



# AGENDA REPORT


**TO:** Jestin D. Johnson  
City Administrator

**FROM:** Floyd Mitchell  
Chief of Police

**SUBJECT:** OPD RSI Helicopter Maintenance  
Contract

**DATE:** May 28, 2024

City Administrator Approval

  
Jestin Johnson (May 29, 2024 21:09 PDT)

Date: May 29, 2024

## RECOMMENDATION

**Staff Recommends That The City Council Adopt A Resolution: (1) Authorizing The City Administrator To Enter Into A Professional Services Agreement With Rotorcraft Support, Inc. (RSI) To Provide Helicopter Maintenance Services To The Oakland Police Department (OPD) For Helicopter Use In Assisting Various Departments With Responding To Emergencies Throughout The City, For The Period Of July 1, 2024 To June 30, 2026 In An Amount Not To Exceed Eight Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$850,000) Per Year For A Total Contract Not To Exceed One Million, Seven Hundred Thousand Dollars (1,700,000); And (2) Waiving The Local And Small Business (LBE/SLBE) Enterprise Program Requirements**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Oakland City Council approved the last helicopter maintenance contract in April 18, 2023 by Resolution 89663<sup>1</sup>, which authorized the City Administrator or designee to enter into a professional services agreement with Rotorcraft Support, Inc. (RSI) to provide helicopter maintenance services to the Oakland Police Department (OPD) for helicopter use in assisting various departments with responding to emergencies throughout the city, for the period of July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024, in an amount not to exceed eight hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$850,000) per year, with an optional six-month administrative extension for a total contract not to exceed one million, two hundred seventy-five thousand dollars (\$1,275,000).

With the legislation accompanying this report, City staff has returned for City Council approval of a new helicopter maintenance contract.

Oakland Police Department (OPD) uses helicopters as backup for vehicle-based police patrols during pursuits, arrests, and for directing the deployment of officers at crime scenes. OPD has two patrol helicopters; both of which are over 30 years old, in addition to a newer training

<sup>1</sup> <https://oakland.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=11937656&GUID=083D7AF8-E5F5-4653-B668-39434CAAB94C>

helicopter. These air vehicles are used every day and require increasing levels of on-call mechanical support to maintain safe operational functionality. OPD conducted a Request for Quote (RFQ), and Rotorcraft Support, Inc. (RSI) was the sole vendor to respond, so OPD will retain their services. OPD seeks a contract with RSI for up to \$850,000 per year for two years, for a two-year contract total not to exceed \$1,700,000.

The current OPD-RSI contract, which expires June 30, 2024, specifies an hourly rate for helicopter maintenance of \$135 per hour to \$185 per hour, depending on the type of mechanical support, plus a cost structure for vehicle parts – a new contract would maintain a similar hourly rate and cost structure (\$140 and \$210). OPD has spent approximately \$850,000 total per year on maintenance (labor and parts) but must budget for a higher level of annual maintenance costs as the OPD helicopter fleet continues to age while also seeing a greater frequency of use. The proposed contract, as outlined in the proposed resolution accompanying this report, will provide for a continuity of maintenance service for OPD's helicopter fleet.

### **BACKGROUND / LEGISLATIVE HISTORY**

OPD uses helicopters for backup for vehicle-based police patrols during pursuits and arrests and directing the deployment of officers at crime scenes. Helicopters are used most days, if not every day, for operational support – averaging approximately 1,200 flight hours per year or 100 hours per month. Helicopters play a critical role in policing because they can respond very quickly throughout the city. OPD air patrol can respond in approximately 30 seconds to a crime pursuit or investigation, when called for support – whereas motor vehicles may take much more time to respond in situations where every minute counts.

Air patrol has provided coverage for incidents in 2023, connected to approximately 600 felony arrests. These cases include homicide, robbery, stolen cars, and residential burglaries. This support also includes over 200 vehicle pursuits and over 130-foot pursuits - air patrol vehicle pursuits are much safer than pursuits via road-based police vehicles due to the inherent danger of the latter type of pursuit for the public, as well as for the suspect and patrol officer. Helicopters also offer unique situational awareness support during sideshows, where hundreds, if not thousands, of people in vehicles gather to engage in highly dangerous and illegal vehicular activity.

At the direction of City Council, the Air Support Unit has completed a Request for Quote through the City's website to acquire a new fixed wing aircraft. The RFQ process was completed in May of 2023. Prior to requesting funds for the purchase of the Airplane and associated equipment, the department was required by the City Charter to obtain an authorized use policy by the Oakland Privacy Advisory Committee. That Policy was approved and adopted by council at the December 5, 2023 City Council Meeting (Resolution 89995 C.M.S).

Since that time the department has been working with the City Attorney's office, City Budget Bureau, and numerous city partners to prepare and schedule legislation to seek City Council direction as to the purchase for the aircraft. The department has two resolutions that are currently under City staff review, that will once be presented to City Council for approval, set out a plan to acquire the airplanes (patrol and trainer). One resolution is for an outright purchase and the other one to authorize finance of the purchase. Regardless of what option is chosen the delivery of the patrol airplane is approximately 1 year from the date that the contract is

signed and a down payment is made. City staff has advised that once approval is given by council it will likely be 2-4 months for the contracts to be completed. That time in addition to the procurement/delivery time will require the helicopters to continue to be the sole air support tool for the city. Once the airplane is delivered it will take several months to ensure that there are no issues that may arise upon delivery of the aircraft and to complete final transition training for the departmental pilots. These timeframes necessitate a two-year maintenance contract for the helicopters at the requested amounts.

### ***Need for Helicopter Maintenance***

OPD has two patrol helicopters and one training helicopter. The two patrol helicopters are MD500E model helicopters, one of which was built in 1990 (34 years old) and the other was built in 1993 (31 years old). The training helicopter is a Schweizer 300 CBI built in 2005. These helicopters are used consistently and require more expensive parts and mechanical support to maintain safe operational functionality.

The cost for new helicopters exceeds OPD's current budget capacity – new similar aircraft would cost approximately \$5 million each – and then require an additional one to one and a half million for new law enforcement equipment (e.g., radios, lights, cameras, special electrical wiring). A total refurbishment of current helicopters would cost approximately \$3.5 million each plus additional costs for law enforcement equipment; these options would still require a maintenance contract as well, although the maintenance would be less expensive on newer vehicles.

The cost for leasing helicopters is also cost-prohibitive. A ten-year lease would be required to lease a helicopter at the cost of \$722,224 per year. That cost does not include maintenance or fuel.

The following history outlines recent maintenance contracts and related spending authority:

- Rotorcraft Support, Inc. (RSI) for an amount not to exceed \$400,000 per year (July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2017) via a cooperative contract agreement with the Contra Costa County Sheriff's Office.
- RSI (July 1, 2017, to June 30, 2018) through a cooperative agreement with the City of San Diego.
- RSI (July 1, 2018, to June 30, 2020) through a cooperative agreement with the City of San Diego.
- RSI (July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2023) through a cooperative agreement with the City of San Diego.
- RSI (July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024) through a open bidding process through the City of Oakland.

### **ANALYSIS AND POLICY ALTERNATIVES**

OPD's helicopters are used for obtaining visual information. The department uses the helicopter as a rapid response patrol unit. The Air Unit can respond to in-progress shootings and violent crimes rapidly and frequently find the situation abruptly ending upon the arrival of the helicopter. During violent incidents in-progress, the Air Unit can expedite the Patrol officer's

response by directing the officer to injured victims and fleeing subjects. The Air Unit is assigned citywide and responds anywhere in the City that OPD dispatch sends it. The Air Unit will occasionally assist outside agencies as requested. These requests frequently have a direct nexus to Oakland. The Air Unit assists Ceasefire and other specialized teams when requested. These requests usually include maintaining a visual on a subject and advising when the safest opportunity arises for arrest (exited vehicle or house).

The Air Unit assists with crowd control by advising the ground units on the size and activity of the crowd. The Air Unit also assists with giving public announcements when needed. One example is the Air Unit directing officers to intersections for traffic control to safely facilitate mobile protests. Many protests do not supply OPD with march routes which prevents the department from safely protecting the crowd from vehicle traffic. The public health use is spotting fires (from smoke) and assisting Oakland Fire in safely evacuating areas. The Air Unit also assists Oakland Fire with identifying safe ingress and egress points to battle the fires. Lastly, the Air Unit can locate and direct Oakland Fire to hot spots that pose additional risks. The daily public health impact is commonly locating missing persons at risk and rapid intervention of violent crimes.

OPD advertised a Request for Quote (RFQ) for helicopter maintenance services on February 27, 2024, which closed on March 18, 2024. RSI can provide all the labor, personnel, material, tools, and supplies necessary to maintain OPD's helicopter fleet on an on-call, as-needed basis. RSI has a valid Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) repair station certificate and can offer a full staff of FAA certified airframe and powerplant (A&P) mechanics with factory training and recurrent training on the relevant OPD equipment.

The OPD-RSI contract for the period of July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2026, would allow for a spending authority not to exceed \$850,000 per year. Rather, OPD is requesting a contract with this spending maximum based on expectations that the aging helicopter fleet may need additional parts that will become scarce over time and based on the historical increase in maintenance cost.

### ***Recent Uses of OPD Helicopters***

- On June 26, 2023, the OPD helicopter assisted the Ceasefire section following a 211 (robbery) vehicle from Oakland through Vallejo, Richmond, Sonoma, Marin, and San Rafael until the vehicle crashed, attempting to avoid ground units. ARGUS was able to direct ground units to the suspects fleeing on foot, and all 3 suspects were taken into custody with multiple firearms recovered.
- On June 30, 2023, the OPD helicopter assisted ground units who had located a vehicle involved in at least 4 robberies. The vehicle fled from ground units. The helicopter continued to follow the vehicle until the subjects attempted to flee on foot. ARGUS directed ground units to the subjects, and two suspects were taken into custody for their involvement in the robberies.
- On September 28, 2023, the OPD helicopter followed a murder suspect from Oakland through multiple cities, including Hayward, San Mateo, South San Francisco and San Francisco. During the follow, ARGUS viewed the suspect crash his vehicle and carjack a passing van. ARGUS continued to follow the vehicle until it crashed near the Moscone Center, and the Murder suspect was arrested.

- Over the last two years, the OPD helicopter has assisted the Sideshow Operations Unit every weekend with increasing mitigation and preventing dissemination of sideshows. The helicopter can report the size, location, and direction of sideshow crowds. The helicopter can give the safest approach paths for ground units. The helicopter can see the exact suspect vehicles and later direct ground units to those vehicles.

In addition to the recent uses cited, this is a comprehensive view of the statistics from the Air Unit over the last several years:

**2020:**

- Flight hours 1,283
- Calls for service 4,696
- Response time and percentage of time first of scene 24 seconds & 91%
- 7 missing person searches, 541 felony arrests, and 132 vehicle pursuits
- 35 murder arrests, 105 robbery arrests

**2021:**

- Flight hours 1,195
- Calls for service 5,198
- Response time and percentage of time first of scene 25 seconds 91%
- 9 missing person searches, 409 felony arrests, 84 vehicle pursuits
- 26 murder arrests, 63 robbery arrests

**2022:**

- Flight hours 1,158.3
- Calls for service 4,092
- Response time and percentage of time first of scene 28 seconds 91%
- 26 missing person searches, 460 felony arrests, 58 vehicle pursuits
- 24 murder arrests, 49 robbery arrests

**2023:**

- Flight Hours 970.4
- Response time average 26 seconds and percentage of time first of scene 89%
- 7 missing person searches, 592 felony arrests, 202 vehicle pursuits
- 39 murder arrests, 112 robbery arrests

The Air Unit has a very focused, prioritized use, as explained in the daily functions and usage. The focused priorities are the preservation of life by rapidly responding to life threatening incidents.

Other uses of the Air Unit include mitigating high-risk incidents such as vehicle pursuits with de-escalating from removing ground units (which usually results in subjects slowing down and abandoning their vehicle where ground units can make the arrest) as well as quickly locating missing persons at risk by covering large areas that would be time and resource consuming for ground units. The capabilities of the Air Unit are impossible to duplicate, making alternative strategies unpractical.

This recommended policy action advances the Citywide priority of responsive, trustworthy government as helicopters serve as the backup for patrol for arrests and direct officers at crime scenes. Having helicopters allows OPD officers to be more responsive and effective at the scene of a crime.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

OPD is asking for spending authority for a contract with RSI for up to \$850,000 per year for a two-year period. Funding for this spending authority will be added to OPD's baseline for FY 2023-2025 budget, increasing OPD's budget baseline annually by \$850,000 to cover the contract term. Funding will be paid from the following funding codes: Fund: 1010 - General Fund: General Purpose, Organization: 107710 - Special Operations, Project: Project to be determined, and Program: PS13 – Special Operations.

### **PUBLIC OUTREACH / INTEREST**

No outreach was necessary beyond the standard City legislation publication.

### **COORDINATION**

The Budget Bureau and the Office of the City Attorney were consulted on the development of this report and accompanying resolution.

### **SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES**

***Economic:*** The City of Oakland can more readily attract economic activity in a safer city. Helicopter support provides vital support to daily patrol operations, which support public safety.

***Environmental:*** There are no environmental issues associated with this report.

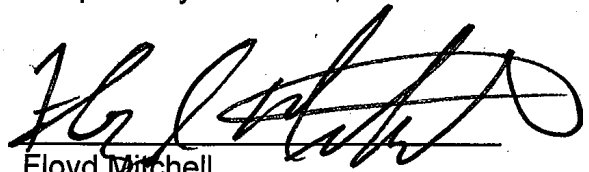
***Race and Social Equity:*** OPD uses helicopters to aid in a variety of patrol operations. Policing operations serve to enhance public safety especially in areas more prone to violent crime. Residents and visitors living in areas with a greater proportion of crime will particularly benefit from police services that promote public safety in these neighborhoods. All Oakland residents and visitors also benefit from efforts to address criminal activity and promote public safety.

**ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

**Staff Recommends That The City Council Adopt A Resolution: (1) Authorizing The City Administrator To Enter Into A Professional Services Agreement With Rotorcraft Support, Inc. (RSI) To Provide Helicopter Maintenance Services To The Oakland Police Department (OPD) For Helicopter Use In Assisting Various Departments With Responding To Emergencies Throughout The City, For The Period Of July 1, 2024 To June 30, 2026 In An Amount Not To Exceed Eight Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$850,000) Per Year For A Total Contract Not To Exceed One Million, Seven Hundred Thousand Dollars (1,700,000); And (2) Waiving The Local And Small Business (LBE/SLBE) Enterprise Program Requirements**

For questions concerning this report, please contact Officer Brandon Mart, OPD, Helicopter Unit, at (510) 882-8107.

Respectfully submitted,



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