

LAW ENFORCEMENT CONSOLIDATION TASK FORCE – STATE AVIATION CONSOLIDATION
SUB-TEAM

State of Florida Aviation Assets

Recommendations for the Law Enforcement Consolidation Task Force

presented by

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Document prepared by the Law Enforcement Consolidation Task Force
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Overview

Five state-owned aviation units currently operate airplanes and helicopters in Florida. The Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE), Florida Highway Patrol (FHP) and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) use aircraft for law enforcement purposes, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) for aerial mapping, and the Florida Forest Service (FFS) for fire protection.

Airplanes and helicopters are powerful tools used to carry out the missions of these respective agencies. These aircraft are piloted by sworn law enforcement officers or certified fire fighters¹ operating them as necessary tools to accomplish specific agency missions. The missions include daily proactive duties and many times the aircraft are used to provide a fast response to a critical public safety or emergency need.

There is a long history of cooperation between the aviation programs. Safe, effective, efficient and appropriate aircraft use is a goal of all the agencies operating aircraft. Continuous improvement has been inherent in aviation since its beginning and is evident in each of these programs. A look back at the changes in these state aviation programs over time reveals their ability to initiate process changes to accommodate new or evolving missions, technology, organizational structures and constantly striving to do more with less. The Aviation Sub-Team has approached its review with these facts in mind and as a result notes these findings.

Findings Overview:

The integration of existing aviation program resources of the Florida Highway Patrol and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement into the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Division of Law Enforcement would result in a more efficient and effective aviation operation based upon the following considerations:

- Improved utilization of aircraft, technology and equipment (resources) would be increased by greater flexibility in scheduling of aircraft and pilots.
- Prevent duplication of efforts.
- Provide all state law enforcement agencies with access to a variety of aircraft, technology and expertise.
- Cross training of pilots resulting in better trained and diversified pilots.

¹ The single exception to either law enforcement or fire fighter certification is the pilot of the aerial mapping airplane operated by FDOT.

- Requests for services could be coordinated and directed by one agency based on agreed priorities.
- A centralized priority list for aviation missions.

Recommendation Overview:

As a result of the above findings, the Aviation Sub-Team makes these recommendations.

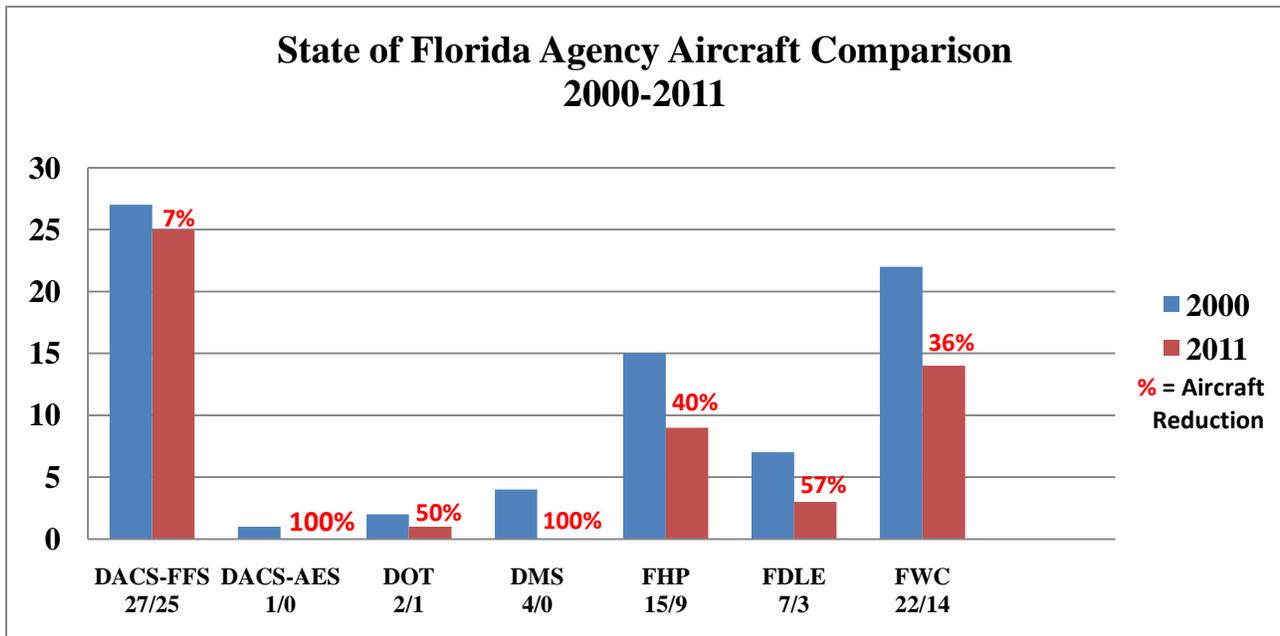
- Integrating existing aviation program resources of the Florida Highway Patrol (9 *airplanes and 9 pilots*) and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (3 *airplanes, 1 full time pilot and 1 OPS pilot*) into the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Division of Law Enforcement (6 *airplanes, 8 helicopters, 14 pilots with 1 being the safety officer and 1 additional maintenance mechanic/coordinator*).
- The FDOT and FFS aviation programs to remain in their current structures.
- All state agency aviation programs continue to make aviation assets available to the State Emergency Operations Center for manmade and natural disaster-related events.
- The creation of a State Aviation Managers Group to ensure efficient and effective overall operations.
- The Florida Fire Service to provide aerial ignition aircraft services to all state land management agencies.

Background Information

State of Florida agencies operating aircraft have an ongoing history of self-assessment and working toward maximum aircraft utilization, efficiencies and operating cost reduction.

The numerical and percentage changes are indicated on Chart 1.

Chart 1: State of Florida Agency Aircraft Comparison 2000 – 2011



Note: DACS – AES (Agricultural Environmental Services) – DC3 Airplane
DACs – FFS (Florida Forestry Service)

Integration of Law Enforcement Aviation Units

Each State of Florida agency operating aircraft has unique and diverse mission requirements. However, there are duplications in function between the law enforcement aviation units in that they each conduct aerial patrol/surveillance missions, disaster response and recovery and domestic security support.

Consolidation of the law enforcement aviation units may result in improved efficiency.² Pooling the resources should allow for broader utilization of the aircraft currently operated. Greater flexibility in scheduling pilots and aircraft would be available to all agencies following cross training of the pilots. With a greater pool of resources, the negative effects of aircraft maintenance, pilot illness, and non-aviation duties on an agency's ability to accomplish a mission can be more easily mitigated.

A single point of contact for law enforcement aviation would be available to all state law enforcement agencies, including those that do not currently operate aircraft. All agencies could use these resources with the confidence that qualified law enforcement personnel are operating the aircraft. Sensitive missions can be conducted with an appropriate understanding of the unique requirements necessary for law enforcement.

Additional aircraft types would be more readily available to all agencies. Currently, helicopters are only operated by FWC. A consolidated aviation unit should allow immediate access to these specialized law enforcement aircraft when the situation dictates that these aircraft are the best resource for the mission. The geographic distribution of the airplanes and helicopters has the potential to reduce response times to incidents, reduce flight time to operating areas and perhaps fill gaps in coverage that may currently exist. A cohesive approach to law enforcement aviation should prevent the duplication that is possible when multiple agencies are pursuing individual approaches to similar needs.

There are potential disadvantages of consolidating the aviation resources that must be considered. These include the cost of training required to prepare the officers for a greater variety of missions. The need to train new pilots could increase if officers choose to remain with their current agencies in non-aviation roles rather than become part of a consolidated unit. Agencies could lose the benefit of the non-flying work that these individuals perform when conditions prevent aviation operations. The pilots are law enforcement officers first and foremost; the aircraft is just one of the tools that they use to support their agencies and its mission. They can just as easily be found along the highway, in the woods, or on the water enforcing the laws of the state.

² This was discussed as Option 2 in a report produced by the Florida Office of Program Policy Analysis & Government Accountability. *Centralizing Aviation Operations and Implementing Cost-Saving Strategies Could Reduce State Spending*, Report No. 11-13, March 2011.

The success of a consolidated law enforcement aviation unit would be dependent on the implementation of a program that takes into consideration the variety of priorities among the agencies. Common priorities and goals must be established that ensure the greatest efficiency is gained from the aviation resources. Initial cost savings would not likely be experienced with consolidation. However, efficiencies should be experienced through time as changes in mission priorities and a unified governance of aviation assets occurs. Those types of determinations are beyond the scope of this sub-team. The recommendation to consider consolidating law enforcement aviation operations under the FWC is not a unanimous recommendation of the team. The FDLE does not support the recommendation as it stands at the present.

Recommendation:

The sub-team recommends that consolidation of the law enforcement aviation units of FHP and FDLE under FWC, be considered by the Task Force.

Florida Department of Transportation Aerial Mapping Program

The FDOT Aerial Mapping section operates one airplane and employs one pilot. In addition to flying the airplane, the pilot is responsible for the administrative and support function of the aviation program. The airplane is a Rockwell Aero Commander 500 Shrike. It has been significantly modified and equipped for its unique mission. Reconfiguring this aircraft for other missions is not feasible and no other airplane in the state inventory has the modifications necessary to conduct aerial mapping. There is no duplication of other state aircraft missions. There does not appear to be any efficiency gained by consolidating this program with any of the others. Aerial mapping priorities, image acquisition and quality control is the responsibility of FDOT. Direct management of the airplane and pilot for aerial mapping by FDOT is the best method for providing a timely, high quality product required by state agencies and the public.

Recommendation:

The Sub-Team recommends that the FDOT airplane and pilot not be integrated with law enforcement agencies.

Florida Forest Service Fire Program

All FFS pilots are trained and certified fire fighters. Their primary function is to prevent, detect and suppress wildland fires. The fleet of airplanes and helicopters is distributed throughout Florida to reduce response time to fires wherever they may occur. A portion of the airplane and

the entire helicopter program consists of aircraft acquired through the Federal Excess Personal Property (FEPP) program. The aircraft, parts and support equipment are available without charge but not without restrictions. These aircraft are limited to missions with a fire related purpose. The restrictions limit the availability for these aircraft for the types of missions conducted by the law enforcement aviation units. The property must also remain under the direct control of the State Forester and is not permitted to be transferred to another agency.

The detection and suppression flights conducted by FFS are not duplicated by other units. Aerial ignition flights using helicopters are conducted by FWC as well as FFS. They are addressed separately in this report. The unique mission, training and operational requirements do not allow for a significant advantage by merging with other units. If the requirements of the FEPP program under the State Forester are not maintained, significant fire suppression capability will be lost. No other State of Florida aviation unit is equipped to fill the void that would be created if these fire suppression aircraft were eliminated.

Recommendation:

The Sub-Team recommends that the FFS aviation program not be integrated with law enforcement agencies.

Multi-Agency Aircraft Use - SEOC Air Operations Coordinator

State of Florida agencies operating aircraft have a history of working together during situations requiring aircraft support such as natural disasters. The “pooling” of aircraft and flight crews allows agencies to respond collectively in levels not possible on an individual agency basis.

Based on the valuable lessons learned during Hurricane Katrina in 2005, State of Florida agencies with aircraft assets, to include the Florida National Guard, came together with the Division of Emergency Management to formally establish an Air Operations Coordinator position within FWC to serve in this capacity within the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC).

The purpose of the SEOC Air Operations Coordinator position is to better coordinate air operations with federal, state, and local entities and to serve as a single point-of-contact for agency aircraft operators during disaster-related events. The Air Operations Coordinator fosters a unified system which takes into account the varied federal, state, and local government aviation operations and enhances response efforts by providing a safer operating environment

through flight coordination, reduced redundancy, and money saved by utilizing the most suitable aircraft for the specific mission.

The efficiencies of a unified agency response were validated during the 2010 Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill disaster. Multiple agencies consisting of the Florida Division of Forestry, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Florida Highway Patrol, Florida National Guard, the Civil Air Patrol and the Escambia County Sheriff's Office jointly participated in response to the oil spill. The combination of these aircraft resources allowed for the successful completion of assigned missions with a total of over 1,780 hours of flight time. Without this working relationship, none of the agencies could have individually supported a mission of this scope.

Recommendation:

All State of Florida agencies with aviation assets continue in this relationship with the State Emergency Operations Center.

Managers Group

Recommend the creation of a State Aviation Managers Group that consists of a representative or Chief Pilot from each member agency that meets quarterly to ensure the quality, efficiency and integrity of the state's aviation program. The duties and objectives of this group will be detailed in a memorandum of understanding. This group will act as a cohesive advisory group and provide mutual oversight on a variety of areas to include but are not limited to flight operations and missions, procurement of equipment and consumables (fuel and oil), parts, maintenance, training, commonality of airframes and facilities. This oversight includes maintaining quality control, providing interagency advice and technical assistance for the purpose of efficient operations, while ensuring that the individual agencies objectives are met. A concept similar to this was presented as an option in a March 2011 report produced by Florida's Office of Program Policy Analysis & Government Accountability.³

Recommendation:

The Sub-Team recommends the creation of a State Aviation Managers Group to ensure efficient and effective overall operations.

³ *Centralizing Aviation Operations and Implementing Cost-Saving Strategies Could Reduce State Spending*, Report No. 11-13, March 2011.

Aviation Facilities

The agencies operating aircraft continue to seek the most cost effective methods of securing and sheltering their aircraft. There is a history of cooperative effort and new opportunities are taken advantage of when made available. This is the case with recent changes at the Tallahassee Regional Airport.

The William D. Martin Hangar facility is located at the Tallahassee Regional Airport on property leased from the City of Tallahassee. The facility has a 100 x 100 hangar, six T-hangars, storage, workshop and office space. The areas other than the T-hangars (used by FWC, FDOT, FHP, and FFS) had been used by Department of Management Services (DMS) for the Bureau of State Aircraft and were vacated earlier when DMS discontinued aircraft operations. FDOT has assumed management of the facility.

The Florida Forest Service has occupied a leased site on the Tallahassee airport facility for more than 50 years. The lease expired earlier this year and negotiations for a new lease have been ongoing. The original lease was for 25 years with a 25 year option for \$1. (Leases of this type are no longer available due to federal regulations associated with airports receiving federal funds.)

Moving Florida Forest Service operation from a separately leased property to the William D. Martin Hangar Facility at the Tallahassee airport will result in substantial cost avoidance. The savings will be \$60,450 annually in property lease charges alone. Additional savings will be realized with the elimination of \$26,999 of average annual operation and maintenance costs for the aging buildings on that site. The result is a combined savings of more than \$87,000 annually compared to the cost of remaining at the current location.

State aircraft currently share leased hangar facilities at Lake City and Ocala. In both cases the facility is leased from the local governments that operate the airports. There are instances where multiple aircraft are located at the same airport without common facilities. In most cases the aircraft are in a T-hangar that houses an individual aircraft. The name "T-hangar" is derived from the shape that follows the outline of the wing and fuselage of a typical airplane. Arranging the storage area in this configuration allows for the sheltering of an airplane in the fewest square feet. This efficiency is passed on to the renter in the form of the least costly method of providing security and protection from the elements for the airplane. The T-hangar typically does not allow space for maintenance or servicing of more than one airplane. The cost of leasing multiple T-

hangars can be less than one larger hangar. The availability of larger hangars is limited when compared to that of T-hangars.

Recommendation:

Support the funding and operation of the William D. Martin hangar facility under the management of FDOT for use by multiple state agencies.

Review aviation facilities in areas with multiple state aircraft to ensure the most cost effective space available is utilized to secure and protect the aviation assets.

Aircraft Fuel

Fuel represents a significant portion of the direct operating cost for an airplane or helicopter. Aviation units continually seek opportunities to keep these costs as low as possible. There is no one single approach that works best in all situations. As a result, numerous purchasing methods are used to acquire jet fuel and avgas.

The two agencies operating turbine powered helicopters purchase jet fuel at Department of Defense (DOD) contract rates. Current rates are significantly less than retail prices. At the time this was written the difference between DOD contract fuel price and retail price at Tallahassee Airport was more than \$2.00 per gallon.

The state fuel contract vendor, Wright Express, provides a discount of 1.45% on fuel purchases. They have arranged for aviation fuel purchases to be made using AVCARD. The fuel card is not accepted at all airports, sometimes requiring aircraft to travel farther to refuel than would otherwise be necessary.

A discount is frequently offered to aircraft operators which are tenants at a fuel supplier's location. The negotiated or standard discount is available at several locations where a hangar or tie-down spot is leased.

Bulk fuel purchasing has also been used when pricing and volume make the method economically advantageous.

Recommendation:

The Aviation Managers Group should review fuel purchasing options on a regular basis to ensure that the most economical methods are utilized.

Maintenance

Florida Forest Service is the only agency with an internal maintenance program staffed with aircraft mechanics and inspectors. The feasibility of merging state aircraft maintenance facilities has previously been reviewed by legislative staff. At that time the Department of Management Services also conducted aircraft maintenance. Merging of those maintenance programs was not recommended in large part because of the requirements of the Federal Excess Personal Property (FEPP) program relied on by FFS.

The FEPP program allows the State Forester to borrow federal property for fire related purposes without payment. The Florida Forest Service aviation program is dependent on aircraft, parts and equipment acquired through participation in this program. A violation of the FEPP program requirements would result in the loss of critical firefighting equipment and the ability to borrow property in the future. The impact of this loss could extend to the fire prevention and suppression equipment used throughout Florida.

FFS maintenance personnel are based at six locations. They accompany helicopters when deployed to locations near wildfires as well as perform maintenance at their respective hangar facilities. All FFS maintenance facilities are equipped for helicopter support. The level of airplane maintenance support varies, with the greatest capabilities at Tallahassee and Okeechobee.

During periods of peak activity the FFS internal maintenance capability can be exceeded, requiring the assistance of cooperators and private business to meet the demand. At other times workloads may allow FFS maintenance personnel to assist other agencies with their maintenance needs.

Recommendation:

FFS should work with the Aviation Managers Group to define maintenance capabilities available to other units and develop a process to provide service where possible.

Aerial Ignition

Two agencies, FFS and FWC, use their helicopter for aerial ignition of large acreage prescribed burns. Both maintain a complement of trained personnel and machines required to conduct these specialized missions. Pilots and machine operators must conduct or attend refresher training regularly to ensure a safe operation. The FFS supplies aircraft for burns conducted by other state agencies as well as their own. The operating costs are reimbursed by the user. The FFS is capable of providing aircraft for the 40-50 hours of aerial ignition annually that is currently conducted by FWC aircraft. This would allow FWC to focus on law enforcement missions.

Recommendation:

The Florida Forest Service should provide aerial ignition aircraft services to all state land management agencies.

APPENDIX A: State Agency Aviation Unit Missions

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)

The FWC Aviation Unit serves a major role in law enforcement operations, search-and-rescue missions, natural disaster response, and ecosystem management for the state of Florida. FWC Pilots are all sworn officers who are trained beyond routine pilots to specifically conduct FWC's mission and to perform law enforcement duties (*to include pursuits and arrests*) and operate sensitive surveillance equipment to ensure public safety. With Florida's vast acreage of Wildlife Management Areas, National Forests, and remote coastlines, the aircraft act as "force multipliers" by directing limited ground resources to contacts on the water or in wilderness areas. FWC Aviation was requested to take the lead in conducting "Deepwater Horizon" reconnaissance for the State of Florida. In addition, FWC aircraft played an integral first responder role during the multiple hurricanes of 2004. Aviation assets are also a primary component in the effective enforcement of resource violations. Night aerial patrol, search and rescues and interdiction of criminal activities are conducted using night vision goggles (NVG) and Forward Looking Infra-red (FLIR) equipment. Combined with the vast area of patrol required, Florida also hosts the largest number of recreational and commercial boaters in the nation, resulting in dedicated aviation hours targeting reckless operation, manatee protection and boating and accident response. In the past two years, FWC aircraft have conducted over 288 flight hours of search-and-rescue missions resulting in 173 persons assisted. The vast majority of these are boaters rescued from along remote coastlines or offshore.

Florida Highway Patrol (FHP)

The Florida Highway Patrol's agency mission is to promote a safe and secure Florida through law enforcement and traffic safety awareness, render aid and assistance to the motoring public, protect life and property, interdict criminal activity and provide Homeland Security support. The core mission of the FHP Aviation Unit is to support the agency's mission through aerial detection of violations of Florida's traffic laws. FHP pilots must first be commercially rated with a minimum of one year road experience as a trooper and 500 flight hours flight time. New pilots have to undergo approximately three months of rigorous training to perform the specialized tasks of aerial traffic enforcement and the associated courtroom testimony. Historically, about half of the pilot trainees were incapable of performing these tasks and were returned to normal duties as a road Trooper. A seasoned pilot typically generates 8000 traffic stops each year for vehicles exceeding speed limits or driving improperly, increasing FHP's ability to reduce traffic

crashes in the state. FHP aircraft respond to vehicle pursuits facilitating the apprehension of fleeing law violators and helping to reduce the risk of injury to other motorists. FHP aircraft provide assistance during disasters by providing traffic flow information during evacuations and transporting personnel and supplies during the response phase of a disaster's aftermath. FHP aircraft have been utilized to transport emergency medical supplies such as the Smallpox vaccine.

Florida Forest Service (FFS)

The Florida Forest Service's mission is to protect Florida and its people from the dangers of wildland fire and to manage Florida's forest resources to ensure that these resources are available for future generations. The FFS aircraft support the protection of Florida's forests through aerial surveillance, which includes spotting smokes, detecting fires, aerial suppression and providing direct assistance to fire suppression efforts on the ground. In addition, FFS aircraft conduct arson surveillance where incendiary is expected, firefighter transport and forest surveys. FFS helicopters are used to deliver water and retardant chemicals to aid in fire suppression and conduct prescribed burning with aerial ignition devices.

Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)

The Florida Department of Transportation's mission is to serve the people of Florida by delivering a transportation system that is fatality and congestion free. The FDOT's aircraft provides state of the art high quality aerial imagery in support of the FDOT's State Highway Map, Work Program, FDOT Districts, Florida Department of Emergency Management (FDEM), other state agencies, and to the public. The digital imagery and aerial mapping products produced are critical to FDOT's responsibilities to include mapping of railway corridors, topography, and coastal erosion. Aerial imagery tasks include pre-storm and post-storm color infrared and traditional photography to support mapping and analysis for emergency management purposes.

Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE)

The Florida Department of Law Enforcement's mission is to promote public safety and strengthen domestic security by providing services in partnership with local, state, and federal criminal justice agencies to prevent, investigate, and solve crimes while protecting Florida's citizens and visitors. Furthermore, the mission of FDLE's aviation assets is to provide an aerial observation platform to assist investigators, local, state, and federal, with conducting

surveillance for active criminal investigations, to support Florida's disaster response and recovery efforts, and to participate in domestic security initiatives. FDLE Office of Executive Investigations handles investigations ordered by the Governor and conducts complex cases where public officials are suspected of criminal activity (Public Corruption). These very sensitive and highly confidential investigations usually occur for any of the following three reasons. One, there is an alleged crime, secondly, on specific direction in writing from the Governor, and third, by joint resolution of the Florida House and Senate.

Appendix B: State of Florida Agency Aircraft Comparison 2000 – 2011

State of Florida Agency Aircraft Comparison 2000 – 2011	
FWCC - (2000) 22 Aircraft	(2011) 14 Aircraft
12 Airplanes	6 Airplanes
10 Helicopters	8 Helicopters
FDOT – (2000) 2 Aircraft	(2011) 1 Aircraft
2 Airplanes	1 Airplane
DACS/FFS – (2000) 27 Aircraft	(2011) 25 Aircraft
19 Airplanes	19 Airplanes
8 Helicopters	6 Helicopters
DACS/AES – (2000) 1 Aircraft	(2011) 0 Aircraft
1 Airplane	
DHSMV – (2000) 15 Aircraft	(2011) 9 Aircraft
12 Airplanes	9 Airplanes
3 Helicopters	
FDLE – (2000) 7 Aircraft	(2011) 3 Aircraft
4 Airplanes	3 Airplanes
3 Helicopters	
DMS – (2000) 4 Aircraft	(2011) 0 Aircraft
4 Airplanes	
Change in State of Florida Aircraft 2000–2011:78 / 52	
26 Aircraft Reduction	