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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: 03/19/19

Sheriff's Office Helicopter

PUTNAM COUNTY, TN – The Putnam County Sheriff's Office has received its first helicopter. The helicopter, an OH58, came from Fort Rucker Alabama via the LESO 133 Surplus program. It was received at no cost, but the Sheriff's Office will pay for outfitting the aircraft for law enforcement purposes as well as routine maintenance. PCSO is fortunate to already have two certified commercial helicopter pilots already on staff and one additional pilot completing his commercial certification.

The helicopter's primary purpose is for seeking out illegal narcotic activities; e.g., growing fields, surveillance monitoring and search warrant support, throughout the 400+ square miles of Putnam County. This invaluable asset will also be used for a wide range of law enforcement specific missions; e.g., missing children and endangered adults, large perimeter searches when seeking subjects, life threatening tactical responses and disaster response. This one of a kind asset will mean that the Sheriff's Office will no longer have to wait for an available helicopter to come from Nashville or Knoxville which could take from 1-3 hours. Immediate response is always important in cases of emergency, but with Putnam County's vast rural areas, it is essential. Deputies will have access into locations that are not accessible by road - such as the events at Cummins Falls in July 2017.

Sheriff Farris began considering the usefulness of a helicopter unit for the Putnam County Sheriff's Office three years ago. During his tenure as Sheriff, he has seen incident after incident that could have been remedied faster with access to a law enforcement helicopter.

"We are grateful to the Tennessee Highway Patrol (THP) for their assistance in previous Putnam County incidents, but as the county grows so do the needs of the Sheriff's Office. We need the equipment and manpower necessary to keep up with the growth of the population of the community that we serve and protect. We are willing to assist other agencies with the use of our aircraft whenever possible," said Sheriff Eddie Farris.

Other local and regional public safety agencies will be able to utilize the helicopter's services under the auspices of mutual aid agreements. These agreements include a provision where the requesting agency is required to reimburse PCSO for costs associated with the asset.

Pictured from Left to Right: Pilot Kyle Wylie, Sheriff Eddie Farris, Pilot Jim Skallion, Chief Deputy Bob Crabtree, Major Greg Whittaker

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