

Officials announce T-3A Firefly final disposition

9/11/2006 - **RANDOLPH AIR FORCE BASE, Texas (AFPN)** -- Nearly a decade after the Air Force stood down the T-3A Firefly fleet following three fatal accidents, Air Force officials made a final disposition decision to salvage the aircraft in place.

Base officials here announced the selection of TOTALL Metal Recycling Inc., of Granite City, Ill., to handle the disposition contract.

The company is scheduled to begin operations at Hondo Airport, Texas, Sept. 11, and complete the task before Sept. 25. This is a two-part contract with the destruction of the 106 T-3s at Hondo Airport at no cost to the government and the transport of four T-3s from Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., to Hondo Airport and their destruction set at \$12,000.

The Air Force no longer has a mission for these aircraft since the cancellation of the Enhanced Flight Screening Program. As well, the Air Force found the cost of getting the aircraft or any of the aircraft's components in airworthy condition for resale was prohibitive. The final disposition decision was delayed due to litigation.

Air Force agencies reviewed disposition options for the T-3. Those options included selling the aircraft for parts via commercial sales to storing them in the Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Center. The Air Force, after considering costs to remove, transport and refurbish to meet FAA minimum standards for safe resale to the public, declined these options due to excessive costs. The aircraft will be completely destroyed and the scrap metal value will be used to off set the disposal cost.

The Slingsby T-3A Firefly was selected in 1992 to replace the T-41 aircraft for the command's Enhanced Flight Screening Program. From 1993 to 1995, 113 aircraft were purchased and delivered to Hondo, Texas, and the U.S. Air Force Academy, Colo.

The Air Education and Training Command commander stood down the entire T-3A fleet in July 1997 as a result of uncommanded engine stoppages during flight and ground operations. A major factor driving the decision were three T-3 Class A mishaps in 1995, 1996 and 1997 that resulted in the deaths of three instructor pilots and three student pilots. The accidents were investigated, and the causes were attributed to spin recovery procedures and engine malfunctions.

In September 1999, the chief of staff of the Air Force approved termination of the T-3A EFSP, and AETC declared all T-3A aircraft excess to the command's needs. In 2000, the CSAF requested a new mission be found for the T-3A; however, a study completed in 2002 did not recommend a follow-on mission.

The remaining T-3A aircraft were then stored without maintenance at the Air Force Academy and the Hondo Airport. In the 2002 to 2003 timeframe, the 53 aircraft at the Air Force Academy were disassembled, crated and trucked to Hondo.

(Courtesy of Air Education and Training Command News Service)



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