



CITY OF GLENDALE, CALIFORNIA REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM

Report: Request to dispense with competitive bidding for the purchase of a new helicopter from Airbus Helicopters to replace Police Joint Air Support Unit MD-520N Helicopter N102CG.

1. Resolution to dispense with competitive bidding and authorize the City Manager, or his designee, to enter into an agreement with Airbus Helicopters for the down payment and purchase of a new H125 helicopter.
2. Resolution of Appropriation

COUNCIL ACTION

Item Type: Action Item

Approved for November 5, 2024 **calendar**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Joint Air Support Unit (“JASU”) for the Cities of Glendale and Burbank currently has three (3) helicopters, one of which (N102CG) is 26 years old and is effectively no longer operational and needs to be replaced. A second helicopter, which is 18 years old, is reaching replacement as well. Earlier this year council approved staff recommendation to purchase a replacement helicopter from MD Helicopters (Model MD-530F). However, due to unforeseen internal shortages and the company’s shift to prioritizing military contracts, MD Helicopters has withdrawn from the purchase agreement, and they are unable to provide a helicopter.

Given the immediate need for a replacement, staff now recommends the purchase of an H125 helicopter from Airbus. The H125 model, commonly used in our region, is highly suited for multi-role law enforcement missions, including patrol operations, criminal surveillance, search and rescue, pursuit, special operations and natural disaster response. This transition is critical in ensuring continuity in our air support capabilities while maintaining operational effectiveness.

RECOMMENDATION

The Airbus H125 is a reliable and versatile aircraft that meets the operational demands of the JASU. Although it differs from our previous fleet of MD helicopters, it offers enhanced features for law enforcement, and Airbus has a strong reputation for after-sales service and parts availability. The H125 is the most common law enforcement helicopter used in our region.

The leadership of both Glendale and Burbank police departments have reconvened to assess the need for this change. While this new helicopter will require additional training for the flight crews, both agencies have agreed that an H125 helicopter and the advantages in multi-role law enforcement missions outweigh the challenges. Therefore, staff recommends proceeding with the purchase of the H125 helicopter from Airbus.

ANALYSIS

The JASU, governed by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Cities of Glendale and Burbank, requires its aircraft to be replaced after 20 years of service or 15,000 flight hours. One of the unit's helicopters, N102CG, is 26 years old and well beyond its recommended replacement window. A second helicopter is reaching that time frame with 18 years of service. Originally, we sought to purchase the MD-530F model, which would maintain consistency within our fleet of MD helicopters. However, MD Helicopters are unable to provide the aircraft.

The leadership of both Glendale and Burbank police departments have extensively reviewed alternative options and both agencies have agreed to move forward with the recommendation that the Airbus H125 is the best suitable option to maintain operational effectiveness.

H125 Overview: The H125 model has approximately 75% of the market share for law enforcement applications in the US and over 83 variants of the helicopter are operating in California. It is known for its adaptability to various mission types, including:

- Response to patrol calls in urban environments
- Monitoring and surveilling criminal activity
- Pursuit and search missions
- Special operations support
- Search, rescue and escort operations
- Response to natural disasters

While it introduces new operational dynamics compared to our current fleet, the H125 offers several advantages, including superior range, better lift capacity, and modern avionics systems which will allow for flying at higher altitudes. The transition will involve training pilots, but Airbus' training programs and global support network will facilitate a smooth integration into our operations. Airbus' comprehensive training is included as part of the purchase agreement.

STAKEHOLDERS/OUTREACH

The Glendale and Burbank Joint Air Support Unit remains a key asset in public safety for both cities. The JASU is regularly showcased at community events such as Open House, Citizens Academy, and Townhall meetings, and it is featured on social media platforms. We will continue to engage the community regarding this upgrade and highlight the enhanced capabilities the new helicopter will bring.

In discussions with the Glendale Police Foundation, the Chief’s Community Advisory Panel, and representatives from both cities, this replacement has been identified as a critical step to ensure uninterrupted air support services.

FISCAL IMPACT

The Airbus H125 helicopter will cost \$6,997,746, which includes a 3% contingency. As with all JASU acquisitions, the cost will be split equally between the Cities of Glendale and Burbank. In April 2024, an appropriation was requested in the amount of \$5,040,000 and will be carried forward into FY2024-25. Staff is therefore requesting an appropriation of the remaining funding, with \$978,873 from the Joint Air Support Fund’s net position and \$978,873 from the Joint Air Support Fund’s Joint Air Support Maintenance Fees. The existing funding and appropriation request is outlined below:

Existing Appropriation		
Amount	From (Account String)	Funding Source
\$5,040,000	51000-6020-GPD-7004-P0000	Joint Air Support Fund

Requesting Appropriation			
Amount	From (Account String)	To (Account String)	Funding Source
\$978,873	27900-6020-GPD-0000-P0000	51000-6020-GPD-7004-P0000	Joint Air Support Fund – Net Position
\$978,873	34676-6020-GPD-0000-P0000	51000-6020-GPD-7004-P0000	Joint Air Support Fund – Joint Air Support Maintenance Fees

Upon authorization to purchase the replacement helicopter, arrangements will be made to sell Helicopter N102CG, with proceeds to be equally split between Glendale and Burbank, contributing to the overall funding.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW (CEQA/NEPA)

The action being considered does not constitute a “project” within the meaning of the CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15378(a) as it has no potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment. Even if it is a project, it is exempt pursuant to CEQA Guidelines 15061(b)(3)

CAMPAIGN DISCLOSURE

Refer to Exhibit A

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Alternative 1: The City Council may elect not to award the contract as recommended herein. This would continue to strain the fleet currently being maintained and possibly procuring a helicopter that is not compatible to the current fleet which will compel the crews to manage multiple helicopter types.

Alternative 2: The City Council may consider any other alternative not proposed by staff.

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

Submitted by:

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Prepared by:

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Approved by:

Roubik R. Golanian, P.E., City Manager

EXHIBITS/ATTACHMENTS

Exhibit A – Campaign Disclosure Form