



Sikorsky Aircraft Firefighters, IAFF Local I-68



ARFF News Tidbits

New ARFF Department on the Horizon Mielec, Poland

In December 2006, Sikorsky Aircraft Corporation Stratford CT USA signed an agreement to purchase aircraft builder *PZL Mielec* in Poland. On 16 March 2007 the deal was closed and Sikorsky acquired a 100 percent stake in the company, which is based in the city of Mielec. The company currently has approximately 1,500 highly skilled employees. *PZL Mielec* previously was wholly owned by the Industrial Development Agency (known by the Polish acronym ARP), a government holding company under the Ministry of Treasury. *PZL Mielec* has been Poland's largest fixed wing aircraft manufacturer with a main product line consisting of the *M 28 SkyTruck*, a twin engine aircraft based upon an Antonov An-28.

Since then, Sikorsky has modernized the 1.2 million square foot facility to support the production of the *S 70i International BLACK HAWK* helicopter, the newest variant which is being produced for the international market, while continuing the current capability for aircraft design, manufacture, flight test and delivery.

The first *S 70i* produced was shipped to Sikorsky's Development Flight Test Center in West Palm Beach, FL arriving 4 May 2010 with the first flight taking place 1 July 2010.

In preparation and support of the first flight of S 70i # 2 in Poland, the Sikorsky Aircraft Fire Department Stratford, CT transferred Fire Fighter Walter Sherman and Lieutenant & Training Coordinator Emil Balusek, Jr. to a temporary duty assignment at *PZL Mielec* Poland. Their mission was to train the 81 line personnel of the Mielec Fire Department in aircraft fire fighting and rescue procedures. The Mielec Fire Department had signed a memorandum of agreement to support ground and flight operations for *PZL Mielec, A Sikorsky Company*. The hangar for *PZL Mielec* is situated on a private airport that provides no ARFF protection.

At *PZL Mielec* the ramp up of a new product line and expansion of responsibilities, showed the need for a fire protection specialist. In September 2010, Andrzej Gawrys was hired. He brings to the job: 6 years with the Government Fire Service of Poland retiring with the rank of captain; 7 years in his own business as a fire and safety specialist; and 3 years with Kidde Poland (a UT Fire Company) as the fire and safety specialist. He is a graduate of the Main School of Fire Service (SGSP) – Technical University of Warsaw; holds a Master Engineer of Management degree – AGH University of Science and Technology of Krakow; and is certified as an Industrial Safety Hygienist – University of Rzeszow.

PZL Mielec, A Sikorsky Company, has committed to hiring ARFF firefighters as the rate of production of the S 70i increases, as this would put a burden on the government fire department serving Mielec Poland. As the word got out, retired members of the government fire service that had served the city of Mielec either stopped by the hangar at PZL or Unit 1 (fire headquarters) in downtown Mielec expressing interest in the position of ARFF fire fighter for PZL.

Reestablishing his network with the government fire service of Poland, *PZL Mielec* Fire Specialist Andrzej Gawrys found out that Krakow International Airport in Balice had a surplus 1989 Pathfinder Barracuda Junior containing 5,500 liters of water and 650 liters of foam that was being offered for sale. Road trip ! So the Sikorsky fire fighters from the USA along with Gawrys and two senior management personnel of *PZL Mielec* spent a day at Krakow Balice evaluating the apparatus. That consisted of a review of the maintenance records; interviews with the local mechanic and fire fighters who operated the apparatus; to conducting their own daily on the apparatus; to driving the apparatus and operating the fire fighting systems. Fire Fighter Sherman and Lt. Balusek made the recommendation to purchase and negotiations began. The apparatus was purchased and delivered to *PZL Mielec* in late December 2010.

The cognitive section of the training was conducted in the classroom of Unit 1 (fire headquarters) Mielec. The psychomotor skills section along with aircraft familiarization and extraction took place out at the airport in the *PZL Mielec, A Sikorsky Company*, hangar. Then, drills were conducted for each shift of the Mielec Fire Department to test competencies. The ambulance, which runs out of the local hospital; the Mielec Police Department; and SNOFO, the company that provides security for *PZL Mielec* also participated in each drill. All training was conducted in accordance with the industry

standard NAS 3306 which is the minimum requirement for DCMA contractor flight operations, as future production of the S 70i will include foreign military sales; NFPA 403 , Annex E; and FAA AC 150/5210-17.

Fire Fighter Sherman and Lt. Balusek report that fire fighters are fire fighters the world over. Our brotherhood exists worldwide. From being welcomed at Unit 1 and Unit 2 (the second station of the Mielec FD); to the comradeship they enjoyed during their stay in country; to witnessing and participating in the playful bantering between the senior and junior personnel of each shift.

After the training and drills were completed to the satisfaction of the on-site Sikorsky Aircraft Fire Department reps (Sherman & Balusek) and representatives from Sikorsky Aircraft Aviation & Product Safety, approval was given for the initial engine start and rotor engagement of the S70i #2 which took place on 27 October 2010 with the first flight occurring 15 November 2010, marking a historic milestone of the first BLACKHAWK model variant built and flown in Poland by Sikorsky Aircraft's company, *PZL Mielec*.

Both events occurred without incident and Fire Fighter Walter Sherman and Lieutenant & Training Coordinator Emil Balusek, Jr. returned to the USA, shortly thereafter. Once the hiring of personnel has been accomplished, both are looking forward to a return trip to initiate the fire department at *PZL Mielec, A Sikorsky Company*.

Picture captions:

S 70i initial engine start # 015

Sikorsky FD Lt. Emil Balusek, Jr. standing by with the Mielec FD



S 70i initial engine start # 011 (Below) S 70i initial engine start: left to right Sikorsky
FD F/F Walt Sherman, PZL Fire Specialist Andrzej
Gawrys, Sikorsky Aerospace Maintenance crew chief
James Covalleski, Sikorsky Aircraft Global Flight
Operations Manager Dave Hoha



Barracuda Junior (Below)

Pathfinder Barracuda Junior purchased by PZL
Mielec, A Sikorsky Company



First S 70i flight in Poland (Below)

First flight of the first S 70i BLACKHAWK built and flown in Mielec Poland



S70i first flight # 017 (Below)

PZL Fire Specialist Andrzej Gawrys (right) gives the “thumbs up” as the S 70i goes wheels off for its first flight, with Sikorsky F/F Walt Sherman on the bottle

