

Van Horn ADVOCATE

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Area sheriffs to get aviation asset

By Larry D. Simpson -

Area sheriffs met with Edd Hendee and Sam Lopez last Thursday and Friday, to work out the details that will bring a surveillance airplane to the area for their use. Hendee, a

radio personality from Houston's KSEV radio, had been in Van Horn and Sierra

Blanca nearly a month ago to do a live interview with sheriffs Arvin West of Hudspeth County and Oscar Carrillo of Culberson County.

In that interview, broadcast live in the Houston area, Hendee became convinced that sheriff's in far west Texas were in need of additional assets to perform their jobs better. In particular, Hendee, an aviation enthusiast, believed that what these sheriffs needed was an aerial surveillance platform.

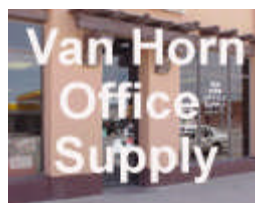
Hendee returned to Houston and went to work on the idea and within a couple of weeks had put an idea together. The idea.... purchase an airplane, equip it for surveillance use and lease it to the area sheriffs until they realize its value to them and then sell it to them.

Operational costs could easily be born by funds the sheriffs get from the capture of illegal drugs and Operation Linebacker funding.

Armed with the concept, Hendee approached area sheriffs with the idea and sought



Aviation help headed our way.... Edd Hendee (R), radio station KSEV in Houston news personality, explains to area sheriffs his concept for bringing some aviation assets into the area for their use in the effort to strengthen border security and improve drug interdiction operations. Hendee was in Van Horn and Sierra Blanca last Thursday and Friday finalizing details of the plan.



their input. Of course, the sheriffs liked the idea!

Hendee and his TCLOSE certified Aviation Trainer and law enforcement officer friend Sam Lopez proceeded to begin raising funds and they purchased a Maule aircraft that is ideally suited for the type of surveillance operations being planned for this area.

The airplane is currently being outfitted with radio gear and surveillance equipment and is expected to be in Van Horn by December 1st. The airplane will be based in Van Horn because it is centrally located for the area.

Hendee and Lopez are in the process of looking for pilots to fly the aircraft. The pilots will be trained by Lopez to meet peace officer standards that apply to pilots working with this type of surveillance operations.

Hendee and Lopez were in Van Horn and Sierra Blanca last Thursday and Friday to formally explain the concept and seek input from area sheriffs. They additionally brought in an Aviation Department representative from the Eddy County Sheriff's Office to further explain the ramifications of this type of operation.

After their airport meeting, Hendee and Lopez spent the rest of their time here finalizing details of the plan so that the aircraft could be placed in service. The plan is for the aircraft to arrive in Van Horn around the first of December with it going into regular operation by the first of the year.

Sheriffs Oscar Carrillo and Arvin West are ecstatic about the concept. "This airplane will give us the aerial eyes that we need. It will help us in all our drug interdiction operations as well as our efforts at helping secure the border. We know that if we can close up the border here, the illegal operations will seek some other weak link to do their work."

"We're thankful for Edd Hendee's efforts on our behalf and we're eager to prove his theory right for this area," said Sheriff Carrillo.

Some minor details remain to be worked out before the plan is completed. Area sheriffs will need to get their counties to get the insurance on the aircraft, and they must make arrangements to handle the day to day operational costs of the airplane. Sheriffs West and Carrillo said that should not be a problem, since the plane would be a valid use of Operation Linebacker funds.

And, a glimpse at Monday's El Paso Times article, "Operation Linebacker catches more immigrants than criminals," would seem to lend credence to the fact that Operation Linebacker is producing results in West Texas counties. Results which show the efforts are leading to the securing of the Texas-Mexico border by curbing illegal drug, criminal and immigration activity.

The proposed airplane will go a long way to improving on those results.

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