

# Plea Deal Struck in Helicopter Parts Case

By David Rosenzweig – Los Angeles Times Staff Writer

Sept. 7, 2005

A San Fernando Valley manufacturing company pleaded guilty Tuesday to selling the Army and Air Force substandard rotor pins for their fleets of Black Hawk helicopters.

Under the terms of a plea agreement with federal prosecutors, Apex Manufacturing Co. of Sun Valley is to pay \$793,000 restitution and a \$400,000 fine.

The deal is subject to approval by U.S. District Judge Margaret M. Morrow, who set sentencing for Nov. 28.

In exchange for the company's guilty plea to a fraud count, the government also agreed to drop its case, consisting of two fraud charges, against the company's owner, Jack Harootun, 51, of Glendale.

The defects were discovered in 2000 when an Army medical unit in Hawaii reported that rotor pins on the UH-60 helicopters were failing flight inspections because of corrosion and cracking. The pin is used to secure the aircraft's four rotor blades.

No mishaps occurred because of the faulty pins. Nevertheless, the military grounded its Black Hawk utility helicopters, built by Sikorsky Aircraft Corp., for inspection and replacement of the Apex-supplied pins.

In a statement read into the court record Tuesday, Harootun acknowledged that his company shipped 3,579 rotor pins to the military in 1998 without disclosing that an aluminum alloy component had not been heat-treated to increase hardness and resistance to corrosion.

Apex Manufacturing, which was located in North Hollywood at the time the offenses occurred, has relocated to Sun Valley.

Under the plea deal, Apex can withdraw its admission of guilt if the judge rejects the proposed penalties.