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Hughes Springs VFD converts steel soldier into a firefighting machine

April 3, 2017 — Hughes Springs, Texas — Hughes Springs Volunteer Fire Department recently received a military excess vehicle through the Department of Defense Firefighter Property Program and a \$20,000 grant for a slip-on unit through the Rural Volunteer Fire Department Assistance Program, both programs are administered through Texas A&M Forest Service.

The VFD converted the Stewart Stevens 2.5-ton cargo military vehicle into a large brush truck capable of navigating the rugged terrain in the department's 80-square-mile protection area.

"This vehicle will be one of our first out trucks for wildland fires but it will also be used for structure fires, vehicle fires and mop up," said Hughes Springs VFD Fire Chief William Cates.

Department volunteers converted the truck. They painted it non-military colors of black and red. The slip-on unit has a 500-gallon water tank and a 10-gallon foam tank.

The slip-on unit is a cost-effective tool that is versatile, compact and self-contained. The unit has a poly water tank and a pressure pump and is easily mounted on the back of a pickup or custom-built bed. The foam solution that is added helps to smother the flames and coats the fuel to guard against re-igniting.

"We have been fortunate and haven't had many grass fires this year but this new truck will help our department be ready if the need should arise," said Cates. "The four-wheel drive and automatic transmission will contribute to easier handling of the truck when firefighters are needing to concentrate on battling flames."

The DoD Firefighter Property Program, overseen by the USDA Forest Service, provides excess military equipment to fire departments and emergency service providers. Launched in Texas in 2005, this program has released over 400 retired military trucks to VFDs across the state to help them better protect lives and property. Texas A&M Forest Service transports the vehicle from a military installation, performs necessary repairs and delivers it to the volunteer fire department at no cost to them.

Texas A&M Forest Service is committed to protecting lives and property through its various fire department assistance programs. For more information on programs offered by Texas A&M Forest Service, please visit <http://texasfd.com>.

