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Press Release

Huey Helicopter Joins AIR-ONE Fleet

March 25, 2009 - Winthrop Harbor, IL. The Law Enforcement Aviation Coalition, Inc. (LEAC) and the Winthrop Harbor Police Department (WHPD) are pleased to announce the addition of a fourth helicopter to the LEAC fleet of AIR-ONE search & rescue aircraft. The 1971 Bell UH-1 "Huey" was obtained through the government's surplus equipment program which transfers useable items to law enforcement agencies at no charge. The Illinois Law Enforcement Support Office (LESO) in Springfield made the arrangements for this transfer, as it has done for the previous three helicopters.

The UH-1 Huey was transferred to WHPD, which received a Bell OH-58 Kiowa helicopter in November 2006. In January 2007, two more OH-58 Kiowas were transferred to Illinois agencies, one to the Byron Police Department and another to the Stephenson County Sheriff's Office. All four helicopters were transferred at no charge to Illinois taxpayers.

The Law Enforcement Aviation Coalition was formed in 2003 using a donated private helicopter to provide no-charge air support to agencies throughout the region. LEAC now assists the agencies who have received surplus helicopters by providing training, fuel, parts, maintenance, hangar and all other expenses associated with refurbishment and operation of the helicopters. LEAC funding is raised through government grants and corporate donations.

"The addition of the Huey takes our capabilities to the next level.", said Mike Bitton, LEAC's Director of Operations. *"While the smaller Kiowa is ideal for search missions, the Huey's lift ability is far greater, meaning we can transport 8 to 10 mission personnel on board, plus the flight crew, as opposed to just one or two. For incidents of natural disasters, terrorist threats or other situations which require rapid emergency response, we are now uniquely positioned to aid local law enforcement in protecting our citizens and preserving life."*

LEAC is a not-for-profit 501(c)3 charitable organization, supporting the helicopter operators in providing no-cost air support for search & rescue, law enforcement, fire service and counter-terrorism missions throughout the region. Additional information about LEAC and the AIR-ONE helicopter program is available on-line at www.airsupport.org.

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