



Postcard from Honduras

AFM contributor **Arnold ten Pas** recently returned from Honduras, where he had the chance to document examples of most of the Fuerza Aérea Hondureña types in service at Base Aérea Hernán Acosta Mejía, located just outside the capital, Tegucigalpa.



Above: The Fuerza Aérea Hondureña (FAH, Honduran Air Force) employs seven Bell 412s, stationed at Base Aérea Hernán Acosta Mejía (Toncontín International Airport), home of the service's helicopter and transport units. As well as six Bell 412SPs, a single Bell 412EP – serial 980, seen here – is used for VIP and presidential transport duties. It was delivered in December 2014. Right: The 'Huey' has an illustrious history in FAH service. The UH-1B was the first subtype to be delivered, 20 ex-US Army examples arriving in the 1970s. Ten surplus US Army UH-1Hs were acquired in 1980 and another four were donated by Taiwan, under a bilateral agreement signed in December 2013. The former Taiwanese helicopters were shipped to Puerto Cortés via sea freight in February 2015, then onwards to Tegucigalpa by road. Currently, five UH-1Hs are believed to remain active at BA Hernán Acosta Mejía, among them is serial 950. All photos Arnold ten Pas/4Aviation



Above: Transport-configured Cessna 208B EX serial 021 at BA Hernán Acosta Mejía. The first two EXs were delivered in August and December 2015 and the third example was first noted last December. Below: Basic training within the FAH is entrusted to the US-built Maule MXT-7-180 Star Rocket, which replaced the Cessna T-41 Mescalero. The first four newly built aircraft were delivered to the Academia Militar de Aviación at Base Aérea José Enrique Soto Cano in June 2008, as a donation from the US government. One was damaged in a heavy landing on September 11, 2008 and was repaired and returned to service. An attrition loss occurred on November 29, 2009. Another batch of four Star Rockets was donated by the US government and handed over between November 2011 and January 2012. One Maule suffered damage in a take-off accident at Toncontín on June 27, 2015, to leave six examples remaining today. This particular aircraft (serial 276) has since been assigned to BA Héctor Caracciola Moncada for liaison duties, replacing the Piper PA-31.



Above: Bell 412SP serial 979 is among survivors of ten examples originally delivered new in 1986-87. Five were completely overhauled and refurbished by Uniflight, in Grand Prairie, Texas between 2009 and 2010. They also received a limited avionics upgrade. Attrition losses occurred on September 10, 1989 and November 25, 2000, while another three helicopters were placed in storage pending a similar overhaul. It was reported in December 2014 that a pair of the stored examples had been shipped to Fort Worth, Texas, for refurbishment and eventual return to service. One of the 412s was badly damaged in a take-off accident on October 24, 2015 and may be beyond repair.

Above: The Northrop F-5 Tiger II entered service in 1987 and continues to provide the backbone of the FAH. Ten refurbished ex-USAF F-5Es and a pair of two-seat F-5Fs were delivered, of which six (four F-5Es and two F-5Fs) are believed to remain airworthy. An F-5E attrition loss occurred on June 3, 1999. The aircraft are assigned to Base Aérea Héctor Caracciola Moncada near the port city of La Ceiba and some airframes were recently overhauled by ENAER (Empresa Nacional de Aeronáutica de Chile). The immaculate appearance of serial 4007 suggests it is among the overhauled jets.

Left: Among the more recent additions to the FAH fleet are four Cessna 208B Grand Caravans. Three Model 208B EX aircraft are used for transport duties, while this single 208B – serial 025 – is employed for ambulance services.