



Zone or inbound to Oregon's ports, to check for stowaways, terrorists, drugs and other contraband. These teams are specially trained in tactics, weapons use and counter terrorism operations, and in many cases are airlifted by the Jayhawks onto the vessels. 'Vertical insertion' is part of the PWCS mission and as the number of vessel inspections increases, so do the number of 'vertical deliveries'.

The rest of Group/Air Station's flight hours are spread between missions in support of Aids-to-Navigation & Waterways Management, marine safety, marine environmental protection and cooperation with state, federal and local agencies. As far as possible, mission objectives are 'bundled' to make good use of the Jayhawk's long endurance and maximise efficiency.

### Modernisation plans

The Coast Guard began converting its 42 legacy HH-60J helicopters to MH-60Ts in January

2007, as part of the Deepwater Program. The project is not only aimed at extending the service life of the HH-60Js but in bringing new technologies to the type. Among planned improvements are new avionics, new radar/Forward Looking Infrared (FLIR) sensors, and upgrades to the gas turbine powerplant. In addition, it will get a modernized cockpit with five multi-functional display screens, full-screen radar display, FLIR and hoist camera images, primary flight instruments, and integrated Traffic Collision Avoidance System (TCAS), and the HH-60 will be modified with an airborne use-of-force package featuring weapons for firing warning and disabling shots, and armour to protect the aircrew from small arms fire.

The first HH-60J conversion to MH-60T prototype was completed in June 2007 and, as of year-end, 40 of the 100 Instrument Meteorological Condition (IMC) certification flight hours had been completed at the USCG Aircraft Repair and

*Above and below: Called upon to undertake a wide range of missions, from search and rescue to drug interdiction to port security, it's no surprise the helicopter crews based at Astoria and North Bend must spend considerable time training and practising for the often dangerous situations they routinely face. Approximately 60 percent of annual flight hours are budgeted for training – a necessary component given the fierce storms and mountainous seas that are a feature of the Pacific Northwest, and which rescue crews have to learn to contend with.*

Supply Center (AR&SC) in Elizabeth City.

The modernisation will further support the men and women of Group/Air Station Astoria in upholding their proud heritage as 'Guardians of the Pacific Northwest'.

### GROUP/AIR STATION NORTH BEND

Located in the coastal city of North Bend, in an area renowned for gorgeous sunsets and beautiful beaches, Group/Air Station North Bend is Oregon's southern 'protector'. Military use of the airport dates back to 3 February 1943 when the Department of the Navy signed a letter of agreement with the city to use a little over 600 acres of the municipal facility and abutting tidelands as a naval auxiliary air station. Additional land was acquired and the station was commissioned on 10 May 1943 as US Naval Auxiliary Air Station North Bend, reporting to the US Naval Air Center in Seattle. Over the years, the facility was home to squadrons of torpedo bombers, dive-bombers, transports, fighters and observation aircraft, although its declared primary mission was the administration, operation, maintenance and training of Fleet Units. Additionally, it was to serve as a base for inshore patrol as well as provide aviation facilities for naval and army squadrons, and landing facilities for lighter-than-air patrol craft (blimps). From 1943 through 1945 the station was primarily used as a training

