

Part Of The Team:

LAPD's Support of Women

By Sgt. Michelle Blackstone

The Los Angeles Police Department's (LAPD) airborne law enforcement program consists of 11 civilian and 85 sworn personnel. The sworn ranks consist of one captain, three lieutenant/pilots, 10 sergeant/pilots, 38 police officer/pilots, 28 police officer/tactical flight officers and five tower operators. The sworn ranks also consist of six women.

Sandra Rosas, Renee Muro, Sara Jaramillo, Angela Krieg, Debra Dickerson and Michelle Blackstone all currently work for LAPD's air section, which began in 1956 with one Hiller helicopter. In those days, the mission of the unit was to conduct traffic patrol of the city's freeway system. In 1963, a second helicopter was added to the fleet and, in 1965, a third. The first turbine-powered helicopter, a Bell 206A Jet Ranger, was added to the fleet in 1968. The division later incorporated American Eurocopter AStars into their fleet.

Today, LAPD's Air Support Division (ASD) fleet consists of 12 American Eurocopter AS350 B2 helicopters, five Bell 206 Jet Rangers, and one King Air C-12 fixed-wing aircraft. The duties of today's aircrews have greatly multiplied compared to those of the "traffic reporter" of yesterday. ASD operates seven days a week, 24 hours a day. The divisional average annual flight hours are in excess of 18,000, flown in support of the LAPD officers working patrol, narcotics, major crimes and various other field related operations, including special events.

Sandra Rosas began her career as an LAPD officer in September 1988. During her tenure as an officer, she has worked a variety of assignments and is currently assigned as one a tower operators.

The LAPD Heliport is one of the largest civilian heliports in the country. The tower operators are required to remain diligent and handle the 24-hour a day air traffic control in a safe and expeditious manner. The tower operators are also required to handle the continual barrage of telephone calls and facility tours and are well versed in handling all emergency procedures and ensuring that if necessary, the firefighting equipment is fully operational in the event of a fire on the flight deck. In addition to her responsibilities as a tower operator, Rosas spends her free time with her family and spoils her granddaughter at every opportunity.

Renee Muro was appointed to the ASD in March 1993. She is currently assigned to the Special Flights Section conducting surveillance operations. As an officer, Muro worked various assignments, including patrol, where she was a field training and plainclothes narcotics officer. She eventually was promoted to the rank of Senior Lead Officer and was responsible for the units assigned to a specific area of Newton Division.

After approximately 10 years in the field, Muro became an ASD tactical flight officer. Prior to becoming a full-time LAPD officer, she was a line reserve police officer, obtained her Bachelor of Arts degree in French Literature from UCLA, and was a bilingual elementary school teacher. Muro said her most wonderful accomplishments, however, are her two beautiful children Analise, 4, and Andrew, 2.

Sara Jaramillo, also a TFO, joined ASD in May 2004. Jaramillo is a tenured officer with just over 10 years on the job. Prior to her arrival at ASD, she worked the 77th Division as a field training officer, where she trained probationary police officers. Jaramillo spent as much time in the

field as possible and continually broadened her tactical expertise. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree in philosophy from Scripps University and enjoys wakeboarding, motorcycling and spending time with her family.

Angela Krieg was appointed to the department in September 1984. After working a variety of patrol assignments and eventually obtaining the position of field training officer in the Southeast Division, Krieg applied for and obtained a position as a TFO in January 1990.

Krieg arrived at ASD with a tremendous amount of flight experience. She had a commercial rotorcraft-helicopter rating, a commercial helium balloon rating, commercial single and multi-engine airplane ratings and an instrument rating. It was no surprise that she was quickly promoted to the rank of Pilot/Police Officer II+6 in August of that same year.

Krieg eventually continued her flight training and later received her airline transport ratings in airplane, single engine land, and airplane, multi-engine land and sea. She is also a certified flight instructor for airplane, single engine and multi engine land, instrument airplane and rotorcraft-helicopter. Krieg received her command pilot "wings" in November 1990, becoming the first female to have completed training and be presented with her wings. She has since flown air support to regular operations (ASTRO) missions, surveillance and was a member of the fixed-wing cadre, flying the department's King Air, C-12. Krieg's outside interests include snow skiing. She is mother to two teenagers, Kevin and Lauren, who keep her busy with sporting events and school projects.

Debra Dickerson began her career as an LAPD officer in December 1989. She has worked several assignments, including patrol and vice. Dickerson applied for and received an assignment as a TFO in December 1996. She has worked special flights (surveillance unit) and ASTRO as a TFO.

In February 2006, Dickerson became the department's first female chief TFO. In addition to the numerous responsibilities in that position, she still found the time to continually offer her support as part of the Crisis Response Cadre to officers in need throughout the department.

Dickerson's hard work paid off in September 2006, when she entered flight training as the third female pilot in the department. She received her command pilot wings in April 2007.

Dickerson said that during her 11-year tenure at ASD, she has not found any unique challenges that would relate to her gender. "The basic premise of either you can do the job or you can't is true regardless of whether you are a male or female. We hold a great responsibility for the safety of either the officers on the ground and/or the aircrew, and nothing can change that," she said. "I have enjoyed my career with the LAPD and especially my years at ASD. If I had to do it all again, I would without hesitation."

Sergeant Michelle Blackstone became a member of the department in September 1988. She worked several assignments as an officer, which included undercover assignments in both narcotics and vice, crime suppression units and various gang units, such as CRASH.

Blackstone originally came to ASD as a TFO in March 1996 and left in August 1999 when she was promoted to the rank of Sergeant. As a sergeant, Blackstone worked as a patrol field supervisor, gang unit supervisor, internal affairs surveillance and investigations agent and was a patrol assistant watch commander before returning to ASD in March 2007. Blackstone entered pilot training in May 2007 and recently received her command pilot wings on January 10, 2008, becoming the department's first female ASD supervisor. Her off-duty interests include snow skiing and spending time with her family.