

## Trump Helicopter First from SureFlight Facility

By Dale Smith

When most shops celebrate the opening of a new paint facility, they hold an open house or send out a press release. SureFlight went way beyond the ordinary, christening its new multimillion-dollar, 18,000-square-foot facility by painting one of the most recognized private helicopters in the world—Donald Trump's Sikorsky S-76B.



"Mr. Trump and his aviation team recognized that repainting such a high-profile helicopter required the finest paint shop available," explained Dan Watkins, CEO of SureFlight, adding that another reason was "because of our reputation with Sikorsky helicopters—in particular, the reputation of our manager, DeWitte Binkley."

Binkley was with Keystone Helicopters for 22 years prior to SureFlight's startup in February 2009, Watkins continued. "He has probably painted more S-76's than anyone in the world."

Watkins said that along with providing repaint services for helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft, the new paint shop is located right next to Sikorsky's factory facility at Chester County Airport (MQS) in Coatesville, Pa. SureFlight used Sherwin-Williams Aerospace Jet Glo Express Polyurethane to paint the S-76B.



"Since it was a pre-owned helicopter, we stripped it down to the airframe to do some minor cosmetic repairs," Watkins said. "We also removed all the inspection panels, cowlings and cabin, cockpit and landing gear doors. That's why a helicopter can actually take more time and be more labor-intensive than a similar sized airplane." All total, Watkins said SureFlight spent a solid three weeks on the project. "We spent more time on it than we estimated, but we seem to do that with all the helicopters we paint," he added.

"Some shops don't do all the additional pre-paint prep work," Binkley continued, "but it's our standard practice. It's just a higher attention to detail. When you have all the parts off, you can address each one individually. You can clean the insides of the panels and doors. We treat a repaint just like it is a new aircraft from the factory."

According to Binkley, when SureFlight "reinstalls everything, we use brand new hardware and we don't paint it. If you paint the hardware, the first time you remove a panel you chip the paint off, and your new paint job doesn't look new any longer. That's why we don't do it."

Another way SureFlight helped ensure that Trump's S-76B would stay looking new for a long time was to employ Sherwin-Williams Aerospace's new JetGlo Express paint.

"We talked them into the Express product. They wanted to use Sherwin-Williams, but they wanted the conventional paint," Binkley said. "Our new facility is a low VOC-compliant shop. We don't use any chromates so we told them they had to go with a high solids paint so it ended up being the JetGlo Express."

The paint "is a high-performance polyester urethane coating system that is designed for commercial aircraft, business jets and helicopters," explained Tom Miller, the account executive on the project for Sherwin Williams Aerospace. "It's resistant to Skydrol hydraulic fluids, fuel and hot oil staining—things like that. They won't damage the JetGlo finish."

JetGlo "is also a buffable paint system, so it's easy to clean up bits of dirt or paint chips," Miller said. "You just use some buffing compound and a buffer to return that deep color and beautiful, glossy finish. It cuts way down on repair time and costs."

Binkley added that "many shops are still resisting high solids paints because they are not familiar with them. There's always a learning curve. The bottom line is you don't give up anything going to the high solids finishes. You still have the same color retention, depth of image—all the performance properties you want in a great paint except the harmful VOCs."

Trump's new S-76B is actually the second S-76B in his fleet. The first S-76B, and the one seen in the opening of "The Apprentice," is now part of Trump's casino operation. With the look of that S-76B so well-known, the decision was made to duplicate the black and red paint scheme of that aircraft for Trump's personal helicopter.

"While they wanted to duplicate that look, the one thing they wanted to change was the Trump logo font on the fuselage. They wanted to make it larger," explained Owen Watkins, SureFlight's president. "We have an in-house design department and showed them a series of renderings with a more artistic flair."



Watkins said that Trump visited SureFlight's shop during the project and that he was very interested in the project. "He asked a lot of pertinent questions about the paint selection and colors. You could tell he was involved and thinking about the entire process." Donald Trump "and his entire organization are all about building on the Trump brand," he added. "We worked closely with Sherwin-Williams to make sure he got an aircraft back that represented the quality of his brand."

Were they successful? Well, if you're a fan of *The Apprentice*, all you need is one look at the overall quality of SureFlight's work and the only thing left to say would be: "You're hired."



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