

In keeping with the Army's tradition of naming its helicopters after Native American tribes, the UH-72A was officially named the Lakota.

Said Lutz Bertling, CEO of Eurocopter: "This first delivery to such a prestigious client symbolizes a major success for Eurocopter, since it's the first time ever that, together with EADS, we participate in the U.S. defense market. It proves the quality, modernity and mission suitability of this helicopter. It creates a great opportunity to strengthen and increase the Eurocopter presence on the U.S. market, with a major extension of our production facility in Mississippi and the creation of 250 to 300 U.S. jobs. It is for Eurocopter the outcome of more than 40 years of co-operation with American companies and customer satisfaction."

The Columbus, Miss., factory of American Eurocopter is undergoing a major expansion to support the UH-72A production, assembly and delivery. Industrial activity at Columbus is starting with the LUH's build-up and acceptance for delivery, and will subsequently transition to full-scale production with the facility expanding to a total covered area of 345,000 square feet which will be completed by this fall.

## First Keystone Assembled S-76C++

On December 14th, 2006, Keystone Helicopter Corporation was issued its first Standard Airworthiness Certificate by the FAA for the first Sikorsky S76C++ manufactured at Keystone's Coatesville, Pa, Heliplex facility.

Marc Poland, newly appointed VP of commercial programs for Sikorsky Aircraft, said, "This is a very impressive achievement and an important milestone in accomplishing Sikorsky's plan to increase production capacity to meet the demands of our customers."

## FDC/aerofilter Announces Record Sales

FDC/aerofilter said it has posted record sales for the first three quarters of 2006, doubling its gross sales over the same period in 2005. Although its growth has been rapid since 1995, when it introduced the first certified inlet barrier filter for the Bell 206, sales had not doubled in one year until now.

FDC president Andrew Rowen said he was not surprised at this growth: "We have a massive product catalog that keeps growing every year, now with 13 separate STCs and more in the pipeline. Our manufacturing contractor, Aerometals, has done an incredible job of staying ahead of the growing demand and keeping our product line in stock and ready to ship."

Said Guy Icenogle, production manager at Aerometals, "We knew FDC's product was good, so we predicted their sales would accelerate. It was a challenge to keep up with meeting the production demands as their product line widened at the same time as sales took off. But we planned ahead for it and this has paid off... we have product ready for FDC to ship at all times."

The company also announced several upcoming developments that are expected to increase sales even more. This includes, among other things, having a certified IBF for the Heli-Lynx 350FX. Said Rowen: "We're going to be certified on the new Heli-Lynx AS 350 Honeywell conversion soon and we're certified on the Soloy conversion already. We're on the Sikorsky production line for all new S-76C+ and C++ models as well as STC retrofit systems for existing aircraft. Based on upcoming certifications on additional Sikorsky models, expanding into new markets . . . and a couple of new strategic developments, I expect gross sales to double again in 2007."

## From Pole to Pole

Two helicopter pilots, Jennifer Murray and Colin Bodill, are trying to set a new world record for flying around the globe via the South and North Poles in a Bell 407. The pair reached the first major milestone on their epic quest when they landed at the South Pole at 5 a.m. (GMT) on Sunday, January 7th, this year.

This is the second attempt at the record for both pilots. Their first attempt nearly ended in disaster after 58 days when they crashed in whiteout conditions on Antarctica's Ronne Ice Shelf on December 20th, 2003, resulting in both pilots sustaining serious injuries. (Murray wrote a book

about the experience called *Broken Journey*.)

Talking via satellite phone from the South Pole, Murray said, "It's a terrific feeling to have made it to the South Pole. Bad weather conditions have hampered our progress along the way, but we had a clear weather window when leaving Fowler [Ice Rise], and flying the 1,200 miles to the Pole in one go has put us very much back on schedule."

"With memories of our last time in Antarctica being overshadowed by the crash, it's been great to come back and lay a few ghosts to rest. Obviously the next milestone is to get out of Antarctica and back across the Drake Passage safely. I'll certainly be feeling relieved once we're back in Ushuaia, but there'll be no time for celebration as we're only halfway through and have to push on northward to the North Pole. . . . Our Bell 407 is performing wonderfully and we have great confidence every time we start it up and fly away."

Murray and Bodill set out on their record-setting journey from Bell Helicopter's facility at Dallas/Fort Worth on December 5th, 2006. They have flown just over 9,000 nautical miles, making 33 scheduled landings. They have over 26,000 nautical miles to go with 94 more scheduled landings to make.

While on their quest, the two pilots are working in partnership with the Royal Geographical Society with IBG, to give a core group of 30 schools along the route, and children worldwide, the opportunity to take part in a global environmental,

Jennifer Murray and Colin Bodill hope the second time will be the charm as they make another record-setting attempt to circumnavigate the globe, going from Pole-to-Pole. **Bell Helicopter Photo**

