

Press Release

For immediate release



NIVA COSSACK AIDS POLICE AIR SUPPORT May 17 1994

Midlands based West Mercia Police Force have taken delivery of a Niva Cossack 4x4 to provide essential ground support for their Air Operations Unit

The special 12 man police team provides helicopter support for operational officers and is employed in searching missions, mostly crime related, using sophisticated detection aids. The unit operates throughout Staffordshire, Herefordshire, Shropshire and Worcestershire.

"We identified a need for a 4x4 vehicle that could be driven to remote and rural areas in support of our air operations," explained Unit Executive Officer, Inspector Dave Johnson. Other criteria included: compact proportions, good approach and departure angles for tackling steep inclines and a proven suspension layout with plenty of ground clearance. The Niva passed on all counts.



Iain Robertson, Field Operations Director for Lada Cars (right) officially hands over the Niva Cossack to Chief Superintendent A F Warren QPM and John Burford (left) of the West Mercia Police

In police driving events, the Niva has an outstanding reputation for its rugged off-road performance. Only recently Sergeant Dave McVay drove a Niva to its second consecutive outright title in the Federation of British Police Motor Clubs' National Drivers' Championship.

While West Mercia's Cossack will remain decidedly to road specification, it is in the process of being fitted with full ground to air radio communications and fire fighting equipment. It already has on-board a completely separate battery pack for powering up the helicopter in case of emergencies, a police specification roof light bar, including amber lights for airport duties and the unit's distinctive exterior livery.

One of the major advantages of the air operations unit is in its ability to search areas quickly, drastically reducing labour intensive searches. For instance, one square mile can be covered in just 6 minutes from the air, while on foot it can take as many as 450 man hours. Couple this aerial advantage with the Cossack's ability to cover cross-country terrain quickly, and the overall time required to reach a target is reduced to a minimum.

To aid search operations the three man helicopter team utilises a thermal imaging camera which senses body heat even when the subject is hidden. A Global Positioning System accurate to within 10 metres is also fitted, as are video and stills cameras, high powered binoculars, an external Sky-shout-loudhailer and a searchlight boasting 30 million candle power.

Future air searches by the West Mercia unit, especially those off the beaten track, will see the agile Cossack working closely with the helicopter in even the most remote regions, thus aiding the Air Operations Unit's effectiveness and efficiency.