, great potential for officer and civilian casualties was prevented. For their heroic efforts, Officers Brown and Trujillo received the Sally and Hubert Mee Award and the Department's Silver Medal of Valor.

**FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

This report is for Council information. Staff is requesting no additional funding at this time.

**ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS**

This report does not constitute a "project" and is therefore exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act according to CEQA Guidelines, Section 15061(b)(1) and 15378(b)(3).

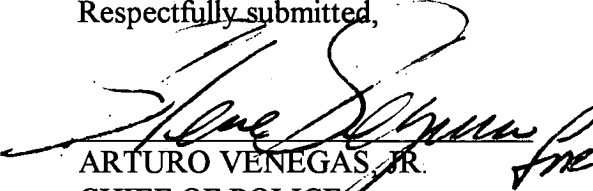
**POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

The mission of the Sacramento Police Department is to work in partnership with the community to protect life and property, solve neighborhood problems, and enhance the quality of life in our city. The Air Support Unit is one of the tools that the Department utilizes in its mission.

**ESBD CONSIDERATIONS**

Not applicable.

Respectfully submitted,



ARTURO VENEGAS, JR.  
CHIEF OF POLICE

FOR COUNCIL INFORMATION:



ROBERT P. THOMAS  
CITY MANAGER

RPT/AV:tlv

Attachment

**Sacramento Police Department Air Operations****Statistics for****2001 - 3 FTE****2002\* - 4 FTE****(\*January through September 2002)*****ACTIVITY LOG***

	Number of Calls Handled	Average Response Time - minutes	Average Minutes Per Call	Total Minutes Spent On Calls	First Responder On-scene (# of times)	Felony Direct Arrests	Felony Assists	Misd. Direct Arrests	Misd. Assists
2001	2,214	1.5	13	25,429	984	53	140	20	54
2002*	3,217	1.7	10.2	32,680	1,405	70	226	42	49

	Back-up Response	Vehicle Pursuits	Foot Pursuits	Calls Handled w/o Ground Asst.	RAM Located	FLIR Locates	Ground Units C-4ed	Outside Agency Assists	Photo Flights
2001	909	20	57	196	0	5	338	128	83
2002*	544	28	74	326	6	14	455	204	158

***FLIGHT LOG***

	Total Flight Time - Hours	Total Down Time - Hours	Weather	Admin.	Mechanical	Scheduled Maintenance	Personnel	Other
2001	887.9	177.7	42.2	51.5	10.9	17.0	12.7	43.4
2002*	1,055.6	173.9	27.9	34.0	10.2	2.6	83.3	15.9