

New helicopters for Guard in Waterloo 'significant upgrade'

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WATERLOO, Ia. – The Iowa Army National Guard Aviation Support Facility has two new helicopters that feature better technology than the Vietnam-era one they replace.

The Army Aviation Support Facility in Waterloo unveiled the new UH-72A Lakota helicopters to the public Thursday. They replace a 1968 Huey OH-58.

The aircraft cost about \$6 million each. One is equipped with a thermal imaging camera, powerful search light and mapping and imaging screens. The other helicopter is lighter and can carry more cargo or personnel. It has a hoist system used on medevac aircraft.

"That hoist capability is really a huge asset to the state of Iowa," said Chief Warrant Officer Mike Mauss, an Iowa Army National Guard flight instructor and pilot.

The aircraft also have twice the range of the Huey and can reach anywhere in the state and beyond with refueling.

"These are a significant upgrade in every measure," Mauss said. "The technological upgrade is amazing."

Lt. Col. Tim Eich, Army Aviation Support Facility commander, said Army National Guard units usually receive older vehicles and equipment as a matter of procedure.

"From what I can tell, it's the first time the Iowa Army National Guard has picked up brand new aircraft right from the factory in about 40 years," he said.

The aircraft will be used for domestic emergency response and emergency management, as well as for transport and search and rescue operations.

"The capabilities are phenomenal compared to what we had before when it comes to search and rescue," said Iowa National Guard Public Affairs Officer Col. Greg Haggood.

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