

THE INTRODUCTION OF THE HELICOPTER IN THE MALTA POLICE SERVICE



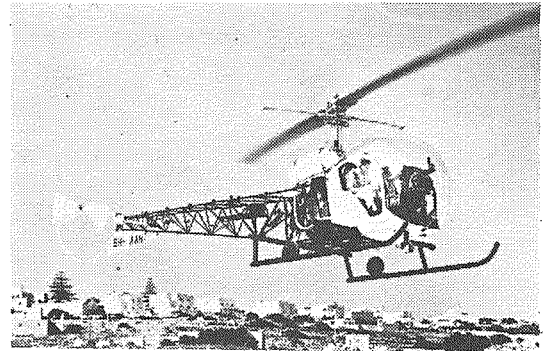
Sgt. Smith



Sgt. Cachia



Sgt. Muscat



In a modern society surely no one can underrate the usefulness of the helicopter service — in our case it was proved that the helicopter has provided precious service to the whole nation. It was in the latter half of 1971 that the Maltese Government seriously tackled this problem and after obtaining the full support of the West German Federal Government this new venture was launched; volunteer student-pilots and mechanics from both the Army and the Police Service were soon after selected and were sent on their way to Germany. At the German Air-base near the village of Fassberg these candidates immediately commenced their courses of study under German lecturers, and further to facilitate matters the German authorities took it upon themselves to provide English-speaking lecturers and this benefited greatly our men.

During these courses nothing was taken lightly and a seventy per cent pass mark was expected from each candidate in each particular subject which was being dealt with, otherwise a return ticket to Malta was the alternative. Suc-

cessfully terminating their courses the newly-fledged pilots and mechanics, after months of study and hard work returned to Malta eager to embark on their new jobs and, four Bell, two-seater helicopters, which the German authorities had placed at their disposal during their training were also graciously donated to the Maltese Government to the joy of all concerned.

With the arrival in Malta of these four helicopters patrolling over our bays and inlets the first to breathe a sigh of relief were surely our fishermen, who previously had to encounter harsh competition from fishermen of other nations and who used to encroach well inside our territorial waters venturing even inside our bays without ever before being stopped or challenged.

Contraband vessels which formerly approached our shores to contact local sea-craft had to keep their gaze upwards on realising that they might from time to time be spotted by our helicopters.

Sea-pollution was the main object of several successful patrols and some of these even resulted in Court prosecutions

with fines of over £M200 awarded against offending captains. With so many ships and sea-craft continuously plying within our territorial waters, anti-pollution patrols had to be stepped up.

Equally important are sea-rescue operations like the one undertaken in the waters of Wied iż-Żurrieq, where an unfortunate bather found himself in difficulties and was being carried out to sea by the current prevailing at the time in that area. In this case were it not for the timely intervention of one of these helicopters in providing a means of support which is regularly reserved for such operations, this man, who incidentally turned out to be a serviceman, could have drowned even before the arrival of a patrol boat in the area.

In matters of crime enquiry and investigation the helicopter came in useful service as well; most worthy of mention being the early spotting, in 1975, of the cars which were used in the St. Paul's Bay and the Gżira bank robbery, and this apart from other minor cases of police investigations.

Helicopter patrols are also spread to include the sister



Sgt. Aquilina



Sgt. Micallef



P.C. Bonnici



P.C. Stivala



P.C. Micallef Hawkes



P.C. Incorvaja

island of Gozo as well; the case of the yacht which was in difficulties with its six persons on board, in windy weather and choppy seas, a few miles outside the territorial waters, and which was safely directed to harbour can readily be remembered by everyone.

Besides rescue and other general duties, the services of the helicopter came in usefully as well in the case where a call for urgent transportation of blood-plasma from Malta's general hospital to that of the sister-island of Gozo was successfully and promptly accomplished. One of the earliest operations satisfactorily accomplished was in the case of a

shipwrecked cabin-cruiser on the shores of the Comino island on the 28th June, 1973. In a few words these helicopters have already proved their worth over and over again.

Referring again to our men's sojourn in Germany, the period spent there was by no means dull — on the contrary the courses of study were well-planned and organised and were made as interesting as could be.

All our candidates shared the same sports and other recreational facilities and social amenities which were offered to everyone on the station, and tours to historical and other places of interest were also organised; in fact all our men enjoyed their stay in such a pleasant and friendly atmosphere.

A welcome addition to our Helicopter Flight was a jet-type helicopter which we received from the Libyan Government. This new machine necessitated further technical as well as theoretical and practical training-courses to be undertaken by our men. This time the Libyan

authorities also provided adequate courses of instruction, which were taken locally by both the pilots and the mechanics. This was in 1973. Later, when overhauling of these aircraft was due, the Italian Government offered by taking the major responsibilities of these overhauls. The Italian Government had furthermore provided Italian lecturers for refresher and advanced courses on both types of helicopters. An interesting feature in this line was the return to Malta of some of these helicopters which were transported back to the Island inside bigger helicopters of the Italian Armed Forces.

Although the upkeep of such aircraft appears to be almost prohibitive in matters of financial backing, not to mention as well technical and other matters, we have up to now, at least managed to obtain and make the utmost use of such a very useful service to our community; thanks again to all concerned and to those who have so far contributed to the success of this service.

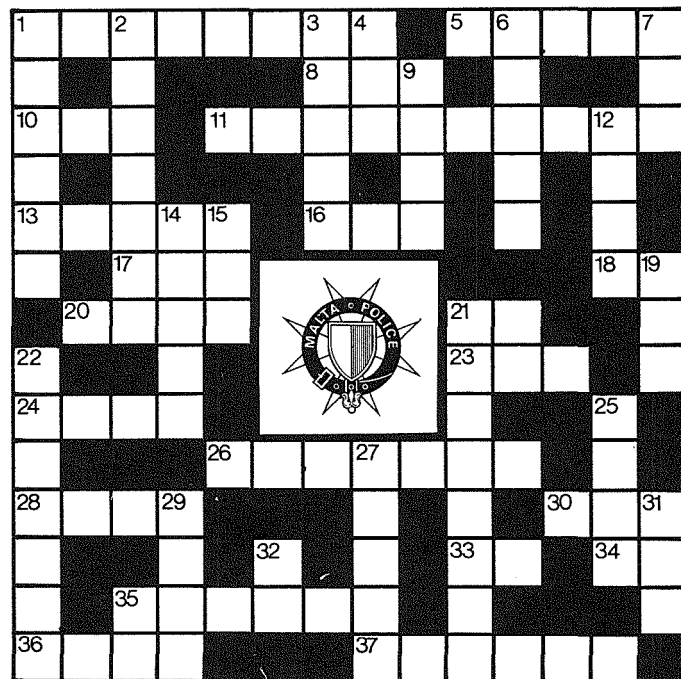
TISLIBA NRU. 1

WEQFIN:

1. Sod hafna (6).
2. Minn ta' l-ewwel (7).
3. Zball kbir (5).
4. Olqot il-musmar fuq din (3).
6. Karfus (5).
7. Dan mimli sabih (3).
9. Raħal f'Malta (4).
12. Hekk isejhulu l-barri l-Ispanjoli (4).
14. Tnaqqis (5).
15. Opra jkun fiha xi tlieta minn dawn (3).
19. Waħda għandna bħal din (3).
21. Il-fuq mill-bejt (8).
22. Bil-penzijiet dan (7).
25. Mixtieq (4).
27. Wiċċa jaqlgħaħha (5).
29. Ta' Verdi jew tal-baħar (4).
31. Għamel bħall-għasfur (3).
32. Ġnus Magħquda (2).

MIMDUDIN:

1. Arma (3).
5. Raħal f'Għawdex (5).
8. Biha jibda r-Randan (3).
10. Bħal 7 weqfin (3).
11. Marsa fil-Belt (10).
13. Halliel min għamilha (5).
16. T.V. Taljan (3).
17. Bħal 15 weqfin (3).
18. 21. 26. Hidma fil-gonna (11).
20. Fil-kampanja hemm hafna (4).
23. 33. Magħqudin (5).
24. Faċċata (4).
28. 34. Post fl-Italja (6).
30. 36. Arti (7).
35. Mogħti l-ordni (6).
37. Hemm sala tagħhom fil-Palazz (6).



Riġal ta' OLD SPICE SET jingħata lil min jitla' bix-xorti fost dawk li jibagħtu soluzzjoni tajba. Indirizzaw hekk:—
"IL-PULIZIJA",

c/o Malta Police Association Office,
Police Headquarters, Floriana.