

Top: Shimotsuma Heliport with Jennifer Murray's R44 and Colin Bodill's microlight on the forecourt  
Middle: Alpha Aviation hangar  
Lower Middle: Agusta 109 used for training police cadets  
Bottom: Blade cover designed by Alpha Aviation



ship in Guam, which although mainly US military also has a few civilians. She was doing well and had sold four helicopters to Guam, when a huge typhoon struck the country. This not only destroyed much of the infrastructure but caused terrible pollution in the air, which then led to corrosion on the helicopters. In 1992 Shizuka decided to cut her losses and bring the helicopters out of Guam and back to her home in Japan.

1992 was not a good year for Shizuka; on top of Guam's typhoon, Japan's economic bubble burst and she had problems with her aviation partner in Arizona, which meant she had to move her students to Seattle to finish their licences. She began to realise it was time to move all her training back to Japan.

The first thing Shizuka needed was a place to train. However, after 1992 with so many companies going out of business it was easy to find people desperate to get rid of property. After looking at various places she came across a yard in Shimotsuma, (north of Tokyo) which was then owned by a truck company whom the recession had forced to sell. She realised its potential immediately.

"It was so quiet," she said, "surrounded by flat areas and Tsukuba Mountain in the distance. There were good hangars and a large area in front for helipads, with fields next to the site for a practice area." She started the school with three R22s and an A350 Squirrel. She decided that, reputation being very important in Japan, she would look for very experienced instructors with a clean record. "All my instructors have at least 5,000 hours and no accidents." This method clearly worked as to this day she has had no accidents or incidents.

She soon became very busy, she says: "My mission statement is I want everybody to be happy, and