

State Police upgrade armored vehicle

By Susan Nienow

There is no comparison between this new behemoth and the old military surplus Air Force peacekeeper or the old armored cars from the '60's previously used by the State Police. The F550 super duty chassis with a V8 engine is wrapped in ballistic steel, and all glass is ballistic rated. At 17,500 pounds, this Lenco Bearcat is one of a fleet of seven serving the state of Virginia and the largest fleet in the nation.

As Sergeant Mark Haygood of the Virginia State Police said, "Wow! It is state-of-the-art." It has all power equipment, a winch, gun ports, extendable running boards, video cameras with sound, and an interior large enough for 12 men and their equipment. It also has a rotating turret with a roof-hatch system.

When asked for specific examples of performance, Haygood joked, "We don't give

all our secrets away." It is for the region's tactical team and has already been used four times, the first time on the day it arrived.

The key is its flexibility. "It rides like a big



Photo by Dan Harrington.

The State Police vehicle is kept in Powhatan County.

truck and drives like a pickup," Haygood explained. It also provides protection. The ballistics steel is designed to withstand a variety of both pistol and long gun ammunition.

"It's a wonderful piece of equipment that took several years of planning," he added.