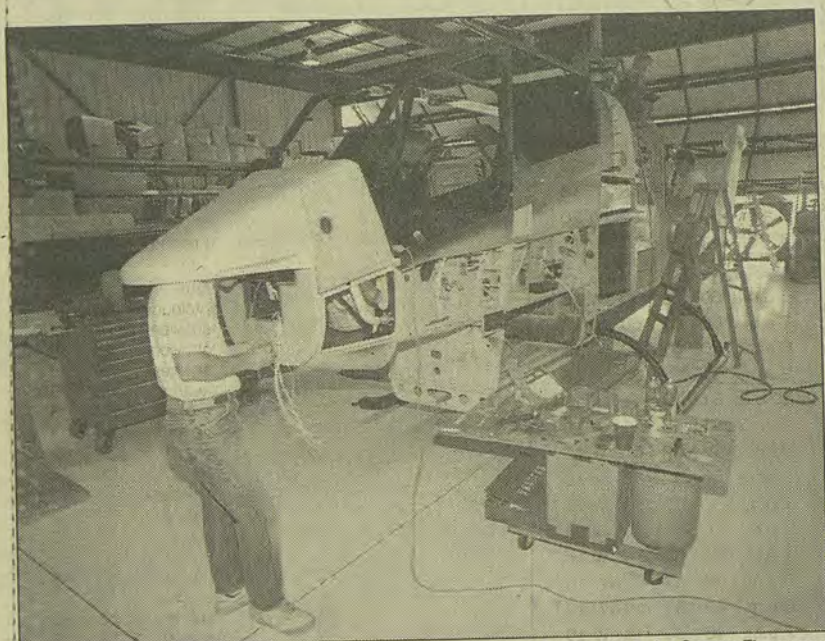


know that they have an operator who understands the equipment."

(293)



Tribune photo by George Thompson

Employees of Tsirah Corp. work on refurbishing one of the two Cobra attack helicopters owned by the corporation.

Helicopters

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1
DuPage Airport.

The Cobras are the only two in civilian hands, said Chuck Aaron, president of Tsirah Corp.

Cobras have a narrow fuselage and a streamlined look. They seat two, a pilot and gunner, and with a cruising speed of about 175 m.p.h. are faster than most other helicopters.

Though the single-engine Cobra is no longer in production, the Army has about 500 in service. Bell manufactured several variations of the single-engine Cobra, beginning in 1965. A twin-engine version is used by the Marines.

The cost of a new Cobra was about \$12 million, according to Aaron.

Financial backing for Tsirah—Hebrew for "hornet"—comes from Robert D. Van Kampen, a wealthy investor and collector of rare biblical manuscripts who founded a municipal bond firm now known as Van Kampen Merritt. He sold the firm in late 1983 for \$185 million.

Van Kampen and his wife moved from their West Chicago estate last year to a new complex in western Michigan.

He is a director of Tsirah, which company lawyer David J. Allen describes as an outgrowth of Van Kampen's interest in aviation and small aircraft.

Tsirah is shopping the helicopters to foreign countries approved by the State Department or wealthy individuals, advertising in aviation trade journals and defense publications.

"It could be the ultimate toy of their lifetime," Aaron said.

Aaron is an experienced helicopter pilot who headed his own air-charter and helicopter-repair firm in Orlando before coming to the Chicago area. He said the Cobra attracts attention whenever he has flown it to trade conventions or military reunions.

"Everywhere I go, even when stopping for fuel, it draws a crowd," he said.

The weapons on the completed copter are dummy, but weaponry is available from the U.S. government if the Cobras were purchased by an authorized country, he said.

Father charged with killing son is transferred back to hospital

Stephen Buik, the Villa Park man accused of murdering his 7-year-old son, Alex, and wounding his wife and stepdaughter during a domestic dispute Oct. 25 in which he also shot himself, was returned Monday to Loyola University Medical Center in Maywood less than a week after being released to the DuPage County Jail.

Buik, whose medical problems stem from allegedly shooting himself in the right temple, was in Loyola for about two weeks before being released to Sheriff Richard

Doria.

Doria placed Buik at the DuPage County Convalescent Center in Wheaton, where he could receive medical attention, but his medical requirements increased and needed hospitalization.

The hospital stay will apparently delay Buik's court appearances before Judge Ronald Mehling. Buik was to have appeared in court Wednesday, but that hearing will be continued.

Buik, 43, is an unemployed mechanic.