

City Police Will Fly 'Beats' to Cut Crime, Perform Rescues

BY JAMES MERLE

The Chicago police department will go airborne this August with the inauguration of a helicopter task force to prevent crime.

The "eye in the sky" idea was disclosed by O. W. Wilson in April 1967 when he was superintendent of the department. It became a reality a year later with the acquisition of two helicopters and selection of 10 police sergeants, five of whom are now being trained.

The helicopter task force is different from the traffic control helicopter which warns drivers of roadway tieups and attempts to divert motorists from snagged traffic arteries. Its primary use will be for patrol, surveillance, and pursuit. It also will be used for rescue work, as two litters can be attached to each side on the landing runners.

Five Potential Pilots

The five potential pilots, sergeants John Duggan, August Sylvain, John Klein, Gerald Weber, and Terry Cornell, all meet the department's first requirement of being at their present rank, 30 to 40 years old inclusive, married, and have a minimum of five years experience as a Chicago policeman. In addition, the department required them to meet the Federal Aviation administration's [FAA] physical requirements.

Instructing the policemen are fire department personnel headed by Lt. George Tannehill. Assisting are John Kerechek, engineer; and LeRoy Hansch.

The policemen began their work with three weeks of ground training at the Fire academy under the instruction of Tannehill and Irwin Maas, a fire department pilot. The men studied navigation, meteorology, aerodynamics, radio navigation, use of a computer, and FAA regulations.

Headquartered at Midway

They then moved their headquarters to Midway airport, where the helicopters are quartered, and began flight training. This was the first closeup the men had of a helicopter. At Midway they learned to apply what they learned at ground school.

The future pilots now begin their days with an hour of classroom instruction. Each sergeant receives 1 to 2 hours of actual flying time at the controls. Then each man is given

a 1 to 2 hour critique after each flight, said Tannehill.

Two of the helicopters have regular airplane engines and can seat three people. But for training purposes one seat has been removed.

Radios Speed Communications

Both are equipped with radios tuned in to police communications so they can be sent thruout the city wherever needed. Another can receive and send to 360 different channels thruout the area.

The helicopters reach speeds up to 105 m. p. h. and can travel from O'Hare International airport, on the extreme northwest of the city, to Calumet park on the northeast in six minutes, Tannehill said.

The 'copters also can attain a maximum altitude of 14,000 feet, tho normally they will fly between 400 and 600 feet. At this level the pilots can identify people, cars, and other objects. In the downtown area the helicopters will fly at about 1,800 feet.

Visibility Greatly Increased

The pilots also will be able to clearly identify objects for 6 to 8 blocks in a 270-degree arch; the range of vision in the helicopters "bubble-dome" cockpit. From a squad car, a policeman's vision is obstructed by buildings.

A third helicopter to be used is the Jet Ranger, a jet turbine plane which seats five people and will be used mainly for rescue operations. The fire department presently has two of these helicopters.

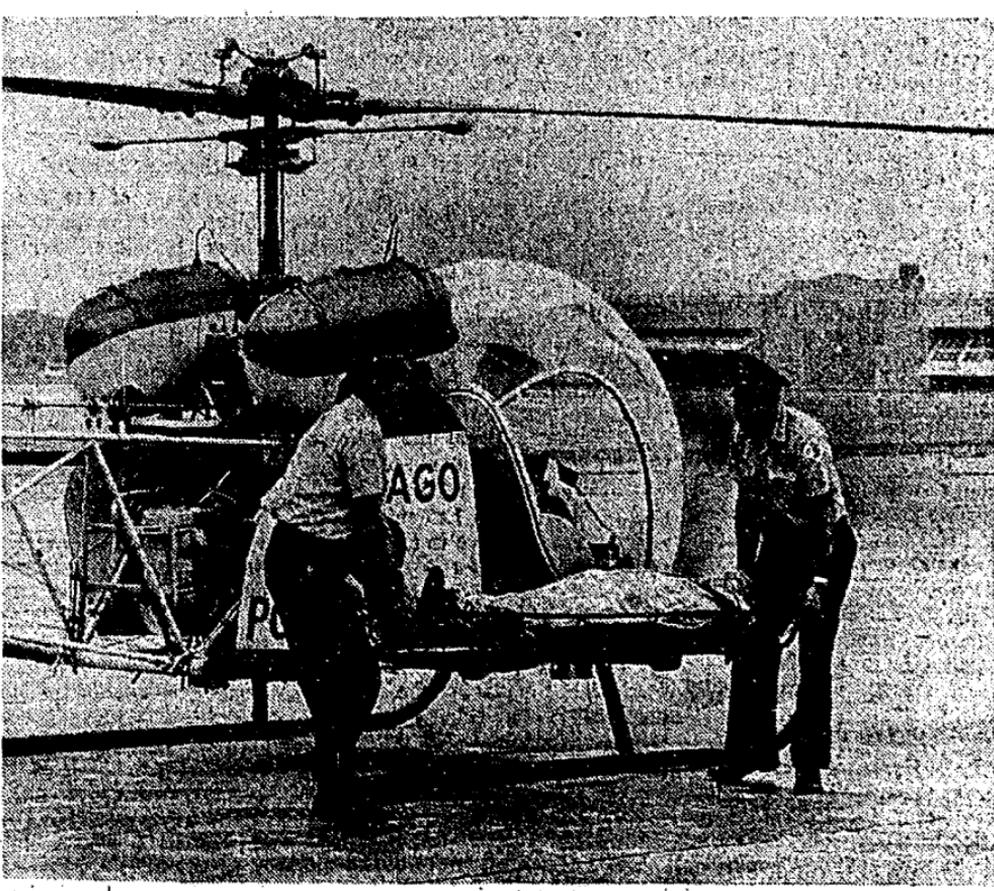
All three helicopters were built by the Bell company of Fort Worth. The regular airplane engine helicopters cost approximately \$57,000 each. The Jet Ranger cost \$103,000, said Tannehill. All three are maintained by Fe Marshall, 48, of 1651 Edgewater av., a civilian mechanic. Any major repairs are done by Chicago Helicopter Airways, Inc.

Must Pass Tests

Before any of the sergeants may fly, they must pass private and commercial pilot's license tests. The sergeants already have made solo cross-country flights.

The helicopters will be manned by fire and police pilots for limited patrol of 10 hours a day for the two planes, said Tannehill.

The patrolman walking a beat may become a thing of the past. Now some, at least, will fly.



[TRIBUNE Staff Photo: by Arthur Walker]

RESQUR—Sgts. John Duggan and Terry Cornell carry stretcher in a mock rescue to show one of the various uses for the new flying task force of the Chicago police department. The helicopter also will be used in crime prevention and, later, fire-spotting in the Chicago area.