

## South Dakota National Guard Soldiers are instrumental in finding a lost child.



UH-1 (Huey) helicopter

One family near Chadron, Nebraska is celebrating a special early Thanksgiving gift. Thanks mainly to the South Dakota National Guard, the family of 22 month old Trevor Lewin had their son safely home for the holiday.

On November 4, 1996 South Dakota National Guard Lt. Col. Ted Johnson, Military Support to Civil Authority's Officer (MSCA), received a request for helicopter support for a search and rescue mission. The Dawes County Sheriff's Department, Nebraska, had received a report of a lost 22 month old boy from his ranch home near Chadron. The urgent request reported that at approximately 4:30 p.m. on November 4th, the small boy, Trevor Lewin, wandered away from a ranch house about 15 miles southwest of Chadron. Neighbors and rescue personnel had responded to the Lewin's frantic plight with dogs and lots and lots of volunteers.

In addition to the helicopter and crew, Special Agent John Walker with the South Dakota Division of Criminal Investigations was also requested to support the search and rescue mission with a hand held thermal imager. Special Agent Walker had a long drive, and when he arrived at the National Guard flight facility at the Rapid City Region Airport he was met by Lt. Col. Johnson, Lt. Col. Dale Clelland, Chief Warrant Officer 4 Frank Effenberger, and Sgt. 1st. Class Bruce Abrams. At about 10:15 P.M. pilots Effenberger, Clelland, crew chief Abrams, along with Johnson and Walker departed the airport. They arrived at the scene at 10:59 p.m. with an intensive ground search still being conducted by various search and rescue teams, law enforcement officials and civilians, about 130 in all. When the National Guard crew arrived, the scene was "disheartened and gloomy with searchers fearing the worst", according to Johnson.

As the pilots flew the UH-1 (Huey) helicopter, John Walker began imaging the area with an Agema 510 thermal imaging device out of the rear of the Huey. Johnson stated, "I was amazed at the precision and confidence the pilots had when they were flying at treetop level giving the imaging device the best chance to work." During the search Walker noted an abnormal hot spot that appeared to be a small person up against a tree. The pilots maneuvered the helicopter back over the area in hopes of relocating the spot. The helicopter then landed about 50 yards from the location of the image. Due to darkness and rough

terrain, they were unable to locate the exact spot. At about 1:30 a.m. a very cold and scared, but unharmed young boy was located in the area they first noticed the hot spot. The temperatures the evening of the search were in the low 20' and high teens. The boy was transported to the hospital and released.

After locating the missing boy the crew landed at the ranch. Lt. Col. Johnson said, "The mood swing of the family and searchers turned into what you would expect, joyful and exhilarated, with heartfelt thanks from the family and friends". The National Guard crew then returned to Rapid City and landed at 3:15 a.m. on November 5th, with relief and the satisfaction of knowing how important their contribution was.

Duke Doering  
CW5 (ret.)  
Historian