

Orange Co. Unveils New Helicopter

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ORANGE COUNTY, Fla. (WOFL FOX 35, Orlando) -- The Orange County Sheriff's Office has added a new helicopter to the fleet. You may have already heard the Bell 407 named Chase II buzzing overhead looking for everything from stolen vehicles to running criminals.

Deputies took delivery of the chopper back in January and one of the many advancements over the other birds in the fleet is laser technology.

"Additionally, with the S.W.A.T. team who has night vision goggles, we'll be able to see as well. If we're working something to assist the S.W.A.T. team, we can point out something to them they can see exactly where our laser is on target at," says Captain Randy McKendree.

The tail-wing on the helicopter isn't new technology, but is something on the aircraft which stands out the most. The names of all eleven deputies who have lost their lives in the line of duty have been air-brushed on the tail.

Capt. McKendree recently flew the new helicopter to a law enforcement convention in Houston and says a number of other law enforcement officers showed interest in doing the same thing with their agency's choppers.

Up in the air is where the helicopter shows why criminals will have something to fear. A global positioning mapping system allows the flight crew to get to scene incredibly fast.

Eventually the same system will allow deputies to enter an address anywhere in the county and the on-board camera will instantly find the location within seconds of taking off. Its just one more way to get a jump on the bad guys giving them less time to get away.

The helicopter can also be tasked to help fire fighters and responders of both natural and unnatural disasters such as terrorist attacks.

"Chase II is equipped with a transmitter that can send images from the cameras to receivers on the ground in the event of a hurricane or other disaster where the emergency operations center or Sheriff's Office commanders or fire department commanders on the ground need to see live real-time video from the air we can give that to them," says McKendree.

The chopper is worth about \$3.6 million, of which the County spent about \$1.4 million. The rest was financed with federal grants and from the proceeds from selling off another aircraft.

It is expected to assist officers on the ground with about 1,200 felony arrests this year and in all flying, a total of six thousand missions.

