TO: MAYOR & EACH COUNCILLOR
FROM: CITY CLERK'S OFFICE

CITY OF PORT ALBERNI

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Office of the Mayor

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November 21, 2006

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UBCM Members

0150-01

The City of Port Alberni requests your support and assistance in order to help save this province's premier forest fire fighting equipment – the Martin Mars Water Bombers. These aircraft, the largest water bombers in the world, continue to be sound, operational aircraft. The owners – Timberwest, have announced the sale of the planes as they no longer fit within the company's core business activities (press release attached).

The City asks for the province's immediate action to invest in the Martin Mars Water Bombers to ensure that they remain in British Columbia, continuing to provide our forests and communities with their fire fighting capacity. Please see the attached letter to Premier Gordon Campbell.

The sheer size of the Martin Mars aircraft alone, never mind the incredible amount of water they drop, means they are a rare and unique fire fighting commodity, especially suited to interface fires, where residential properties are threatened by wild forest fires. No other aircraft can deliver the massive 60,000 pound payload as quickly as the mars and continue to deliver it every few minutes sustained over several hours.

Flying Tankers Inc. is a self-sufficient operation which employs up to 20 personnel. All maintenance tasks are carried out on base and the highly skilled technicians who maintain the aircraft are also part of the flight crews. They have maintained these aircraft for peak flying performance with additional parts and supplies available for sustained service. All of this is threatened as our province's resource with the imminent sale of the aircraft.

Port Alberni City Council is asking that the province step in and invest in these aircraft, their support infrastructure and the personnel that operate and maintain them. The flying tankers have assisted many of your communities and we request your help to attest to the necessity in keeping them active within our province. Please provide a letter of support directed to our Premier asking that the province invest in the Martin Mars Water Bombers, before this valuable resource is lost.

Yours truly
CITY OF PORT ALBERNI

Ken McRae
Mayor

c. Ken Watson, City Manager
Terry Dixon, Flying Tankers Inc.
Hira Chopra, Chair ACRD
Dewayne Parfitt, Alberni Valley Chamber of Commerce
Stacey Robins

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CITY OF PORT ALBERNI
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TimberWest

For Immediate Release: November 10, 2006

TIMBERWEST SEEKS BUYERS FOR MARTIN MARS WATER BOMBERS

Vancouver (BC) – TimberWest Forest Corp. today announced that it is selling its two Martin Mars water bombers.

"We have made the decision to seek buyers for the Martin Mars water bombers as the planes are not part of our core business functions," said Paul McElligott, TimberWest President and CEO. "TimberWest is a forest land management company and we believe there are other private sector interests who are in a better position to operate these planes."

TimberWest has made arrangements with public and private sector agencies to ensure that its forest land holdings on Vancouver Island continue to receive forest fire protection services.

"The company is confident that by working with the systems in place, we can protect our land assets on Vancouver Island from forest fires," said McElligott.

The Martin Mars water bombers, initially conceived as military bombers, have been providing fire-fighting services in British Columbia for over 40 accident-free years. They are based in Sproat Lake, near Port Alberni on Vancouver Island, and were originally operated by a consortium of partners, including TimberWest. However, for the last five years, TimberWest has been the sole operator.

"Over the years, the company has put significant resource into upgrading these planes. We believe the two planes have been rigorously maintained to keep them in a safe and effective operating condition. They will be attractive to those parties whose business interests are suited to operating these types of aircraft," said McElligott.

As a condition of sale, TimberWest will require that one of the planes be donated to Port Alberni upon retirement for use by the community as a heritage attraction.

"This is consistent with a commitment we made to the people of Port Alberni and reflects our support for local communities," added McElligott.

Some interest has already been expressed by the private sector to operate the aircraft, which, in addition to forest fire-fighting capabilities, have solid tourism and marketing potential for the right buyer.

The tendering process for the sale of the Martin Mars aircraft closes on December 31, 2006.

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For more information:
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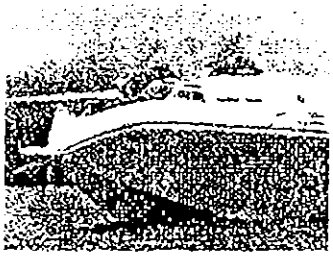
TimberWest

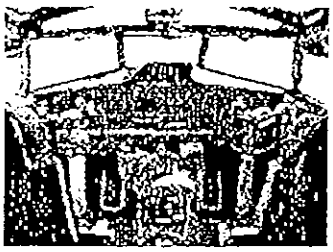
BACKGROUNDER

- A total of five Martin Mars aircraft were built in Baltimore, Maryland in 1942-43.
- They were originally conceived as a military bomber for long-range mission and patrols
- The planes were redesigned and classified for long-range general transportation because of their demonstrated heavy lift capability.
- In 1959 a consortium of British Columbia coastal forest companies formed Flying Tankers, which then purchased the remaining aircraft and converted them to water bombers.
- Two of the aircraft have continued to operate, providing unsurpassed fire-fighting protection services to British Columbia's coast and interior and as required to neighbouring jurisdictions in Alberta, Washington State, Oregon and California.
- The planes are operated by a crew of four, including a captain, first officer and two flight engineers
- Each plane can hold over 27,000 litres (7,200 US gallons) of water/foam load, enough to cover three to four acres in a single drop. The planes have the capability to use fresh or ocean water.
- It takes the aircraft a skimming distance of about two kilometres to pick up a load of water. They can operate from a body of water as small as six kilometres depending on surrounding topography and other approach and departure requirements.
- Both aircraft have the capability to drop either straight water or water mixed with foam onto fires. In 2005, one of the aircraft was also fitted with long-term suppressant.
- Once the planes are airborne, foam concentrate is injected into the water load at a ratio of 30 U.S. gallons into the 7,200 U.S. gallon water load.
- Once dropped, the tumbling action causes aeration which converts the water load into a foam load, a process repeated for each drop.
- The planes are housed at Sproat Lake on Vancouver Island, but have the capability to operate for extended periods away from their base.

The Philippine Mars
Photo by John Gustafson



The Hawaii Mars
Photo by Stuart Haigh



The Mars
Photo by Christian Ruggan

AIRCRAFT FLEET - THE MIGHTY MARTIN MARS

Firefighting certainly wasn't what Glenn L. Martin had in mind for the design of the Martin Mars. Originally conceived as a bomber for long range missions and patrols, the production aircraft were redesigned and classified for long range general transport because of the demonstrated heavy-lift capability of the prototype. The 'Big Four', as they were affectionately known, established lift and endurance records which remain valid today and they logged some 87,000 accident-free hours before being retired by the USN and sold to Flying Tankers. Mr. Martin would be very pleased to know his original intention of the Mars in a bomber role came to pass in their second career as waterbombers!

Philippine Mars
Red Tail - bottom drop system
Canadian Registration C-FLYK
S/N 76820

Hawaii Mars
Red Tail - bottom drop system
Canadian Registration C-FLYJ
S/N 76823

During the fire season, the aircraft are kept in a state of readiness to meet the existing fire hazard conditions. They can be in the air in ten minutes and, based on historical data, each can make a drop every fifteen minutes. Working in tandem, this equates to 7,200 US gallons (27,270 litres) every seven minutes and each drop can cover an area of up to 4 acres (1.6 hectares). It has often been said that the Mars, with a 60,000 pound (27,216 kilogram) payload of foam, is like "a huge wet blanket". The highly experienced Mars pilots, working closely with the Incident Commander, deliver the water or foam right where it is needed.

Each Mars carries 600 US gallons (2,270 litres) of foam concentrate - enough for 21 drops of a 0.4% solution which is the standard used although it may be decided to use more or less foam as dictated by the Incident Commander. The Mars are also equipped to deliver Thermo-Gel which when mixed with water forms a light gel by encapsulating the water droplets. This product provides a more even coating of the fuels as well as lasting longer on the ground.

Flying Tankers completed test and evaluation of Class A foam in 1986 and began using it with the Mars as a matter of routine in 1987. It has been estimated that the foam capability of the aircraft increases the efficiency of the Mars by at least 30%. The ability of the machines to drop massive amounts of foam lends itself particularly well to the suppression of large natural interface fires and the Mars have excelled in this regard.

The Scoops

The Engines
Photo by: Andreas Bartosik

If you would like information or submitting photos to our gallery contact us at flyingtankers@shaw.ca

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The Mars carries a crew of four: Captain, First Officer and two Flight Engineers, all of whom work together as a team to get the job done - efficiently and safely. Since the loss of the prototype waterbomber in 1961, the Mars operation has been accident-free for both those flying the machines and those working on the ground. The strict flight procedures the crews adhere to ensure every effort is made to continue this enviable record. The Mars are maintained to the highest standards and undergo intensive repair and overhaul each year. It should suffice to say that the people who maintain them also fly in them - added incentive to do their work well!

The most frequently asked question regarding the Mars is "How do they pick up their water?" This part of the flying operation is, perhaps, the most demanding in terms of teamwork among the crew. The Captain executes a normal landing, keeps the the aircraft "on the step" and allows the speed to decrease to 70 knots. He then passes engine power to the Flight Engineer and selects the scoops to the "down" position. The ram pressure for injecting the water into the tanks is such that the aircraft is taking on water at a rate in excess of a ton per second. To account for this added weight, the Flight Engineer must advance the throttles to maintain a skimming speed of 60-70 knots to ensure the aircraft remains on the step. Pickup time is, on average, 25 seconds. When the tanks are full, the Captain will have the scoops raised, call for takeoff power from the Flight Engineer and carry out a normal loaded takeoff. Once airborne, the foam concentrate is injected into the water load (normally, 30 US gallons of concentrate into the 7,200 US gallon water load) where it is dispersed and remains inert until the load is dropped. Once dropped, the tumbling action causes expansion which converts the water load into a foam load. This process is repeated for each drop. In other words, this vital team work is carried out, on average, every 15 minutes per aircraft. For a Gel drop, the concentrate is injected during the scooping process to allow even mixing.

THE MARS BEST EFFORT: click here to view the SPECIFICATIONS PDF