

Police Aviation News

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Issue 342

October 2024

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EDITORIAL

A new government is in place in the United Kingdom and it would appear that those that might be considered the 'Office Juniors' are not learning their respective tasks too fast.

We have a rich Prime Minister that included a Robin Hood like intention to take from the rich to give to the poor and to banish sleaze and graft and bring only 'change for good' in his election promises. Unfortunately, he went off script, denied a heating allowance aimed at poor elderly and then forgot to declare sizeable gifts accepted by himself and his associates until pressed. And this was the man who declared that a previous incumbent was culpable when attending work gatherings in Downing Street – the so called 'Partygate'.... it seems that it can only get better.

Meanwhile his ministers have also had trying moments with one policing minister having her bag stolen while visiting and speaking about theft to a Police Superintendents conference and others reading scripts clearly written by civil servants rather than based on personal knowledge. Hopefully it will improve as the new ministers learn their job.

Meanwhile the unscripted and strange activities of NPAS and NPCC remain difficult to fathom. Welcome to the strange world of UK police aviation!

Bryn Elliott

LAW ENFORCEMENT

AUSTRALIA

VICTORIA: As carried in a story in an early issue of PAN, for several years the Victoria Police helicopter operation has operated from the southern hemisphere's highest helipad.

The Victoria Police Centre completed four years ago is a purpose built 40 level office block at Spencer Street, Docklands, Melbourne. The \$650M tower stands beside a 12 storey block completed some ten years ago.



Composite image: The EU contracted Schiebel to support multi-purpose maritime operations with its Unmanned Air System (UAS) Camcopter® S-100 in La Manche (the English Channel) and the southern section of the North Sea. The initial aim of the contract was to seek out shipping exhausts contravening the emissions laws. More recently the craft, based at the Gris-Nez Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) in the Pas-de-Calais has been embroiled in the, often heavy, illegal migrant traffic to England alongside numerous other aerial resources. It provides enhanced support for maritime safety, SAR, surveillance, environmental protection and maritime accident and disaster response. UK Home Office and Coast Guard images added. *Story page 18.* [Schiebel]

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Now it I reported that Victoria Police are seeking a cap on Central Business District (CBD) tower heights to protect flight paths for their helicopters into the future. The proposed changes would affect skyscrapers being built along four flight paths. [The Age]

AUSTRIA

WEINER NEUSTADT: As reported on several occasions over the past three years in PAN, the air police in Austria are moving their main base in Vienna out to a newly built complex in Wiener Neustadt.

After three years of construction, the operation moved from Vienna Meidling to the new facility in Wiener Neustadt last month. Meidling was located within police headquarters in a residential area.



© Facebook

It was faced with several challenges: lack of space for new helicopters, changed international maintenance regulations, lack of expansion opportunities, no night flight operations and a decentralised flight school in Bad Vöslau. The new base offers an air police facility complete with both maintenance operations and a helicopter school.

Analysis indicated that the military area of the Wiener Neustadt offered space and facilities suited to the police aims. It was already the base for DSE/EKO Cobra ("Task Force Cobra") a police tactical unit of the Ministry of the Interior. It is not part of the police but those volunteering for it are drawn from police ranks to undertake a variety of irregular missions including counterterrorism and hostage rescue crisis management.

A new, two-storey addition with a total area of around 6,250 m² houses the maintenance operation, the helicopter school and the air police base. Workshops and storage rooms for maintenance, teaching rooms of the flight school and offices are housed behind the air hangar. In front of the hangar is the operating pad and parking spaces with underground refuelling. The existing hangar was renovated to allow for larger helicopter types in the future. The costs for the new construction amount to around €26.1M, the hangar amounting to €5.4M.

The symbolic key for the handover of the keys was brought out of the air in accordance with the status: three helicopters circled in the pouring rain on the outskirts of Vienna's Neustadt city, Cobra officials abseiled off as part of a small demonstration and handed over the key.



Gerald Beck (Geschäftsführer Bundesimmobiliengesellschaft),
Bürgermeister of WN Klaus Schneeberger,
Landeshauptfrau Johanna Mikl-Leitner,
Innenminister Gerhard Karner,
Nationalratspräsident Wolfgang Sobotka (alle ÖVP) und
Bernhard Treibenreif, Leiter der Direktion Spezialeinheiten/
Einsatzkommando Cobra

©Philipp Hacker-Walton

CHINA

GUANGZHOU: Airbus Helicopters has delivered the first of six H175s to the aviation force of the Guangzhou Public Security Bureau. The new helicopter will perform public service missions and support emergency management. Alongside two four-blade H145D2 helicopters that were delivered in 2016 and 2019 respectively and have accumulated a total of 3,200 flight hours. This equates to an average of around 250 hours per aircraft per year.



© Guangzhou Public Security Bureau

Airbus Helicopters and SKYCO International Financial Leasing Co., Ltd., a state-owned enterprise belonging to China's Guangdong Province, signed a contract for six H175 helicopters, which will be deployed by the Guangdong Government for search and rescue, emergency medical services, disaster relief and other public services missions in China. SKYCO Leasing is in charge of leading the aviation industry development in the province. On top of the helicopter purchase, the Airbus and SKYCO have agreed on the joint development of support and services activities and an industrial cooperation setup, including promoting the reform to open low-altitude airspace. [Parapex/Airbus]

EL SALVADOR

In the aftermath of a fatal crash of a military Bell UH-1H on September 8 it emerged that the helicopter contained the head of El Salvador's police force is among nine people who died when it crashed in the Central American nation.

Police Director-General Mauricio Arriaza was escorting a suspect in a multi-million-dollar fraud scheme to the capital, San Salvador, when the helicopter came down shortly after take-off. The suspect, fugitive former bank director Manuel Coto, had been accused of involvement in the embezzlement of \$35M (£27M) from a credit union in El Salvador.

President Bukele ordered flags to be flown at half-mast for three days in honour of Mr Arriaza. The president had named him as chief of police in 2019 and he was key to a crackdown on El Salvador's infamous gangs. The country's homicide rate dropped, but human rights groups say security has come at a cost, with some suspects arbitrarily detained and denied access to fair trials.

GERMANY

BAVARIA: Early last month the Bavarian Minister of the Interior Joachim Herrman attended the 50th anniversary celebrations for the Roth branch of the Bavarian Police Helicopter Squadron. Established in 1970, the unit is still based at Munich Airport with three helicopters also stationed at its Roth site.

In 2010, the squadron began replacing its Eurocopter EC135 P2s with eight H135 (formerly EC135 P3) helicopters, which offer an increased take-off weight and a greater range. In 2018, the squadron completed 2,925 missions, 953 of which were at night. It celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2020.

The event included a demonstration by the air unit in cooperation with special units ranging from dogs to firearms to showcase the capabilities of each of them.

In April 2023 Airbus delivered the first two five-bladed H145 helicopters to the Bavarian Police, to be used for the training of pilots and crews. The event at Roth provided an opportunity to show the new aircraft with role equipment fitted alongside the current fleet of EC135 and earlier H145 and even one of the earliest helicopters, a BO105.



NIEDERSACHSEN: The colour scheme for the new Airbus Helicopters H145 due for delivery to the Hannover based police air support operation have been released by Airbus.

The popularity of the BK117 based type remains high and, with an ever-growing waiting list facing would be buyers, there are plans in place to double production. [MM]

IRELAND

GARDA: The latest helicopter for the Garda Air Support has been noted at the Airbus Helicopters plant in Germany. H145 287 is currently carrying test marks as D-HBTS prior to test flying commencing. At the time it was photographed at Donauwörth it was still without its main rotors. [MJ]

Meanwhile the 27 years old BN Defender 4000 is also due to be replaced next year by a new surveillance aircraft. Although the story is not officially confirmed, the Gardai have admitted to buying an aircraft but not which type it was. In a statement issued in July, De Havilland disclosed that a Guardian had been sold to "an undisclosed European country for surveillance operations". In August The Irish Times made the connection and announced that the type is the Canadian-made de Havilland Twin Otter Guardian. These cost about €6.5M before any surveillance equipment is added. The force's budget for last year included an allowance of €7M for a new aircraft.

Despite its long production history the venerable Twin Otter is emerging as one of the more popular surveillance aircraft at present. The highly visible star of recent editions of PAVCon Europe, the type is al-



The de Havilland European demonstrator aircraft was at this years PAVCon Europe and was made available for flights for the delegates. © PAN

ready in completion for the Home Guard of the Royal Danish Air Force with Airborne Technologies in Austria.

The plane will require two pilots to fly it instead of the Defender's single pilot. These would fly alongside a team of specialist gardaí operating surveillance equipment in the aircraft's rear. The standard format in Ireland is for the plane to be registered as a military type and piloted by Air Corps officers and serviced by Air Corps technicians.



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SPAIN

POLICIA NACIONAL: During September, the Policia Nacional took delivery of their seventh new Airbus H135. Registered EC-OIC and with Airbus msn 2257, it also carries their fleet callsign "Angel 07" on the tail.

UNITED KINGDOM

NPAS: Nothing has yet been confirmed in writing, but I hear that, contrary to the stated preferences of the Mayor of West Yorkshire, Tracy Brabin, the West Yorkshire Police are to retain full operational control of NPAS.



ANNUAL REPORT

The 31-page NPAS Annual Report 2023/24 has been published, following September 2024's National Strategic Board meeting. It captures many of the key headlines from the previous year and details operational and financial performance data.



The document was compiled by Glenn Shelley, he was the acting Accountable Manager from January to August 2024. The NPAS Accountable Manager and Chief Operating Officer is Chief Superintendent Vicki White. She has been in post since Assistant Chief Constable Scott Bisset left. There was a short period when Vicki was temporarily away and so the Head of Business Services Glenn Shelley was appointed to the role on a temporary basis. As Glenn was AM at the close of the year, he is the one referenced in the Annual Report - but Vicki is back in the role now.

The report tells the story of NPAS throughout the year and how it is supporting police forces across England and Wales. An average of 100 calls for service every day, and over 90% of attended taskings resulting in a positive outcome, the continued need for air support, and the value it brings to policing, is clear to see.

NPAS operates one of the oldest helicopter fleets in the UK, at least one aircraft has exceeded 20,000 hours and continues to accrue another 600 each year. Maintaining such an old fleet and managing to deliver an effective service that complies with strict safety and regulatory requirements, is a challenge.

Not for the first time NPAS looks forward to the fleet replacement programme through BlueLight Commercial and sees that they are closer to delivering a significant investment in police aircraft and equipment, the first involving the rotary fleet since NPAS was formed in 2012. At the year end, £30.8M was held in NPAS reserves towards the cost of the fleet replacement programme.

Editor: The report notes that between April 2023 and March 2024, the fixed wing crews were deployed 577 times and flew for 506 hours in support of 39 different police forces. It suggests that the move of some 50 miles from Doncaster Airport to East Midlands Airport has both improved the areas it can service effectively and the availability of pilots and crew. Regardless of that the four relatively new fixed wing aircraft are flying less hours between them than the single 20,000 hour EC135T2 based at Oxford. I believe it is a pilotage issue rather than a problem with the airframe.

Lots to read in the report which can be found on the [NPAS website](#).

EAST MIDLANDS

Earth works on a new build base started late in 1993 with the framework being erected in January 1994. The base came into use in May 1994 operating Eurocopter AS355N Twin Squirrel G-EMAU. Early in June 1994 the Home Secretary Michael Howard officially opened the unit. In October 1998 G-EMAU was lost in a fatal accident close to the base. Operated ad-hoc AS355s for a while and then purchased the EC135T1 that many years later was to start up the Cayman Islands operation. Back home that was replaced by the first EC135P2 helicopter G-EMID. It provides an example of the piecemeal purchasing system that NPAS was expected to eradicate.

G-EMID was the first PWC powered P2 model in the UK police helicopter fleet, but it was ordered and configured by the local air unit and as such was a bespoke role fit that reflected what had gone before. It was delivered in 2007. Subsequent P2 models were ordered to a standard new specification that reflected the factory standard. Gone was the Macpod and its associated high skids. Like the Turbomeca powered former Merseyside and Norway police airframe it remains configured with high skids and Macpod, it remains something of a runt in the pack and presents its own problems in training.

Normally the East Midlands base operates a standard configuration PWC powered model, G-SUFK, so having their old aircraft back temporarily was at least worthy of a photograph.

I clearly recall the Oxford sales team extolling the benefits of the high skids and the Macpod at the time but in truth it was slightly too heavy and getting in and out meant clambering up those high skid steps. In addition, although it was not intended that way, in practicality each of the pods was custom made for the airframe it was fitted to. The worst aspect was probably that the model flew slightly differently and sat differently on landing so was therefore an additional training element to avoid alleviating the potential risk for pilots switching between the high and low skid versions. The pod was set aside.

Editor: An example of the pod was donated to the Helicopter Museum in Weston-super-Mare. It may have had its drawbacks, but it was a feature on many of the police fleet for many years.



The insignia in the background relates to the pre-NPAS operation © NPAS Facebook

NEW FLEET

I never did get a finite reply from BlueLight Commercial /NPAS on the perfectly reasonable query on what had happened to the January 2022 tender for new aircraft. The official version would probably have been a useful starting point even if somewhat short on accurate content. By presumption we can assume Heli-Ops, Bell and Babcock are somewhat disappointed – probably nearer to raging – over how they were treated in this matter but that is the commercial expectation when you are expected to negotiate with unprofessional numpties. I believe that, following extensive research assisted by the Bell operating police in Sweden, the Met Police were inclined to order the Bell 429. Such a move, driven by the results of the research, was not in keeping with the inclinations of the ‘experts’ at the Strategic Board. The police team promoting the Bell was duly dismantled and all further work was assigned to the BlueLight organisation. They are difficult to pin down, there are several organisations operating under variations of that name the one involved in the UK police aviation work is BlueLight Commercial based in Birmingham and offering eTendering. The service was launched in November 2004, to give suppliers easier access to tenders and quotations published by the Police and Fire and Rescue services. Unfortunately trying to talk to them as anyone other than a registered tenderer is at arms length and difficult.

There are no official words on what next but PAN understands that the future is surely going to revert to default and be ten Airbus Helicopters H135. That option does at least save anyone with minimal aeronautical experience (also known as the NPAS Strategic Board) having to think too deeply about what to do next. The main difficulty is that Airbus Helicopters is not an aircraft operator and never has been. Many years ago, McAlpine Helicopters created a separate division, OSS/MAS to supply the police and air ambulances with pilots and to supply and operate their aircraft. The news in the Annual Report that there are sufficient funds in reserve for three new helicopters is a start. They will probably waste it on a new hangar.

ROLE EQUIPMENT

If the overarching Airbus Helicopters position is true it gives added credence to another rumour that some of the current fleet of NPAS helicopters (EC135T2/EC135P2/EC145) is to have a role equipment makeover.

Currently the fleet has a mix of sensor turrets from Teledyne FLIR and L3 Harris Wescam. The most recent changes have been to the fixed wing and EC135T2 fleet. These have been fitted with the Wescam MX-10. It would seem probable that the plan is to bring the rest of the fleet into line with those most recent modifications – but it will eat into the cash reserves.

This would indicate the demise of the significantly more capable 15-inch turrets in favour of the standardisation on the MX-10. Nothing wrong with the MX-10 but those on the front line have long held that the larger turret is preferable on many grounds including safety – the ability to fly higher. For NPAS though there are plus points on first cost, when replacement 15-inch turrets are likely to cost £750,000 each, and spare turrets that are common across the fleet. These days the EO/IR turret going down can ground the airframe, a far cry from the days when the crew survived on eyesight alone. As any equipment gets old the number of times it fails increases and, eventually, all sensors need to be renewed.

IN PARLIAMENT

In Hansard September 16; Stuart Anderson the Shadow Minister (Defence) asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent assessment had been made of the sufficiency of funding to the National Police Service (NPAS).

In a written reply, Diana R Johnson, The Minister of State, Home Department and the Labour MP for Kingston upon Hull North stated:

“NPAS provides borderless, round-the-clock, crewed police air support across England and Wales.

“The Home Office supports NPAS through the provision of an annual capital grant. For the Financial Year 2024/25, this grant is £11.46M. The NPAS revenue budget is funded through contributions from police forces. For Financial Year 2024/25 this budget is £49.6M.

“Funding for future financial years will be agreed as part of the ongoing Spending Review.

On 29 July 2024, and after the Labour party had won the general election, Chancellor Rachel Reeves instigated a spending review, arguing there was a need to make "necessary and urgent decisions" because the outgoing government had overspent.”

UNITED STATES

ALABAMA: The City of Oxford in Alabama registered a third MD500 to their fleet last month. Already flying an 1969-build OH-6A registered N535X and a much newer 500E N530X, the Police Dept here have added N369LE, a 1968-build OH-6A [Parapex]

CALIFORNIA: In the central valley of the state Fresno Police operate two EC120 Colibri helicopters that fly around 1,200 hours each year and respond to some 2,400 incidents. With the type now being out of production maintenance costs are rising and a replacement is being authorised.

The choice of the police department is a \$7M Airbus Helicopter H125 and the acquisition has just been approved by the Fresno City Council. They are going for a 10-year lease-purchase agreement with Banc of America Public Capital Corporation to finance the move.

The city is splitting its purchase in order to save more \$850,000. They are buying a base helicopter from



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Airbus and is contracting with Hanger One Avionics to purchase and install the police role fit. That brings the cost down by \$861,745 from what it would have been if the city bought the entire package from Airbus. A basic H125 currently costs \$4.7M and the selected role equipment adds an additional \$2.26M. Fresno is paying a downpayment of \$1.3M for the helicopter and estimated annual payments of \$600,000.

Three pilots will collect the H125 from Airbus' Columbus, Mississippi and fly it to Hangar One Avionics, in Carlsbad, California over three to four days. The work there is expected to see the completed airframe being available for entry into service in Fresno early next year.

The first of the two EC120 Colibri helicopters was purchased in 2003. It has accrued over 14,700 flight hours on it and is scheduled for its next major maintenance in 2027. That is predicted to cost \$300,000, if no major problems are found. [Sun]

FLORIDA: In late August Flagler County, on the east coast of Florida north of Daytona Beach took delivery of a new Airbus Helicopters H125.

The brand-new H125 was taken on charge at a late August ceremony - the aircraft will be operated by their Fire & Rescue unit under the name of "FireFlight". From the July 2023 press announcement by Airbus, the central Florida county ordered the new helicopter to replace their existing AS350B3, the oldest B3 in North America, which they had acquired in 2002 and recently sold to Canada.

In the 22 years since its 2002 helicopter launch, FireFlight has achieved:

- 797 patients transported to trauma centres
- 851 wildfire suppression missions
- 764 law enforcement support missions
- 479 public outreach events
- 282 search and rescue missions
- 2452 storm reconnaissance missions
- 2,087,849 gallons of water

Shortly after the new H125 was delivered to Flager Executive Airport a ceremony was held with representatives from across Flagler County Fire Rescue units, the Florida Forest Service, law enforcement and first responders, city and county officials, and both current and former members of the dedicated FireFlight crew.



Flagler County extended its appreciation to Wysong Enterprises, the Tennessee completion centre they used for the equipment fit-out and painting of the H125. [HeliHub]

MICHIGAN: Last month's report on the new Bell 407 for Detroit was short on detail. It has now been learned that the used 1998 407 helicopter purchased from Bell is now registered as N450BF. It had previously served for many years with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police in North Carolina as N406PD. Interestingly, it also had previously served as N907MC with the Maricopa County Sheriff in Arizona. It's service in Maricopa County had been very short however, as it was repossessed by Bell not long after delivery. Maricopa County had refused payment over a contract dispute. In Detroit it replaces Army surplus OH-58 helicopters. [Facebook]

NEW YORK: On the Westchester County Surplus Auction website, they were selling a 2006 Bell 407 c/n 53703 N509PD. Due for completion at the end of last month, two weeks ago the bids were hovering around \$612,000.

The single Rolls Royce M250-c47B, SN: CAE-847660, Engine Hours: 4,717.9. Engine cycles: 3,883. Airframe Hours 4,916.9, Landings: 6003, Torque events 7,078 Run on landings: 11. RIN: 7,137. Solely used for law enforcement. Wired to accept a Teledyne FLIR 230 or 380 EO/IR sensor. Dual Controls, cargo hook, inlet barrier filter, fire detection kit, SX-16 Night Sun with IFCO filter, Sliding door kit, High visibility crew doors, Rappelling fixtures.





© Facebook

OKLAHOMA: Oklahoma City Police has taken delivery of its latest Airbus Helicopters H125 N740KC c/n 9411 from Hangar One Avionics. The aircraft was undergoing its role fir from April to the end of August and arrived in Oklahoma City in the middle of last month.

One year ago, the police department successfully put forward a case for acquiring a third helicopter to ensure that one was always available. The earlier H125s (actually designated as American Eurocopter AS350B3e when acquired in 2014) are N720KC c/n 7803 and N730KC c/n 7807.

No list of its role equipment has been published but it appears to be equipped with a FLIR Star Safire 380 HDC sensor, Luminator Orion searchlight, cargo hook and Goodrich/Collins hoist.

WASHINGTON: King County Sheriff in Seattle has taken delivery of a new Bell 407GX i N422CT. It joins a fleet composed of a 2008 Bell 407 N407KS, two Bell TH-67 (military Bell 206B-III) comprising N67880 built in 1995 and N78906 built in 2001. They also operate a military surplus Bell UH-1H N790RJ used in SAR work.

Funding of \$2.7M for the new 407 was approved last year to replace a 1973 Bell 206B N411KS. The Bell was purchased by Northwest Helicopters. The old was due an expensive major service and the unit wanted to get the replacement in place to allow the 206 to be retired from service.

SAFETY STAND TO: Still time to sign up for the APSA 2024 Safety Stand To in Spokane County, Washington being held from October 8-10. APSA is working with the Spokane (WA) Regional Air Support Unit

The main event is free and is being held at the Spokane County (WA) Sheriff's Office, Regional Training Center, 13033 W. Highway 902, Spokane, WA 99224 on October 9 with the APSA Training sessions and Sponsor Displays (0800-1700hrs) Classrooms 216A / 216B / 216C / 216D (The Quad)

October 8 offers hoist training (1300-1700 hours) at the training centre but the October 10 Dunker Training at Fairchild Air Force Base is already sold out. To register for this event, check out the APSA website www.publicsafetyaviation.org Accommodation with group discounts is arranged through the Northern Quest Resort and Casino, Airway Heights. Again, check out the link from the APSA website.



AIR AMBULANCE

IRELAND

DONEGAL: A rescue helicopter is being forced to land more than three kilometres from Donegal's main hospital because of health and safety concerns at its helipad.

Members of the Irish Coastguard's Rescue 118 team have expressed concerns over landing at Letterkenny University Hospital and have decided to take casualties to an airfield on the outskirts of Letterkenny at Boangee. The casualties must then be taken by ambulance through traffic to Letterkenny University Hospital's Accident and Emergency Department.

The move follows a health and safety inspection at the hospital's helipad during which a number of issues of concern were highlighted. There are a number of malfunctioning lights as well as concerns over fire extinguishers and also the level training of staff operating in the vicinity of the helipad.

A health and safety inspection was ordered after a recent security breach at the helipad. Management at the hospital are aware of the issue and it is understood they are working to rectify the various health and safety concerns.

CHC Helicopters, (the current operator of the Irish Coastguard helicopter service) is working with the hospital to make corrective actions to issues found in the health and safety check.

UNITED KINGDOM

DORSET & SOMERSET: Dorset & Somerset Air Ambulance are expecting to take delivery of a second Leonardo AW169 in the next two years. In a recently published newsletter, CEO Charles Hackett announced that the charity "have secured a delivery slot from the helicopter manufacturer and we have the initial design scheme for the operational base upgrade". The very fact that they have a confirmed delivery slot confirms they must have paid a deposit. The acquisition of a second aircraft is to both provide maintenance cover for their primary aircraft – without the need to lease an aircraft in – but also to enable the expansion to 24x7 operations.

Currently Dorset & Somerset fly 19 hours a day from 7am to 2am, seven days a week. Adding a second helicopter will also need a larger hangar and other facilities, as noted in Hackett's statement. The current AW169 is based at Henstridge Airfield, usefully located right on the boundary between the two counties. It is operated by Gama Aviation on their AOC. ^[Helihub]

ESSEX & HERTS: The charity has announced the appointment of Bill Long as its new Aviation Director, effective 16th September. Bill will join EHAAT's executive team, bringing with him a wealth of aviation experience and a strong passion for advancing the charity's life-saving mission.

In his role as Aviation Director, Bill will spearhead all aviation-related operations at EHAAT, including the charity's ambitious goal of securing its own Air Operator's Certificate (AOC). This milestone will mark a significant step forward for the charity, giving it greater autonomy in its delivery of critical emergency care across Essex and Hertfordshire.

Bill says "I'm really looking forward to joining the team at Essex & Herts Air Ambulance. It's a great opportunity to be involved at this pivotal stage. Working alongside our current service providers while also driving the development of our own AOC is incredibly exciting. There's a lot of really dedicated people working at EHAAT and I'm looking forward to being in a team with them and to contribute to the remarkable work they do."

Bill's extensive career in aviation is nothing short of impressive. Starting as a pilot in the Royal Navy, where he operated Sea King helicopters in anti-submarine missions, Bill went on to work in police aviation for a decade, flying helicopters in critical missions. His transition to operational sales and marketing at Airbus Helicopters UK (formerly Eurocopter UK Ltd) further deepened his connection to the air ambulance community, where he specialised in national resili-



ence and emergency services. He subsequently moved on from Oxford to take up a defence related post.

Having spent much of his life in East Anglia, Bill's ties to both Essex and Hertfordshire run deep. His diverse background and hands-on experience make him uniquely qualified to lead EHAAT's aviation operations as the charity remains committed to providing exceptional emergency care to the communities it serves.

KENT, SURREY AND SUSSEX: Last month the Air Ambulance Charity Kent Surrey Sussex (KSS) hosted more than 50 key pre-hospital emergency medicine leaders, decision-makers and clinicians for an innovative and thought-provoking national 'Optimising Inclusivity in Pre-hospital Emergency Medicine (PHEM)' Symposium, to discuss how to improve gender-based related barriers to inclusivity within Helicopter Emergency Medical Services (HEMS) and pre-hospital care.

The aim of the day was to inform the discussion around these barriers to generate actionable insights and plans around equity and perception of equity of access to working within UK HEMS and PHEM to drive meaningful progress. This is to ensure that services, and ultimately patients, benefit from the most talented clinicians regardless of their backgrounds and characteristics.

The event, held at Robert Denholm House, Nutfield, in Surrey, saw experts come together from across the UK with a special focus on potential and perceived barriers for clinicians around pregnancy-related challenges, the ability and opportunity to continue in PHEM and HEMS clinical work during pregnancy, maternity and paternity leave, return to work policies and beyond.

Attendees included influential stakeholders from specialties such as paramedicine, emergency medicine, midwifery, obstetrics and gynaecology, and anaesthesia working for a wide range of organisations including air ambulance charities, ambulance services, universities, the Royal College of Emergency Medicine Professional Advisory Group, Ministry of Defence, Association of Ambulance Chief Executives, College of Paramedics, and the Royal Air Force.

GREAT NORTH: Most UK Charity air ambulance operations fly modern aircraft. The Great North operation in the Northeast continues to rely on tried and tested variants of the Aerospatiale/Eurocopter AS365N Dauphin despite this type long being shunned by the others.

Stories of the GNAA helicopters having technical issues are not rare.

Recently, G-NHAD (Guardian of the North II) was noted as being out of action and being roaded for inspection and repair. This time it was 'another' gearbox fault and the stricken airframe was on its way to Leeds/Bradford Airport for what turned out to be a very quick repair. It was back on station with a few days.

GNAA has two other Dauphin's including G-NHAE which remains operational and likely to be seeing increased sorties. A third Dauphin, G-NHAC, has not been seen for some six months and is already at Leeds Airport. [GNAA Facebook/DT]



LONDON: Both H135 helicopters destined to serve London from later this month are now in the UK and undergoing final role fit and crew training based in the new Airbus Helicopters facility at Kidlington Airport, Oxford.

LONDON DRONE TRIALS

Shortly essential blood samples taken from patients at a major London hospital will be sent by drone for analysis, as a means of avoiding delays in the capital's clogged traffic.

This trial service hopes to enable a much faster delivery of the samples when directly compared with ground transport. Led by Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust, the pilot programme will carry blood between both hospitals. The two-mile journey can take over half an hour using a van or motorbike courier, where drones can be expected to deliver samples within a couple of minutes.

Regulated by the UK's Civil Aviation Authority, the project is expected to span six months. It will involve transporting blood samples from patients undergoing operations with a higher risk of complications due to pre-existing bleeding disorders.

The scheme has been organised as a partnership between the hospitals, Apian, a healthcare logistics company founded by NHS doctors; and Wing, a global drone delivery company that is part of Google's parent company, Alphabet.

Ed: The original report stated that a recent drone trial launched by the Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust discovered that drones could be used to safely and efficiently deliver blood stocks between hospitals but neglected to report that these trials were now suspended. St Thomas Hospital is located on the side of the River Thames opposite the Houses of Parliament where Guys is further inland around a bend in the river. It is not clear yet where the route follows the line of the river, something over 2 miles, is direct overland or follows the 1.9 mile road route that takes some 12 minutes to drive in good conditions.

NORTH WEST: Announced during Air Ambulance Week, was news of recent upgrades to all three of their aircrafts, designed to enhance efficiency and futureproof the service!

The improvements include new medical fit interiors, featuring an upgraded stretcher for improved accessibility, power upgrade allowing for an additional 115kg of lift/fuel/equipment, data cell improvements for real-time patient data transmission mid-flight, extra medical kit and door storage. In addition, the three EC135T2 aircraft now feature updated seating, a new access step, and enhanced LED lighting to aid crews around the aircraft, ergonomic rear doors for easy one-handed operation as well as enhanced safety features and a fresh visual rebrand with QR codes and logos. [NWAA]



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YORKSHIRE: The charity air ambulance has ordered its third Airbus H145 and it has been registered with the UK Civil Aviation Authority as G-YAIR. It will be brought to the new Airbus Helicopters UK facility at Oxford for completion work, and we estimate delivery to the customer from there around March 2025. It will join two other five-blade H145 D3 models that they currently fly - G-YAAA and G-YORX - which they received in mid-2023 and will provide better cover when one is down for maintenance. [Parapex Media]

UNITED STATES

NATIONAL: - The Association of Air Medical Services (AAMS)) and Golden Hour, has announced the "Eat Dessert First" Awards Celebration, set to take place on November 5th at 3:30 pm MST during the 2024 Air Medical Transport Conference (AMTC) in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA.

Established in 1980, the Association of Air Medical Services (AAMS) is an international trade association headquartered in the Washington, DC area, Golden Hour is a ZOLL company, a leader in EMS devices, software, and data solutions.

This year's awards event, *sponsored by Golden Hour* celebrates all that is sweet! Attendees will enjoy milk and cookies to toast and dunk while the industry learns who will take home the 2024 Community Awards, as well as the honorees of the 2024 AAMS, AMPA, ASNTA, ICAPP, IAMTCS, and NEMSPA annual awards. This event is open to all AMTC attendees.

Below are the finalists for the 2024 Community Awards:

Program of the Year, sponsored by Airbus

Awarded to an emergency medical transport service that has demonstrated a superior level of patient care, management prowess, high quality leadership through visionary and innovative approaches, customer service, safety consciousness, marketing ingenuity, community service, and a commitment to the medical transport community.

ARCH Air Medical, St Louis, MO

Intermountain Life Flight, Salt Lake City, UT

LIFE FORCE Air Medical, Chattanooga, TN

UNC Carolina Air Care, Chapel Hill, NC

University of Utah Health AirMed, Salt Lake City, UT

University of Virginia Medical Transport Network, Charlottesville, VA

Marriott-Carlson Lifetime Achievement Award, sponsored by Bell.

Awarded to an individual who has made significant contributions to the overall enhancement, development, leadership or promotion of the emergency medical transport community and has been actively involved or participated in an emergency medical transport organization.

Janie Ford, MSN, RN, CFRN, AGACNP-BC - University of Utah Health AirMed

Richard Orr, MD - Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC (Retired)

Stephan Russ, MD - Vanderbilt LifeFlight

Jim Charlson Safety Award

Awarded to an entity (team, organization, individual) who has made significant contributions to the overall enhancement, development or promotion of safety within the air and critical care ground transport community.

Kevin and Sandy Hutton - The Hutton Foundation

Dave and Amanda Repsher, Silverthorne, CO

Kevin Schitosky - Med Trans Corporation

Donna York, Chair, Safety Management Training Academy (SMTA)

Neonatal/Pediatric Transport Award of Excellence, sponsored by AirBorne.

Awarded to a team that has made an outstanding contribution to a neonatal/ pediatric transport service in any of the following areas: enhancing safety, education, leadership, patient advocacy by developing or promoting the improvement of patient care in the medical transport community.

Children's Health Neonatal/Pediatric Transport, Dallas, TX

Children's Nebraska Critical Care Transport, Omaha, NE



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UNC Carolina Air Care Pediatric/Neonatal Specialty Team, Chapel Hill, NC
UVA Health's Medical Transport Network - Neo/Peds Team, Charlottesville, VA

Transport Mechanic Award of Excellence, sponsored by Leonardo

Awarded to an individual who has made significant contributions to the safe operation of medical transport vehicles or the improvement of safe maintenance procedures of medical transport vehicles.

Dave Esteves - Haiti Air Ambulance

Jim Heller - University of Virginia Medical Transport Network

Greg Robbeloth - Stanford Life Flight

Excellence in Transport Leadership Award

Awarded to an air and ground critical care transport leader who has demonstrated a superior level of knowledge and management prowess, high-quality leadership through visionary and innovative approaches, customer service, safety consciousness, marketing ingenuity, community service, commitment to the emergency medical community as a whole.

Ashley M. Chitty, RN, CFRN, CPEN - Life Link III

Jermaine Clayborne, MSN, RN, NEA-BC, CCRN, CFRN, FP-C - University of Virginia Medical Transport Network

William Cyr, MHA, RN, NR - LifeFlight of Maine

Christopher Hardman, MBA, MSN, RN, NRP, CMTE - PHI Health, LLC

Additional notable industry awards to be recognized during the event include:

AAMS Community Impact Award - Awarded to a team, organisation or individual that has made an outstanding contribution to transport medicine which resulted in expanded access, increased health care equity, preserved or broadened services, improved medical transport solvency, strengthened business continuity, enhanced patient advocacy, or improved a foundational element of medical transport that gives hope for a brighter future.

AMPA Medical Director of the Year – Goes to highlight a physician who has made outstanding contributions to their own operation.

AMPA Distinguished Physician Award – Highlights the work of a physician who has significantly contributed to the Air Medicine profession and to recognise lifetime achievement and service to the Air Medical community

The Air & Surface Transport Nurses Association awards highlight exceptional leadership to by an individual in flight transport nursing on a global scale.

In addition, there are awards for flight safety, journalism, education and a Pilot of the Year and another piloting lifetime achievement award.

CALIFORNIA: Mercy Air ambulance and medical provider partners, including Rady Children's Hospital San Diego (RCHSD) and UC San Diego (UCSD) Health System, hosted the annual Southern California Emergency Care Conference on September 14 in San Diego. The conference is unique to Southern California as it brings together physicians, registered nurses, paramedics, first responders, and other critical care specialties in the prehospital, interhospital (transport), and hospital settings.

This year's hands-on learning labs focused on wilderness emergency medicine, led by UCSD, and neonatal resuscitation, led RCHSD. The pre-conference human cadaver lab, led by UCSD and Mercy Air, also helped make the event unique. [Air Methods]

ILLINOIS AND MISSOURI: Air Methods "ARCH Air Medical Service" operation recently held several events to celebrate 45 years serving Illinois and Missouri. These ranged from participating in First Responder Day at the DuQuoin State Fair, a Party on the Pad in Highland, a "Thank You" lunch for partners in Farmington, continuing education in St. Louis, and an open house in Litchfield, members of the ARCH program were able to share what they do with the communities they serve. The program involves nine bases across the two states.



FIRE

UNITED STATES

CALIFORNIA: The Kern County Board of Supervisors minutes of September 24 state that funds are being brought together for a presumed helicopter purchase in the near future.

The detail is unclear but it would appear that funds are being moved around to allow for the purchase of a fire helicopter expected to cost up to \$9M.

The transactions include moving \$3.5M from the fire fund to aid meeting the eventual cost of the unspecified helicopter to be delivered in an unspecified timescale. It was also noted that \$5.5M in Measure K funding (a one-cent sales tax on retail sales) was approved in the county's 2024-25 budget for the purchase of a type two helicopter with an estimated value of \$9M. The county currently has two 1967 UH-1H "Huey" helicopters, N407KC and N408KC, both of which are nearing the end of their useful life.

Of more general interest, at the same meeting supervisors approved a request from the Sheriff's Office to agree to participate in the filming of the television series "COPS" which will be aired on Fox Nation streaming service. [PAN/Parapex Media]

SEARCH & RESCUE

EUROPE

FRANCE/BELGIUM: The EU contracted Schiebel to support multi-purpose maritime operations with its Unmanned Air System (UAS) Camcopter® S-100 in La Manche (the English Channel) and the southern section of the North Sea.

The operation aimed to assist the maritime authorities of Belgium and France across a variety of coast guard functions but was primarily aimed at monitoring ship exhaust emissions.

Stationed at the Gris-Nez Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) in the Pas-de-Calais Department of France, the S-100 supported on request both participating countries within an airspace validated by the civil aviation authority depending on the areas flown over. The UAS has inevitably been drawn into surveying the, often heavy, illegal migrant traffic to England. It provides enhanced support for maritime safety, SAR, surveillance, environmental protection and maritime accident and disaster response.

The operationally mature S-100 executed these tasks equipped with multiple sensors, a Trakka TC-300 EO/IR sensor, an Explicit Mini Sniffer for emission monitoring, a Becker Avionics BD406 Emergency Beacon Locator, an Automatic Identification System (AIS) receiver and a Mode-S Transponder ADSB out [Cover story S/PAR]

IRELAND

SAR: Bristow is ramping up preparations for the start of its new search and rescue (SAR) operation in Ireland following arrival in the country of the first of six Leonardo Helicopters AW189s to be deployed on the contract. First of Irish Coast Guard's new fleet arrived in Dublin on August 28.

Currently run by CHC Ireland on behalf of the Irish Coast Guard, the SAR service will begin transitioning to Bristow Ireland at the end of October, becoming fully operational in July next year.

Five new-build AW189s, plus one older example, will replace the current fleet of Sikorsky S-92s; subcontractor 2Excel Aviation will also supply a pair of Beechcraft King Airs for the service.



The first AW189 – a 2024-built example registered EI-IRR – arrived at Weston airport near Dublin on 28 August. The helicopters will also be based at Shannon, Sligo and Waterford.

Bristow will assume responsibility for Shannon operations from 31 October, with the three other bases progressively transitioning across. In the run-up to the start of the contract, SAR providers including coast-guard volunteers, lifeboat operator RNLI, inshore and mountain rescue teams will conduct training and familiarisation exercises with the new helicopter.

In addition to SAR missions, the fleet will be used for environmental monitoring, and for emergency medical services flights. Bristow was awarded a 10-year contract to run the Irish SAR operation in 2023.

ITALY

COAST GUARD: Tekever, has announced the deployment of its AR5 unmanned fixed-wing aircraft to the Sarzana air base in Italy. The aircraft will be operated by the Italian Coast Guard on behalf of the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) to enhance maritime awareness in the Gulf of Genoa.

The Tekever AR5, a high-endurance UAS, is being deployed as part of a contract awarded to the REACT consortium (CLS Group and Tekever) by EMSA. The aircraft is equipped with advanced sensors, including optical and infrared cameras, maritime radar, an AIS receiver, and an EPIRB antenna, enabling it to perform a wide range of maritime surveillance tasks.

Key objectives of the deployment include: Boosting maritime safety and security: The AR5 will provide real-time situational awareness, allowing for rapid response to incidents such as illegal activities, pollution, and distress calls.

Supporting search and rescue missions: The aircraft's long endurance and advanced sensors will enhance search and rescue capabilities, particularly in challenging conditions.

Protecting the marine environment: The AR5 will be used to monitor whale migration within the Pelagos Sanctuary, contributing to conservation efforts and ensuring the protection of marine ecosystems.

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UNITED KINGDOM

BORDER SECURITY: The new UK Labour Government, only in power since July, has announced up to £75M of new investment for the Border Security Command. The funding will be used to deliver what is described as cutting-edge new technology, extra officers and further covert capabilities across the system. The funding is redirected funds that come from the previous government's Illegal Migration Act.

As part of the uplift, the National Crime Agency (NCA), the police and other law enforcement agency partners will receive a significant cash injection to bolster the UK's border security and disrupt people-smuggling gangs. There is a belated assumption that there will be efforts for more people to cross the channel when the weather remains fair.

New capabilities announced will include covert cameras and state of the art monitoring technology, which it is hoped will enhance evidence collection, speeding up investigations and increasing the likelihood of successful prosecutions. There will be a new unit to improve intelligence collection across UK police forces and information flows to partners, alongside an uplift in prosecutors working in the Crown Prosecution Service to act on investigations.

New personnel will be recruited for the new Border Security Command, led by Commander Martin Hewitt (right). There will be increased work to tackle organised crime groups facilitating irregular migration upstream by intensifying efforts in transit countries to prevent small boat equipment reaching the French coast.

Within days there were reports that the replacement Border Force fleet will not be ready until 2030 at the earliest and is set to cost six times more than its original budget after an alleged Brexit planning blunder. Plans to replace five cutters and six patrol boats used to protect UK borders and pick up migrants in the Channel are set to see costs balloon to £300M.



INDUSTRY

On September 13 HRH Prince William flew into **Oxford Kidlington Airport** to, as we thought, officially launch the new facility into service. Not so it seemed, the intelligence was faulty and the visit was shrouded by a lack of an announcement.



© Airbus image



Prince William was indeed present, but he turned up a mite late and more casually dressed than we were assuming. He likes helicopters – full stop – and he has an affinity with the Airbus product line after flying H145s operated by East Anglia air ambulance. Typically, he arrived at Kidlington in an anonymous H145 that was parked up away from the action. He was there to observe, not to undertake the opening ceremony.

Meanwhile, back in the multi-million-pound new Airbus facility Airbus were undertaking their own launch event.

Double banks of workstations were required to provide spare entertaining space for the opening event, but the intention is that only a single line will

prevail for day to day working and therefore allow full and easy access to the doors to the extensive apron. No one is going to miss the juggling required to move helicopters in and out of the cramped 1948 hangars that were vacated in the summer.

The short speeches and presentations were under the banner of Airbus 50 1974-2024, but it was as much about the long dissolved McAlpine Helicopters as Airbus. Due deference was accorded to the history of McAlpine's place in the growth of the helicopter market in the UK and in particular the emergency services market penetration.

The work stations included around a dozen aircraft in various stages of maintenance (to be resumed the following week) including a handful of emergency services regulars from such as NPAS and the charity air ambulances.



Airframes brought forward as 'set dressing' for the event included an H160 M-ABSG, H145 G-OMBS, H145 G-LAAB inside the presentation area and the other new London HEMS, G-LAAA outside on the pad.

The final act of the day was a fly-past by the SA341 Gazelle display team. A quirky choice in some ways, it was designed by Sud/Aerospatiale, the UK versions built by Westland and it was the first helicopter to make widespread use of the now signature Airbus Helicopters Fenestron tail.

Beyond simply being one of the leaders in the UK helicopter market, Airbus has a sizable stake in the vertical lift infrastructure in one of the Company's 'home countries'. At face value, the Oxford site and its staff of nearly 300 employees have two crucial activities. The first is the completions and retrofits of the helicopters for Airbus Helicopters' customers. The second aspect is the maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) for the helicopters used by organisations such as the police and armed forces. On closer inspection though, the range of activities goes deeper, with a design office that has the responsibility of developing customisation solutions for customers with highly technical equipment requirements on their aircraft. The site also provides training to pilots and engineers, for both UK and international customers, as well as housing the team selling helicopters into the UK market.

Airbus's helicopters are an important part of the nation's civil and defence fabric. In terms of parapublic missions, the NPAS is flying twenty Airbus helicopters, while two thirds of Great Britain and Northern Ireland's air ambulances are Airbus helicopters. Today, all UK military pilots, and rear crew do their mission-specific training on H135 and H145 helicopters.

Robinson Helicopter Company (RHC), the world's leading manufacturer of civil helicopters, obtained FAA approval to double the service life on specific Robinson R66 helicopter components from 2,000 to 4,000 hours. This approval, backed by previously approved data and structural testing, will help operators reduce maintenance costs, enhance reliability, lower operating costs by 6%, and reduce hourly reserve for overhauls by 25%.

This FAA-approved extension, based on rigorous testing and data analysis, directly translates to lower parts and maintenance costs for R66 owners. By extending the service life of critical components from the

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main rotor gearbox, Robinson is helping operators minimize downtime and maximize operational efficiency.

The extended service life applies to twelve selected parts, including five components within the main rotor gearbox. This means fewer overhauls and reduced maintenance expenses for R66 operators. In addition to the retirement life extensions mentioned above, the calendar life for the R66 main rotor and tail rotor blades increased from 12 years to 15 years. [Robinson]

Images from this year's **Farnborough Air Show** of the first test prototype Turkish Aerospace T625 Gokbey TC-HLP (formerly known as the Turkish Indigenous Helicopter Programme). The type was performing for the first time at Farnborough Air Show 2024, having been previously represented by a full-size mock-up – this year relegated to their chalet.

The T625 is reportedly in the process of being delivered to the Turkish Gendarmerie General Command who have ordered 3 airframes. One was noted flying in Turkey as J-6001 in 2022, previously being registered as TC-HLV.

It is predicted that the T625 will replace the legacy AgustaBell AB205 Huey's in the fleet. Other parapublic customers for the T625 include the General Directorate of Security - Polis, the Coast Guard and Ministry of Health. [Helian]



© Helian image



© Helian image



© Helian image

At Farnborough this year, the HelioOps AW139 and one of the Norwegian AW101 SAR fleet. © Helian image

In recent months the **drone industry** has been promoting their small craft for several roles including the transportation of drugs and blood products and attempting to 'prove' that the systems are more cost effective than a paid driver in a van or volunteer ridden blood bikes.

On the public relations side these projects come across well, they are usually attractive to the media and the public alike especially as the overall economics and viability are usually glossed over. Not everyone out there knows that an aviation certified screw or bolt costs a small fortune, one thing is certain and that is that most of the people involved in the UAV cottage industry are also rarely in that league.

There are voices of dissent out there that accuse the developers of the air vehicles of over promoting their product in terms of performance and ruggedness. Most designs do not yet have to meet the same level of stringent design limitations as required with certified civil aircraft. Some of the drones these days are the size of a small Cessna single and yet the differences in certification standards are massive.

Generally, those with oversight on programmes are civil servants with no aeronautical experience and unable to form let alone ask the pertinent questions. At the present this lack of knowledge is not causing major problems – it is relatively easy to arrange the temporary segregation of aerospace for focussed trials – but when, in due time, sizeable craft start to roam freely in shared air space the screws will need to be tightened and that will inevitably lead to higher prices on manufacturing.

Meanwhile all of the trials are just that – a means of finding out the true economical aspects of these small craft.



A new colour scheme for Offshore Helicopter Services © OHS

Offshore Helicopter Services (previously Babcock MCS Offshore) have retained their long-term offshore energy sector SAR contract through to at least May 2032. The operator has confirmed they will continue to fly two Leonardo AW139s on this contract, but will be replacing the current pair with new higher-spec aircraft. New features will include cabin upgrades and night vision goggles for the pilots.

From their Aberdeen base, these SAR crews ensure 24/7 medical emergency cover 365 days a year is available in the harshest of working environments. Managing director Andy Rodden said: "Over the course of the last ten years the SAR crews have attended almost 1,000 call outs" [Parapex]

De Havilland Canada is assembling its first **DHC-515 Firefighter** in Calgary and expects to begin delivering the aircraft by early 2028, a bit later than previously anticipated.

Sikorsky has received US regulatory approval for a life extension to a critical gearbox component on its S-92 helicopter that it believes will contribute to alleviating the availability challenges currently afflicting the heavy-twin.

Airbus Helicopters is not on the verge of a new programme launch despite the recent announcement it was exploring clean-sheet engine developments with GE Aerospace, according to the airframer's chief executive.

Leonardo has opened a £30M logistics hub for helicopters in Yeovil, Somerset, a major new investment in UK infrastructure in the Southwest

Last month Leonardo invited community leaders to the opening of a Single Site Logistics Hub for helicopter maintenance in Yeovil, replacing eight ageing buildings with a state-of-the-art new integrated facility. The Hub will revolutionise the way Leonardo services its global helicopter fleet, helping the company deliver replacement parts more efficiently and responsively for its international customers. Digital technologies underpin the highly automated facility, which is able to rapidly distribute parts all over the world in order to keep Leonardo's fleet flying.

The £30M hub represents Leonardo's wider investment in the UK as the nation's only onshore helicopter manufacturer Leonardo has built a 3,330 strong highly skilled helicopters workforce in the UK, working on-site in Yeovil, including 430 design-focused engineers proficient in the 87 essential skill sets for executing high-value helicopter design work. The site also supports a thriving UK-wide helicopter supply chain and over 12,000 jobs.

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The **Australian Border Force (ABF)** has engaged Microflite to wet-lease two Airbus Helicopters H145s for operations in Australia's North. Microflite has ordered a second five-bladed H145 to support its growing training, commercial, utility, fire observation and rescue operations earlier this year. To add to the existing airframe VH-8JB c/n 21198 delivered last year.

The 12 month contract is valued at \$12.8M and Microflite will provide the ABF with an aircraft and pilot combination in both Darwin and Broome.

Both aircraft will focus on preventing Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing in the Kimberley Marine Park. They will also be employed in support of Operation Sovereign Borders, (OSB) a border protection operation led by the ABF, aimed at stopping maritime arrivals of asylum seekers. [Helios/PAR]



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30 August 2024 Eurocopter AS350B3 Ecureuil EC-LBV firefighting aircraft coded H16 operated by HTA Helicopters. Crashed in the Douro River, near Samodães. The pilot suffered minor injuries and was rescued by a vessel. The five passengers all died. The helicopter was participating in operations to combat the rural fire raging in Gestaçô, in Baião. On the return flight to Armamar base, the aircraft began a steady descent, where it flew over the left bank (south) of the Douro River towards the city of Peso da Régua. While descending towards the river in a left-hand turn, the helicopter collided with the surface of the water at a speed of around 100 knots (185 km/h).

30 August 2024 Eurocopter AS350B3 Ecureuil/AStar N508AM. The helicopter departed Albuquerque International Airport with three persons aboard and arrived at Taos Airport, New Mexico USA. On arriving on the apron at Taos Airport, the vertical stabilizer and 3 rotor blades contacted the open hangar door. This aircraft has been used as an air ambulance in the past but the reason for this sortie is unclear.

2 September 2024 Leonardo AW139 EC-JOU Air ambulance INR103 operated by Avincis for INEM (Instituto Nacional de Emergência Médica de Portugal) and based in Macedo de Cavaleiros in north eastern Portugal crashed in trees in Atei, Mondim de Basto while landing to pick up a casualty in a quarry. The airframe ended up on its right side. There was no fire. According to INEM the rotors raised a lot of dust and entered a brown out state. All four occupants sustained minor injuries, but the crew were able to attend to the original casualty. [ASN/Media]

2 September 2024 Hindustan HAL Druv Indian Coast Guard. Crashed into the Arabian Sea with the loss of three lives. The helicopter was carrying out a medical emergency flight, crashed in the sea near Gujarat. One crew member was rescued, the pilot and co-pilot died in the crash, one crew member is still missing.

16 September 2024 Cessna T206H Turbo Stationair HD N844CP of the Civil Air Patrol. The Cessna and a Globe GC-1B Swift, N78074 were involved in a mid-air collision in the vicinity of the Minden-Tahoe Airport, Minden, Nevada, USA. The Swift impacted terrain and a post crash fire ensued, killing the sole pilot. The Cessna landed back at the airport and both occupants were not injured. ADS-B data suggests the collision occurred as the Cessna was on a climbing left turn from runway 34. The Swift was not transmitting any data at the time of the collision. The Cessna sustained extensive damage to the engine and front fuselage, losing one propeller blade in the process.

19 September 2024 Cessna U206G Stationair II N6522Z operated by Sacramento County Sheriff's Department, California, USA but owned by Orbital Support Services crashed in an open field near Village

Parkway and Linden Road in West Sacramento when making an emergency landing. It came to rest upside down with substantial damage to the fuselage. The pilot and sole occupant was able to leave the aircraft uninjured, there was no fire. The 1981 aircraft was being flown for maintenance from Mather Field to Watts Woodland Airport when a mechanical issue arose, and the engine stopped. On landing it is believed that the front wheel dug into the ground, flipping the aircraft over. [Sacramento Bee]

19 September 2024 Leonardo AW119 Koala N281MC Air ambulance of Mercy Flight suffered a malfunction and as a result undertook a hard landing at Canandaigua Airport, Ontario County in northern New York State close to Lake Ontario and the Canadian border. The Koala came down upright but suffered major damage including the nose compartment detaching and distortion to the MRB. Emergency services were called to the Mercy Flight facility on Brickyard Road in the town of Canandaigua. [Media]

UNMANNED

Nova Systems has signed a Teaming Agreement with WholeShip to provide Ship Aircraft Integration and Digital Test and Evaluation (T&E) support at the National Drone Hub.

The partnership will deliver a mix of live and digital flight test activities focused on accelerating the development of Uncrewed Air Systems (UAS) technologies. Nova is demonstrating how the combined digital engineering toolsets can rapidly accelerate the development of UAS/Ship safe operating envelopes, and revolutionize the UAS Ship Air Integration T&E process. The National Drone Hub exhibited at Drone X last month.



MORE MORE

Quoting Britain's Civil Aviation Authority *The Daily Telegraph* has stated that the "skies are to be blanketed by drones within three years," to that the newspaper added "Six operators including Amazon and the National Police Air Service are due to trial drone flights with the regulator this year."

TRAINING (UK)

Police use of drones boosted with new training. The first Trained Observer course has been delivered to police officers from across the UK, preparing them to work with drone pilots to deliver safe and successful police drone missions. The course, which is delivered by a team at Cheshire Police (Cheshire Constabulary) was designed for individuals with no prior drone experience, upskilling them so they can assist drone pilots in keeping the area around drones safe and maximising the effectiveness of drone camera systems in a police response. Feedback from participants has been positive, with the opportunity to undertake practical flying exercises after classroom sessions on various aspects of drone theory. Courses will be run throughout the UK on a regular basis for all police forces to benefit so get in touch if you'd like to find out more.



**PROVIDING A PIVOTAL PLATFORM FOR
THE GLOBAL DEFENCE INDUSTRY**

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2024 Commercial UAV Expo, Las Vegas, Nevada

By Mark Colborn

PAN Correspondent, Dallas PD pilot (retired) and Drone pilot

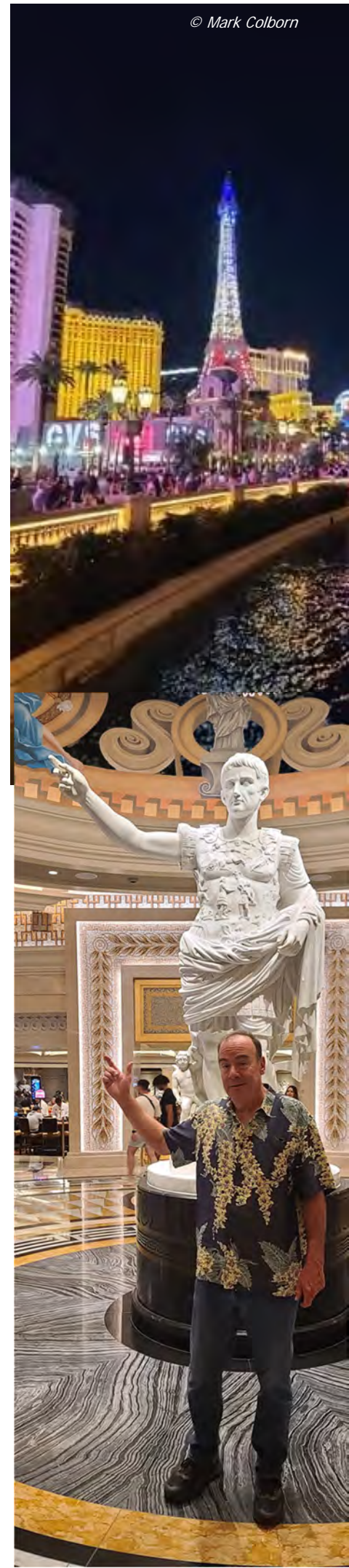
The tenth iteration of Comm UAV Expo was their biggest yet, with around 3700 attendees. The energy level at this year's conference was markedly higher than last, mainly because Congress finally passed the long-awaited and highly contested FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 into law – which funds the FAA for the next 5 years. Last year, my impression was that everyone felt the regulatory environment was stagnant due to delays in the bill. That was not the case this year. Optimism on the exhibit hall floor was contagious. And during the keynote address on day one, Lisa Ellman, Executive Director of the Commercial Drone Alliance (CDA), stated that the biggest win over last year was the passage of the FAA Reauthorization Act. Ellman and Gretchen West (also with the CDA) conversed about the need for better collaboration between public and private entities on policy and agreed that the act (which includes 350 provisions that require FAA action, and of those, 140 apply to UAS/UAM) will help the industry scale and move commercialization forward. Ellman stated that in the coming year, the FAA will release a number of critical rulemaking proposals and encouraged everyone in the audience to get involved by submitting comments and engaging the regulators.

The FAA was at this conference in force, assuring attendees that we will see a Beyond Visual Line-Of-Sight (BVLOS), or Part 108, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) by the end of the year, or in the first quarter of 2025. The regulators also promised more streamlined and quicker approvals for waivers and exemptions, or what Jodi Baker, Deputy FAA Associate Administrator for Aviation Safety, called summary grant exemptions. If companies performing a certain type of operation have been granted an exemption, and another company wants to conduct their operations the same way, the approval process can be streamlined. Section 927 of the FAA Reauthorization Act granted the FAA this power. Aircraft certification, Baker stated, requires input from many offices in the FAA. The FAA has moved these offices into one management structure, which should help reduce approval times. In the past, FAA employees working on certification projects also had additional tasks attached to their job, but now, according to Baker, they have people working full time on these requests. Baker also stated that the FAA is adapting, and as an example, cited their change in position which now allows non-maintenance certified employees to conduct simple, non-critical tasks, such as changing/swapping batteries. She also said the 44807 exemption process (for drones over 55 pounds), is being reevaluated and streamlined.

Everyone wants to be the first to gain aircraft certification, but BVLOS is what the industry has been waiting for the most. And to make that happen, a robust Unmanned Traffic Management (UTM) system is needed to safely integrate drones into the national airspace system. Tim Arel, Chief Operating Officer of the FAA's Air Traffic Organization (ATO) told Ellman we need a shared communication system. This would comprise an info-centric safe data exchange system that would enable crewed aircraft pilots (currently using the air traffic control system), drone pilots (eventually using UTM), and public agencies flying under certificates of authorization, and posting NOTAMS, to have access to each other's position, mission, and route of flight information. Arel stated that he wants to share raw radar data with UTM systems. He is very supportive of small drone operations and is ready to integrate them into the system. The financial rewards are exponentially tied to scaling, with drones democratizing the industry, he said. Arel addressed the work being done at the UTM test site in Texas and said he is "excited" with the progress that is being made in this area.

Welcome to events at Caesar's Palace, 3570 S Las Vegas Blvd, Paradise, NV 89109. You may not have been able to be there but a latter day Mar Anthony took in the sights for us all to read © Mark Colborn

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New Technology on the Exhibit Room Floor

There was some new technology on the floor, but not at the levels we have seen in past years. The drone industry has made great strides recently and is well established, according to speakers and panelists at the show. However, experts that I talked to agree; the drone industry is in a plateau at present while we wait for regulators to draft new rules that will allow the drone industry to conduct important operations and scale, without waivers or exemptions. I also believe venture capitalists are taking a breather, waiting to see the direction the regulators will go, and how industry responds. Package delivery and industrial inspection companies are also impatiently waiting for the strategic deconfliction and tactical deconfliction technology to mature, so when there are multiple drone operations in the same airspace, they won't run into each other. But the tech that was on the floor is clearly maturing, plus becoming more reliable.

Pilot Institute, the Prescott, Arizona company that has helped 340,000 people become crewed aircraft and drone pilots, recently introduced three new public safety drone classes – Public Safety COA Made Easy, Public Safety Part 107 Class, and NIST UAS Made Easy. They also recently introduced a comprehensive drone search and rescue training class taught by Kyle Nordfors, the UAS team coordinator for the Weber County Search and Rescue Team in Ogden, Utah. The course consists of 2.5 hours of video instruction (which can be done at the student's pace) covering everything from basic to advanced techniques. And students will see a real-world application (mock scenario) on how drones are integrated into search and rescue operations. The Pilot Institute was founded by Greg Reverdieu and Johann Beishline. Their motto is "Aviation Made Easy" by offering a wide range of free and paid classes for pilots everywhere.

DJI was back this year in significant force at a massive booth displaying all the DJI consumer and enterprise drone models. The DJI Flycart 30 took center stage in their display – a massive eight-motored cargo and winch drone. This drone, with two batteries, can lift 30kg (66.2 lbs) of cargo. With one battery it will lift 40kg (88.2 lbs) of cargo. Maximum flight distance without a payload (dual batteries) is 28km and 16km with full payload. The drone is IP55 dustproof, waterproof, and corrosion-resistant, has front and rear active phased array radars and dual binocular vision system to achieve multidirectional obstacle sensing. It has multiple redundancy protection measures such as dual batteries and parachutes. The drone uses 20km O3 transmission tech with anti-interference abilities, enables dual operator modes for two pilots in different locations or to transfer control of the drone with one click, and sports a high resolution FPV gimbaled camera for real-time aerial awareness. It is an impressive machine, and I can't wait to see it in action.

New at the show this year, at least to me, is a company marketing drones for swarm light shows. Uvify has developed a 990g quad called the IFO, or Identifiable Flying Object. The company's brochure states their ambition is to dominate the sky! Uvify provides turn-key systems for worldwide, diverse climate, every night drone light shows. Their drones come with a 140-degree viewing angle, 24-bit RGB true color, and can receive all four GNSS systems concurrently for centimeter-level precision. They also claim to have the fastest light show drone, with speeds of up to 10 m/s with unparalleled acceleration for amazing content creation and transitions.

Each year, I manage to bump into at least one or two individuals serving in public safety agencies that are entrepreneurs, and have great ideas that they are trying to field. At this show it was George Perera, Major/Commander, Cyber Crime Bureau, Miami-Dade PD and his business partner, Nicholas Guilbeault – USAF. They started the company Detectix. Both men were leaving brochures on tables in the exhibit hall for the Canary, a hazmat auxiliary unit that can be carried on a drone for remote hazmat monitoring from a safe distance. The Canary sports an versatile design, integrating seamlessly with a wide range of commercial drone models. The device accommodates handheld radiation, chemical, and multi-gas detectors used by hazmat teams nationwide, and uses real-time data transmission to wirelessly transmit critical sensor readings via an onboard long-range radio, bypassing reliance on local wifi/cellular networks. The Detectix Canary can be quickly deployed for faster public safety incident response, versus manually carrying sensors into hot zones.



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Now and Beyond 2024 – Essentials for Every Drone Pilot

The big hit at the show occurred on Monday afternoon prior to the grand opening of the exhibit hall, with an informative session that packed a large convention center room with drone pilots. The Now and Beyond 2024 session, the first of a new theme at the show called Drone Pilot Hub, is geared toward providing content from actual drone pilots, for actual drone pilots, and to provide actionable advice and career development opportunities. Amy Weigand, founder of Earhart Alden & Associates moderated the session along with panelists Desiree Ekstein, founder of On The Go Video.biz, Vic Moss, owner of Moss Photography and CEO of the Drone Service Provider Alliance, Greg Reverdiau, co-founder and lead instructor for Pilot Institute, Jared Janacek, founder and president of the Texas Drone Company, Kenji Sugahara, director of the Oregon Department of Aviation, and John Meehan, Aviation Safety Analyst, Office of Safety Standards with the FAA. After each panelist introduced themselves and described how they use or are involved with drones, the topics of conversation consisted of pilot training, safety, the need for professionalism in the drone industry, and the boring topic of insurance. Vic Moss is a huge proponent of making sure you have drone insurance before showing up for a job, because you must anticipate the unexpected. Kenji Sugahara agreed, relaying a story of how he inadvertently flew an FPV drone with an expensive cinema quality camera into a tree. He was following a client's car up a winding canyon road, filming a TV commercial. Without insurance, he agreed, the incident could have been very costly.

Panelists also stressed the importance of understanding the needs of the client, and that those who do will have an advantage over the competition. Constant education is also key to becoming successful in this field. Attending seminars, completing on-line courses, or just taking the time to converse with the client before starting a project, the panelists agreed, would pay dividends down the line. Vic Moss also said not to be discouraged by the number of drone pilots that are out there. There is always going to be competition, he said, and he used the analogy that every town has multiple restaurants, general stores, lumber yards and other businesses, but not all of them are the same. Some are better. He recommended that you build a good reputation by doing it better than the competition. It was a great session that could have gone on for several hours more, with all panelists not afraid to tell it like it is!

DroneResponders Program

This year's DroneResponders program was very similar to the program the group put on at the 2024 Energy Drone + Robotics conference in Houston, June 10 through 12. Many of the speakers were in attendance, so I will refer to my article in the July issue of *Police Aviation News* (starting on page 24) for what public safety professionals are relating about drone operations in America. Nevertheless, there was one plenary session that was unique to this conference and might be of interest to readers of *PAN*. It was conducted on the last day:

Aerial Firefighting, Wildfire Prevention, and Rescue with Drones.

Panelists for this session included Captain Michael Leo, New York City Fire Department (FDNY), Dirk Giles, National UAS Program Manager for the USDA Forest Service (USFS), Fire Captain Ted Kalnas, Los Angeles City Fire Department (LAFD), with Chris Sadler, Director, Public Safety Innovation Center, Virginia Innovation Partnership Corporation acting as moderator. Introductions were made and each panelist gave a brief description of their respective programs. For all three public safety agencies, a Part 107 certificate is the minimum requirement for any employee interested in joining a UAS team. The FDNY consists of over eleven thousand members, with the UAS team comprising 60 to 70 pilots. Prospective pilots are put through a 40-hour basic operator course, then undergo a 40-hour advanced course where they master flying indoors. The USFS personnel also undergo a 40-hour basic operator course, then during the second week attend a natural resources and wildland fire management course. The USFS is broken down into nine regional areas across the United States. Each region is different, and staffing is based on need. Flying a drone is an additional duty, and considered an additional qualification in the USFS; like air attack manager. The USFS approaches UAS training the same way they do crewed aircraft training, stressing professionalism and safety, and concentrating on communication, coordination, and deconfliction.



Each panelist was asked about program acceptance. Chief Kalnas related that his agency had no trouble gaining acceptance from the mayor and city council, but received heavy pushback from celebrities and community advocacy groups. Los Angeles is a helicopter rich-environment, and pilots were hesitant to accept drones in the beginning, especially pilots within their own agency. They didn't want drones anywhere near the areas where they were working. Chief Kalnas said they had to speak aviation to the pilots and eventually tensions thawed after all parties became aware of each other's benefits and restrictions. Kalnas met a lot of resistance in the beginning from his battalion chiefs. The fire services are in many cases more resistant to change than police, but once the battalion chiefs realized how much additional situational awareness the drone can provide them on a fire or Hazmat scene, Kalnas said, now they get upset if they don't have a drone at their disposal. Captain Leo encountered similar resistance with his agency, and even had Mayor Bill de Blasio at the time state that New York City would never be allowed to have drones! According to Leo, they overcame this resistance by engaging the media and community advocacy groups (NY Times and ACLU), conducting drone and robot naming contests with the public, and showing consistent transparency with their program. Plus, they never record video during training or when there might be a privacy concern. Acceptance was hard to get in the beginning at USFS, according to Giles, but by being transparent and with engagement, gained acceptance. The USFS must report all their flights, and Giles stated they are listed on the USFS's website...somewhere. He also said that it is advisable to brief your PIO, so they sound reasonably intelligent when interviewed by members of the press!

The panelists were asked about their wildland fire prevention strategies. Captain Leo bowed out on this question by jokingly stating that his concept of a wildland fire in New York City might be two trees and a bush on fire in Central Park! Giles then took the baton and related that the USFS is allocated \$4.2 million every year from Congress for wildland fire management. Last year, if I heard him correctly, the USFS used 750 thousand incendiary balls for controlled burn operations. When they use a helicopter, Giles related, the dispenser spits out thousands of balls in a line and it is difficult to be prescriptive with the burn. By using a drone, the service has more control over the spread and number of balls that are dispensed. This gives them better control over the heat, intensity, and direction of the burn.

The LAFD has found that drones with mapping capabilities are excellent for wildland fire prevention planning. Every summer, vegetation around the Los Angeles area dies and dries out. Adding to the fire danger, California has numerous plants with waxes, oils, and resins that become extremely flammable when their moisture content evaporates. Chief Kalnas stated that drones with 3D spectral-imaging capability have been very helpful in their prevention methods in areas like Laurel Canyon, Pacific Palisades, and Hollywood Hills. In advance of the fire season, they have been able to map out safe zones for fire crew retrieval. They map areas with excessive underbrush buildup, giving dozer crews the information they need to cut fire lines to prevent the spread of the fire, or improve fire access roads leading to high-risk fire areas. Kalnas stated that drones have proven to be most effective for planning purposes, and for use post-fire. They use drones equipped with thermal imagers to identify hot spots between midnight and 3am. This saves the department from having to send brush trucks and firefighters into potentially hard to reach and dangerous areas where they are not needed, giving them the valuable sleep (that we in law enforcement know) they so desperately need! "The return on investment (ROI) with our drones has been incredible, and are much cheaper and easier to deploy," stated Chief Kalnas.

Show News

In other news released at the show, Teledyne FLIR announced a limited-time offer (expires December 31st, 2024) to first responders, giving them the opportunity to purchase one (saving 30 "C" notes) SIRAS Pro UAV for \$6,995.00 through an authorized distributor. And on September 12th, AirData announced the integration of their flight data management platform with the SIRAS drone. According to a company release, data can now be securely exported from the SIRAS, providing customers with a unified solution for flight data management, compliance reporting, and operational readiness.



Starting a DFR Program

During a DroneResponders seminar at the 2024 Energy Drone + Robotics Summit in Houston entitled, "A Public Safety Conversation with the FAA," Mike O'Shea, Program Manager and Public Safety Liaison, Safety and Integration Division, UAS Integration Office of the FAA, stated that he has seen departments that want to go from zero (no UAS program at all) to a full Drone as First Responder (DFR) program deployment. O'Shea shook his head, and said something to the effect, "Not going to happen!" He also said that a police department that has a police officer with a drone in the trunk of their cruiser, and ready to deploy when needed in the field, essentially already has a DFR program and recommended that instead of implementing a full DFR program, obtain a Tactical BVLOS waiver. At this year's Commercial UAV Expo, I met an individual that proved this premise is not correct. In fact, the individual in question also won an

award for his pioneering work, essentially proving that a department can go from zero to full DFR. While walking the exhibit hall floor, I stopped at the Motorola Solutions booth. They are offering a complete turnkey DFR program, called CAPE, to public safety agencies. Having used Motorola radio systems for years as a police officer, I was curious as to which methods they are using to communicate with and control their drones. According to a brochure, CAPE is a scalable, subscription-based solution for remote drone operations, live video streaming, and evidence capture. "The software brings mission-critical control to your unmanned aerial system. Whether your police agency is just getting started with your first drone or pursuing an advanced DFR program, CAPE has all the tools you need to successfully get up and running."

Trusting what I had been told in June by the aforementioned representative of the FAA, and essentially agreeing with him, I mentioned at some point during my conversation with the gentleman from Motorola, that it would not be a good idea for a public safety agency to jump into DFR without first having flown pilot-controlled drone missions first. No sooner than the words left my mouth, I heard a very forceful and commanding voice behind me say, "That is totally not the case, and we proved it in my agency." I turned around and was introduced to Lieutenant Abrem Ayana, UAS Program Director for the Brookhaven (Georgia) Police Department. Brookhaven is a small residential bedroom community with 61,000 residents, incorporated only 11 years ago. With the help of Motorola Solutions, Lieutenant Ayana ramped up a successful DFR program in less than a year. Lt. Ayana told me he spent a full week at the Chula Vista, California, Police Department studying their very successful DFR program. He also visited several other DFR programs around the country, and now he says he gets over a hundred e-mails a week from departments worldwide, interested in starting their own programs. Lt. Ayana swore Brookhaven didn't have drones before they started a DFR program. This is why I enjoy going to shows like Comm UAV because I always learn something new. Plus, it's also healthy to have one's assumptions and misconceptions challenged from time-to-time, and, in this case, be proven wrong!

DroneResponders Eric Talley Memorial Award Presentation

For recognizing excellence in public safety UAS program management and operations, Lt. Abrem Ayana received the 2024 Eric Talley Memorial Award from DroneResponders/AIRT. Christopher Todd, Executive Director of AIRT, Jared Moore, Boulder UAS Team Lead/Police Officer, Boulder, Colorado PD, and Captain Mike Leo - FDNY (and last year's recipient) presented the award during the keynote September 5. The award is named in honor of Boulder (Colorado) Police Officer and UAS pilot Eric Talley who was killed in the line of duty while responding to an active shooter incident in March 2021. Congratulations, Lt. Ayana.



Pitch The Press

Since this correspondent, thanks to our esteemed editor, was wearing a name tag with the word "PRESS" printed on it, how could I possibly miss the "Pitch the Press" segment on Wednesday afternoon in the exhibit hall. This year, 16 companies were allowed two minutes to pitch their product(s) to a panel of three "media" judges. Following the short presentations, Richard Thomas of Inside Unmanned Systems Magazine, Patrick Sherman of Roswell Flight Test Center, and Scott Howe, Commercial UAV News Editorial Analyst debated and chose three winners.



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The Ukraine display © MC

The winner was Bavovna AI, a Ukrainian company that makes dual-use AI-driven alternative inertial navigation systems for drones operating in GNSS denied and electronic-threatened environments, such as war zones. The company’s modular hardware and AI tech addresses malicious and natural challenges to position, navigation, and timing (PNT) systems. Bavovna AI also had a table in the Ukrainian Pavilion [above] with eight other Ukrainian companies participating in an initiative called the “Fleet of Millions.” The initiative intends to expand the global footprint of Ukrainian robotic technology and provide access to what they claim in their brochure to be the world’s largest ecosystem for robotic technologies. Ukraine wants to become a leader in the field of robotics on the world stage and to partner with American technology firms. And from what we have witnessed occurring in Ukraine since their sovereign nation was brutally invaded, they have a very good chance of bringing this initiative to fruition.

In second place is a company called Sixof Space, with a unique optical tracking system that will land a drone with centimeter-level accuracy, even in a GNSS denied environment.

In third place is Sunhillo Corporation, offering UAS solutions for tracking, situational awareness and voice communications, essentially “decluttering the airspace.” Sunhillo participated in the FAA’s Mid Atlantic Aviation Partnership (MAAP) lead by Virginia Tech, and performed operational testing supporting the FAA/ NASA, and completed NASA’s UAS Task Orders 1,2, and 4.

An honorable mention should go to a company called AVSS (Aerial Vehicle Safety Systems) for a brilliant marketing poster displayed during their presentation. AVSS produces parachute systems for drones. And in order to fly over people, your drone must be granted an FAA Category 2 Declaration of Compliance. Otherwise, you have to file for a Part 107.39 Flight Over People Waiver from the FAA. The poster displays two Olympic competition air pistol shooters. One is aiming the air pistol using a high-tech vision device while the Turkish contestant Yusuf Dikec (who won a silver medal) is using iron sights. The caption under the photo of the high-tech shooter says, “FAA 107.39 Waiver,” and the caption under the photo of Dikec reads “Declaration of Compliance.” AVSS expects to be granted a Category 2 Declaration of Compliance for the DJI Mavic 3 soon, eliminating the need for a 107.39 waiver.



© Mark Colborn

The AVSS parachute recovery system is the white canister on top of the drone © MC

Also participating in “Pitch the Press” was a company called TTP. Their presentation piqued my interest because Detect and Avoid (DAA) tech is crucial to safely conducting any BVLOS drone operations in the NAS, so I visited their booth. The autonomous team at TTP, a Cambridge, England innovations solution company, has developed a small UAS detect-and-avoid radar-led sensor fusion platform. The device at-

taches to the front of the drone and uses radar and optical sensors to perform last-mile tactical deconfliction, which the company admits is a “tough nut to crack.” The system, still in development, blends 360-degree vision coverage with 90-degree forward radar coverage in a single form-factor integrated unit. And according to their brochure, the company believes they can come close to an ambitious budget of 200g weight, using 15 W of power at a bill of materials (BoM) cost of \$1,000. When asked, sales reps stated that the retail price would most likely be between \$3,000 to \$5,000. TTP said they were seeking investors for this project.

Before closing this article, I would like to mention an initiative to create and build an autonomy-enabled rescue aircraft intended to save lives. There is a currently a void in the vertical lift world between existing small drones and helicopters. This initiative plans to solve that void. Gwen Lighter, founder and CEO of GoAero requested an interview with *PAN* at the show, so I obliged. Lighter’s enthusiasm for this project is amazing. She is working with thousands of aerospace engineers globally to create a safe, autonomy-enabled platform that can perform rescues and other critical response missions in the face of climate disasters, medical emergencies and humanitarian crises. GoAero is a three year competition, backed by corporate sponsors like Boeing and NASA, with \$2.5 million in prizes. Lighter advised *PAN* that the initiative currently has 130 teams working on the project and would like to bring in more. The teams will retain their intellectual rights to the technology they develop, she said. Teams are provided mentors for the three-stage project. The first stage involves submitting white papers outlining each team’s ideas (deadline is December 2024). Stage two involves building a prototype and testing, and stage 3 will consist of a flyoff, ultimately choosing the winner. Lighter is hoping to see all kinds of different designs before the flyoff in 2027. For more information on this intriguing project, visit their website at: www.goaeroprize.com

It was a great show this year, and again, the attractions in Vegas never fail to please. With excellent friends in the business, we managed to fit in a little go-cart racing, a drone light show at Atomic Golf, a drone flight over a solar collection facility just across the state line in California, views of the Sphere, and the amazing attractions at the Bellagio; the fountain show, chocolate fountain, Dale Chihuly’s “Glass Ceiling,” and the constantly changing theme at the conservatory and botanical gardens. Also, a must do is a mandatory visit to Caesar’s Palace for a \$14 scoop of Gelato, and to Gordon Ramsay’s Fish and Chips (in the alley between the LINQ and the Flamingo) for a mouthwatering \$22 fish box!

It will be interesting to see where our industry is next year at this time. I fear though that if a small minority of elected officials in Washington D.C. are successful in pushing through legislation that bans Chinese drone products in America – like DJI, Autel, and Anzu – our industry (especially public safety agencies) will be set back five to ten years, and lives will be lost.




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LETTERS

Good day,

In the last issue (September 2024) of *Police Aviation News*, there are a following paragraphs as an attachment to the article about Bell Textron announcement about a signing of purchase agreement for a SUBARU Bell 412EPX to the Sarajevo Canton Ministry of Interior, forming the agency's first helicopter unit:

Yugoslavia, a country that ceased to exist in February 2003.

They were expected to be operated by the government owned Helicopter Service of RS, which currently flies three Gazelles, a Bell 206 JetRanger and a Leonardo AW119 on air ambulance missions as well as undertaking ad-hoc police missions. Recent images of this fleet have been posted on-line but, predictably, there is no sign of the police Ansat's.

I have to report you that there are two obvious mistakes in these paragraphs:

1.) The State of Yugoslavia did not cease to exist in 2003, but in 1992, when the states of *Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina* and *Macedonia* (now, *North Macedonia*), declared their independence which were recognized by United Nations and most of other states in the world.

Three other, now independent states (*Serbia, Montenegro* and *Kosovo*), continue to form something that was first called *Federative Republic of Yugoslavia* and later *State Union of Serbia and Montenegro*, but definitely, neither *Sarajevo* as a capital or entire other territory of State of *Bosnia and Herzegovina* was not a part of any kind of *Yugoslavia* state since 1992.

2.) Three *Kazan ANSAT* helicopters were not ordered to be operated by the *Helicopter Service of Republic of RS*, but to be operated by the *Ministry of Interior of RS*.

Two of them were delivered in 2020. (or 2021.) and they have registrations: E7-MUP (Msn: 070A01) and E7-SAJ (Msn: 070A02).

You can check the activities and flights of these two helicopters by using services like *Flightradar.24*.

The third *Kazan ANSAT* is still not yet delivered to the *Ministry of Interior of RS*, because of the war between Russia Federation and Ukraine.

Hopefully you do not mind because I have reported to you these two items.

Anyway, your magazine is excellent and very informative, and I like to read each of the monthly issues as well as special editions.

With Best Regards!

Slobodan Kadjević
Bosnia and Herzegovina

Dear Bryn,

As always, the Emergency Services Show, at the NEC, Hall 5, Birmingham, 18-19 September, together with the Emergency Tech Show, in the adjoining Hall 4, lived up to a well-deserved reputation for excellence, with something for everyone who has an interest in the blue light emergency services.

This year saw several services, including the police, fire and rescue service and HM Coastguard, together with several manufacturers, promoting drones. Some of these drones have proved themselves worldwide, for example the Scheibel S-100 Camcopter, which, in the UK, is flown by Bristow Helicopters, on behalf of HM Coastguard and, as the Peregrine RWUAS, is currently conducting sea trials with the Royal Navy. This aircraft with the option to fit both an electro-optical camera turret and a compact maritime radar, is in its element when operated overwater. The Scheibel S-100 Camcopter



The Scheibel S-100 Camcopter

By comparison the much smaller fixed-wing Skysports drone, operated by the CAE-LUS consortium in Scotland and targeted at the healthcare industry can carry a diminutive payload, the equivalent of two bags of sugar!

The fixed-wing Skysports drone carries a diminutive payload.

Then we have the aspirational 'drone in a box' which promote the concept of a 'first responder drone', located in city centres and responding quickly to a variety of incidents, providing an 'eye in the sky' under the control of an operator located in a remote control room. Operational imperatives, including operating the drone beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS), together with the ability to 'see and avoid', other aircraft, have been identified, but have yet to be addressed.



Skysports drones carry a diminutive payload



Interestingly, those drones that are out there, doing a job, the Scheibel S-100, also, the Tekever AR5, have internal combustion engines rather than electric motors.

Tony Cowan MBE



Now—The Tekever twin operates over the English Channel

The future—the aspirational 'drone in a box'



An open letter to Secretary of State for the Home Department (The Home Secretary) - The Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP

26 September 2024

Dear Home Secretary,

One Prime Minister says “Stop the boats”, the next says, “Smash the gangs” whilst, at the same time, many thousands of illegal migrants continue to stream across the English Channel in small boats. At the time of writing, towards the end of September 2024, in less than 9 months, over 25,000 migrants have, as you know, landed in the UK at Dover; 29,437 illegal migrants were landed at Dover in the previous year, in 2023.

With 3 days of adverse, 18-20 September, there were no Channel crossings, then, in the next 3 days, 21-23 September, with the return of good weather, (by coincidence at the same time as the Labour Party Conference in Liverpool) 1,537 migrants were landed at Dover by the UK Border Force. When the weather is good, with light winds and a calm sea, migrants will surge across the Channel from France to England. During adverse weather the organised criminal groups, the people traffickers, will re-stock northern France with large inflatable boats, together with out-board engines. The same large, flimsy, unseaworthy boats, described by the National Crime Agency as ‘death traps’, that are built in China and imported into Europe through Turkey.

On both sides of the Channel, people, those who live in Kent and East Sussex and those who live in northern France, have had enough. In northern France, the coast has become a militarised zone where the bodies of migrants, those who have perished whilst trying to reach England, are washed up on the beaches. Some 50 migrants have perished at sea this year, although the true total may never be known. Twenty migrants are known to have died this month, in September, some of them crushed to death in grossly overloaded inflatable boats. There were 12 deaths in 2023.

With the cooperation of the French who, understandably, wish to control the border between France and England as much as the British, the answer is quite simple. First, increase the success rate of the French police on the beaches of northern France with more ‘boots on the ground’ and with more light aircraft, with more ‘spotter planes’ in the air. Use light aircraft to locate and to report the large inflatable boats, together with large groups of migrants, before they set sail. Currently, the French police prevent some 60% of migrants from leaving France in small boats. In the first 2 weeks of September the number of migrants landed at Dover was 2,481. In the same period the French police ‘prevented’ 1,456 migrants from crossing the Channel (Home Office figures).

The French police could do better, but only if they’re in the right place at the right time, with close air support, with ‘eyes in the sky’. Unlike a hand-launched drone, a crewed aircraft, a ‘spotter plane’, has the necessary, speed, reach and flexibility, to conduct persistent air patrols above the beaches and the sand dunes which extend for some 80 miles, between Dunkirk and the Baie de Somme. The value of an observer in the air, rather than in a cabin on the ground, should never be underrated.

The current policy of patrolling the middle of the English Channel with a fleet of aircraft, based at Lydd in Kent, some large and very expensive, for example, a deHavilland Dash 8, together with the smaller, less expensive, Diamond DA62, as well as rotary and fixed-wing drones, is, quite frankly, a nugatory exercise. These expensive to operate aircraft can, without any doubt, observe and report boats crossing the English Channel, those carrying illegal migrants; it would be very disappointing if they couldn’t. However these aircraft have not and cannot ‘stop the boats’, or ‘smash the gangs’. By comparison, the operating cost of a light aircraft, a ‘spotter plane’, flying above the beaches of northern France would, at less than £200 per flying hour, be extremely cost effective! Boats and migrants would be seen, reported and stopped, before they set sail.

Second, deploy UK Border Force vessels further south, south of the median line, close to the French coast. To rescue migrants at sea, before returning them to France, landing the rescued migrants at Calais, rather than at Dover. We must be absolutely clear, running a ‘bus route’ across the English Channel with large, badly constructed, unseaworthy inflatable boats, boats which are unlicensed and operated by unqualified crew, is both illegal and extremely dangerous. This cannot go on, it must be stopped now, if lives are to be saved.

These boats must be stopped, as soon as they set sail, and then inspected. If they fail inspection, and they will, then the passengers must be rescued and landed in France whilst the crew are arrested and prosecuted. Do this for 3 months and it will become clear that, with Anglo-French cooperation, effective border controls between England and France are now back in place. Without 'customers' the organised criminal groups, the people traffickers will quickly have no business, let alone a business plan! Moreover, the migrant camps, those outside Calais and Dunkirk, will soon be emptied.

The alternative, since 2018 when the first migrants crossed the Channel in small boats, is to continue to squander many more millions of pounds, most probably billions of pounds, with no end in sight. Spending very large sums of money, money that could be better spent elsewhere, whilst the organised criminal groups, the people traffickers, continue to ply their evil trade and continue to 'run circles' around the governments and the security services on both sides of the English Channel.

Yours sincerely,

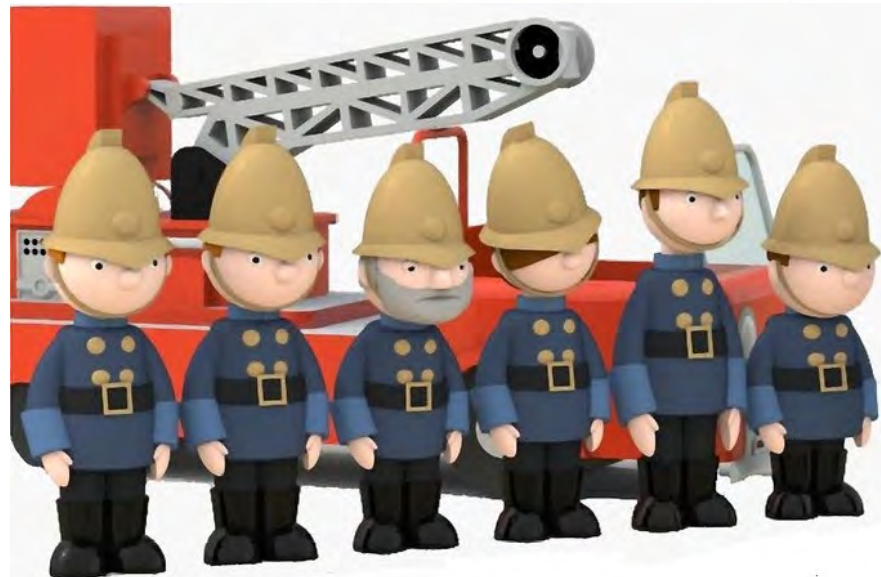
James A Cowan MBE
Squadron Leader
Royal Air Force (Ret'd)

EMERGENCY SERVICES SHOW/EMERGENCY TECH SHOW NEC, Birmingham 18-19 September.



This, the ESS, is a great British business opportunity show for most of the airborne emergency services and the police – unfortunately the prime absentees are the airborne emergency services and the police.

It brings together the fire and rescue services and ambulances from across Britain to experience and learn about new equipment and techniques. It was set up by a magazine that has its roots in the fire services and despite many years of trying it has not been able to shake off the perception that it is primarily for experiencing by Captain Flack: Pugh, Pugh, Barney McGrew, Cuthbert, Dibble, Grubb. (the BBC Trumpton fire crew). Despite the long standing perception Dixon of Dock Green and Biggles are more than welcome.



Every so often a small breakthrough is made, and an aircraft company will be present. Unfortunately, they are usually small in number and immediately halt subsequent visits taking the event back to the fire fighter's show it has always been.

This year the aerospace presence was thanks to Bristow, the Air Ambulance charities and a few drones – just not enough. Only the presence of the Bristow SAR Schiebel S-100 on their stand sought to break the mould.

I fear that without some stirring from the big names in aviation an opportunity will be lost in the domestic market. In terms of an easy access UK show, they have already lost Helitech, the ESS could be an economic option to engage with the right people. Fortunately, perhaps, the organisers of the Helitech Show in London are doing their very best to drive manned aviation from their venue. Aviation might sit well in future editions of the NEC Tech Show.

PAN has long reported on the seemingly snail like pace of the introduction of the 4G based Emergency Services Network (ESN) and it was possible to get a hopeful briefing on the future of this important multi-agency system. Not unexpectedly the latest hopeful date for the existing digital system, Airwave, to be finally switched off is still some time away in 2029. More positive news is that ESN is being brought into limited service where the infrastructure can support it. The day-to-day problem that this advance brings is that those using the system need to carry two radios – although for years now those same staff have been

obliged to carry private cell phones to fill in the capability gaps of the old Airwave.

Only a few hundred more cell towers to be built or upgraded – meanwhile the world is introducing 5G!

Bristow now have four examples of the S-100 in service, more will follow. They are proving useful and are currently assigned to over-water operations from Lydd – another aircraft type keeping watch on the illegal migrant boats. They have not featured in recent reports of activity over the English Channel because they have not been picked up by Apps. They have transponders but mainly fly in the dead of night and low over the water and are not being detected by sleeping researchers. Airframe weather limits also play a part in the regularity of missions.



The ESS is about showing off hardware and giving groups and individuals a chance to explain their field of expertise to a wider audience. Subjects included the potentially boring to the latest technology. The Tech show included items on AI, machine learning, mapping, cyber defence and several on ESN. There was even a quirky one on dealing with an unexploded WW2 bomb.

The ESS/ETS offers CPD accredited content in the programme. Continuing Professional Development is a commitment to ongoing lifelong learning. Put together in consultation with a multi-agency Advisory Council, the programme spans two halls, five stages and includes 55 sessions covering a diverse range of topics. I am very old fashioned on this 'new-fangled' CPD lark and fail to understand what is so endearing about listening to so called experts that gives you house points back at work, but I is what it is and I have inadvertently gained some CPD's in the past. I guess as a journalist I must both gain and create CPD daily just by reading a newspaper.



The packed Tech Main Stage theatre was chaired by Rich Preston who is an anchor on the BBC's domestic and international news channel and a presenter on the BBC World Service. Rich holds an MA in Intelligence and International Security from the War Studies Department at King's College London with a focus on National Security, Intelligence, Counterterrorism, Extremism, and Foreign Policy, so a suitable figure to look after the subjects on the main stage of the co-located Tech Show. Prior to joining the BBC, Rich was a police officer in Central Scotland, but I suspect his tenure there was short. He returned to The Emergency Tech Show for a second year to host the Tech Main Stage.

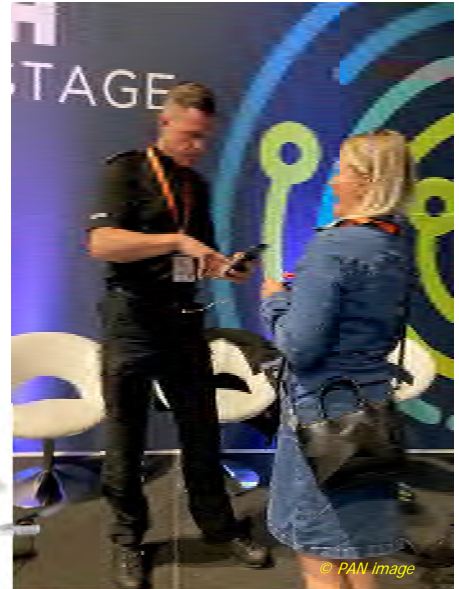
Of main interest to the aviation sector (and CPD compliant) was a joint presentation on current and future drone use on the Tech Main Stage by of the Police College and of the Fire Service.

Future gazing: what's next for drones in the blue lights? was the title of the presentation by Keith Bennet the Drones Manager SME for the College of Policing, his fire service foil was Tim Murrell who is the Drones lead for he National Fire Chiefs Council. Although fire and policing focussed, the pair had their views on trials being undertaken by the NHS, hospitals and ambulance providers.

What became clear is that drones are already serving the emergency services well and there are plenty of developments out there to further enhance the future path of the technology. It was also clear that these hopes for autonomy are still a way off, current trials are not only seeing whether the technology works but also whether there is economy of scale. It remains clear that many of these trials of moving blood and medicines by drone are going to remain expensive and inefficient in terms of human involvement (manpower) and always require a costly 'man with a van' back-up until the aircraft can be trusted to operate autonomously in a 50mph wind.

Non the less the pair put forward an interesting presentation that will apparently not be seen again with the same stars.

The audience learned that, after 30 years Keith Bennet (right) was retiring from the police and going to pastures new and dissimilar. As he said, five years ago he knew nothing much about the subject and here he was at the pinnacle of NPCC drones. All gone and now retired. Nothing new in that line of 'progress,' the exact same happened with the drone expert of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (Dave Domoney). This presumably suggest that the NPCC will need to train up a new in-house expert on the subject. I guess they can start with someone who has sufficient CPD points in flower arranging....



IDI were showing several 'homes' for their DFR equipment at the ESS. The one on the left is a portable launch box, the other two are effectively hangars on a stick © PAN image

IDI Serve, specialising in drone innovations across several market sectors, they market themselves as the resident drone company and leaders in UAV Automation. The name may have escaped previous reports in PAN, but avid readers will probably recall the (drones as a) First Responder reports from the recent Isle of Wight Festival. They, IDI, were there and it was their kit that was in use.

IDI has been pivotal in supporting the NPCC and Thames Valley and Hampshire and Isle of Wight Police during an 18-month trial of the developing technology on the island and elsewhere in the UK.

IDA had a significant presence at the ESS with an indoor stand displaying control units and an outside area well stocked with sizeable DFR launch pads and towers. The hardware that will in theory be popping up in a town near you. The units displayed included large but portable drone boxes as well as the sort of cubicle you might expect to encounter on rooftops and yards across Britain if the technology is proved to work. IDA are keen, as you might expect, but there are lots of trials to go through yet.

MOVE ALONG THERE MISINFORMATION

I am unsure whether it was human hands or a bot that wrote the next item, but it looks suspiciously like an AI happening slipped onto the Internet in view of the words that asked us:

Did you know, the Emergency Services Network is delivering 4G coverage from 500 feet all the way up to 10,000 feet so our flying emergency service responders can communicate and access lifesaving data whilst in the air? This is the first time a Long-Term Evolution (LTE) device has been used for this purpose in the airspace and will operate the same mission critical push-to-talk application with priority and pre-emption enabled as their colleagues on the ground. The team behind the delivery of ESN Air works extensively with the five main user groups made up of over 90 aircraft belonging to police and ambulance

It is certain that all is not as stated, even without the intelligence gained at the ESS a statement from the Metropolitan Police on the subject (dated Tuesday 7 November 2023) stated:

There continues to be uncertainty around the exact roll-out date for the new Emergency Services Network (ESN). The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) continue to await more up-to-date information from the Home Office, with current understanding being that the ESN transition will not happen until the latter part of the 2020s.

CAREFUL WHO YOU VISIT

It was reported early last month that the Minister of State for Policing, Fire and Crime Prevention, Dame Diana Johnson, had her purse stolen while giving a speech to police chiefs about theft. Although recently placed in post she has been an MP for Hull since 2005 but it still beggars' belief that she knew the first thing about the subject when faced with supposedly experienced police Superintendents – well before she arrived at the venue that is!

ALL AT SEA

Not wishing to besmirch the sad deaths of 72 people of many nations seven years ago in a London high-rise fire but it seems that the politicians are throwing public money at the horrific incident to assuage their own considerable feelings of guilt.

I do not recall many memorials being built to 70+ deaths on trains or planes but it is reported that they are going to spend £350M on keeping the burned-out tower on valuable building land and, in addition, creating a memorial to those who died in the tower block. The site will no doubt turn into another place where politicians of all persuasions can regularly gather to say sorry for the many failures the incident represents. That proposal is already a plain waste of money and resources, but there is little doubt that political expediency means that there will be an annual Grenfell Day stretching into the future.

According to records over 80 people have died crossing the English Channel recently. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) cites at least 201 in the years since the tower block fire. So where is the memorial to these people to be erected? These people of many nations were also let down by the incompetence of politicians and other organisations. Is it to be on the beaches of northern France or southern England?

PEOPLE

After facing many refusals, the British Government have found a suitable volunteer to take on the task of running the team stopping the boats in the English Channel.



Former police chief **Martin Hewitt** has been appointed to lead the UK's new Border Security Command, which will focus on tackling small boat crossings.

As chairman of the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC), Mr Hewitt previously coordinated action by UK police forces on issues including terrorism and organised crime. He joined UK Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer on a visit to Rome in early September at a meeting with Italian Prime Minister, Giorgia Meloni to learn from her country's approach to tackling illegal migration.

Mr Hewitt led the NPCC between 2019 and 2023 and previously served as an assistant commissioner in the Metropolitan Police.

Editor: The Border Security Command will bring together intelligence agencies, police and border force officials to tackle the smuggling gangs behind small boat crossings. An aim that has been announced on numerous occasions by a seemingly never-ending series of UK ministers.

The 'new' organisation will comprise the same line up of staff as those that went before. Whether Hewitt can reinvigorate them into a group capable of stopping the boats remains very much in the realms of fantasy.

Scotland's Charity Air Ambulance has appointed a new chairman and two new Trustees. The new Chairman is **Robbie Brown** (see image), who has a strong background in the legal profession. Also joining the board are pilot Mike Stewart, an RAF veteran and currently commercial pilot with Leeds-based airline Jet2, and former Edinburgh Rugby professional Sean Cox, now Director of Clients Department with Investment Managers Baillie Gifford. Meanwhile, SCAA Trustees Alan Bell and Andrew Richmond both step down this month following 11 years on the board. [loosely based on the press release by SCAA]



EVENTS

HELITECH EXPO AND DRONE X

After again spending time and effort on a long ailing Helitech it can be definitely said that it has now finally disappeared from view. The event this year, laughingly marketed as Helitech Expo, Advanced Air Mobility Expo and Drone X failed to impress on every one of those elements.

As has been the case for some time now the joint event at ExCel London Docklands has advertised 300 exhibitors attracting 3,000 visitors and failed to deliver on even that modest claim. The Helitech content was just two companies and the drone content itself was clearly struggling. It makes you wonder what lies the marketing department have been pushing out on the thousands of telephone calls and e-mails they have been pushing out for weeks.

Just a few years ago the separate helicopter and drone events at ExCel were interesting go to occasions, now even the drone element is at best boring and without the indoor flying areas that occasional lifted up the atmosphere. On day two there were numerous no-show booth areas, in addition several of the less hardy exhibitors were packing their bags at lunchtime. In the past that had mainly been manned aerospace exhibitors, this time the drone sector was also voting with their feet.

After an enquiry at the organisers spartan booth it was learned that several people had asked why the manned helicopter (Helitech) content was so low. It seems that Helitech is not a helicopter show, it is about (rotary wing) technology, they do not need or embrace involving static aircraft as part of the formula. Forgive me for being mistaken over my many decades of attending the event, I know there were aircraft in previous years!

But even when the product is irretrievably broken you can still learn a little from the exhibitors and attendees. Unfortunately, the mix attending this year fell short on any finite information. In the main it is clear that the drone industry is as confused about where it is going as it ever was.

Next year it seems that the best bet is going to be a planned visit to the bi-annual DSEi, also at the ExCel centre. There they understand the value of displaying hardware of aircraft of many types. The main issue is that there's so much hardware on display planes, drones, weaponry, tanks, armoured vehicles and ships that you need days to get around it. Make plans now? 9-12 September 2025!

16-19 October 2024 Japan International Aerospace Exhibition

22-25 October 2024 Dubai Helishow UAE

29-31 October 2024 Milipol Qatar Doha Exhibition and convention Center, Doha. www.milipol.com e-mail sales@milipol.com

4-6 November 2024 AMTC Salt Lake City, Utah www.aams.org/AMTC24



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Blue and Yellow—is it a police drone? No it is designed to clean high rise windows!