# Sea King used in pot surveillance

## Joint mission involved RCMP, Victoria police and the military

Rudy Haugeneder
*News staff*

That military Sea King helicopter flying around rural areas of the West Shore recently wasn't on a rescue mission.

It was on a search – a search that helped find enough marijuana plants to make between 10 million and 20 million joints.

It was part of an annual aerial police search this time of the year for large and small ready-to-harvest pot-growing plantations around Vancouver Island, said Cpl. Greg Cox, spokesman for the RCMP's Vancouver Island district.

However, he didn't have figures on how much pot police found growing on Crown land around the West Shore.

Across Vancouver Island and including the Capital Region, the joint military, RCMP and municipal police effort found and "eradicated" 19,000 mature marijuana plants – a record haul that exceeded last year's take of 16,500 plants.

Each plant can be used to make between 500 and 1,000 joints, he said.

The Sea King helicopter was one of three much-maligned Sea Kings used during marijuana search and destroy missions, he said. The helicopters, known to be plagued by mechanical difficulties, suffered no breakdowns during the search.

Cox said Vancouver Island police officers wrapped up the nine-day air and land operation about a week ago.

Police hit about 350 sites where marijuana was being illegally cultivated on Crown lands.

The aerial phase started on August 21, "when an integrated team of police officers from the RCMP, the Victoria police department and the Saanich Police Department took to the skies over Vancouver Island with the assistance of the Canadian military."

The Sea Kings flew the police officers "to remote and challenging locations" he said.

"As anticipated, this year's project was very successful in eradicating a large quantity of marijuana plants that were destined for sale on the streets of the Vancouver Island communities and possibly beyond," Cox said.

"We believe that the sale of the eradicated marijuana would have profited organized crime groups, in turn providing them funds for other serious criminal activities in our communities," he added.

Although the aerial portion of the Island District Marijuana Eradication Project has concluded, Cox said "police officers across Vancouver Island remain committed to eradicating illegal outdoor marijuana crops."

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*File photo*

**Military helicopter Sea King hovers before landing after taking part in aerial surveillance of marijuana plants growing in the West Shore area and other points on southern Vancouver Island.**


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