

# Police Aviation News

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

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Issue 344

December 2024



**PAvCon Europe 2025 Date and Location Announced**

*Much of the same - Channel Contract Renewed*

*New UK BVLOS trials in the west country*





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# LAW ENFORCEMENT INTERNATIONAL

PAvCon EUROPE: The next PAVCon Europe event is scheduled to take place in the Var department, Southeast France. More details coming soon but enough to say that we are putting together a conference programme that focusses on surveillance and firefighting without excluding other leading edge technology subject matter.

The dates agreed are **Tuesday 27 and Wednesday 28 May 2025**, with the exhibition build up, and potential training options, taking place on Monday 26 May.

The location is Le Castellet International Airport, near Marseille in the prefecture of the Pyrénées-Orientales department in Southern France. A few kilometres from the Mediterranean Sea and the scrublands of the Corbieres massif the busy business airfield is marketed as the gateway to the French Riviera. [www.aerportducastellet.com](http://www.aerportducastellet.com)



Le Castellet ©Excelis



Le Castellet ©Excelis

Excelis S.A., the owner operator, chose the best adapted solutions for the creation of an upmarket airport, specialising in the business and leisure markets. Since the airport was remodelled 20 years ago five top quality hangars have been available to users and special attention was given to the overall architectural design, so as to integrate fully into the regional architectural style. The airport installed a solar array power plant on the 5000 m<sup>2</sup> roof of hangar 5 in February 2010.

It will be a little while before full hotel and other details will be available but so far, we find that the easiest arrival airport is going to be Marseille. The airlines serving Marseille include Aegean, Aer Lingus, Air France, Austrian, British Airways, Brussels, Easy Jet, El Al, Eurowings, Iberia, KLM, Lufthansa, Ryanair, Swiss, Turkish and Vueling.

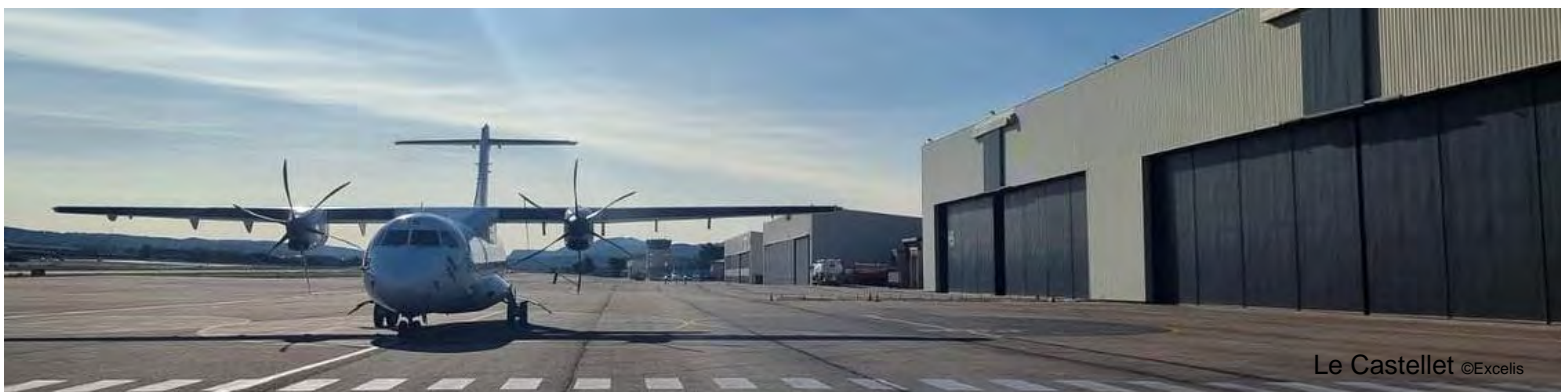
Options available for an onward journey from Marseille Airport include the train which appears to cost under \$5 to get to Le Castellet and takes just 34 mins. We will be checking that in the coming weeks!

A typical car journey is 41.6km via A50 and D8N takes 40 minutes

***The venue is no stranger to events including motor racing and a drone event where a DFR home (left) was one of the exhibits.***



Le Castellet ©Excelis



Le Castellet ©Excelis



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NSW Police @Facebook

**AUSTRALIA**

**NEW SOUTH WALES:** Captured at in Port Macquarie on the north coast of New South Wales was POLAIR 3, a Bell 429 VH-PHB normally based at the Bankstown base. [Kilo Hotel Photography via Facebook]

On the same mission PolAir – NSW Police Force Aviation Command posted its own image – this time an interior shot. [also borrowed from Facebook]



NSW Police @Facebook

## CANADA

ONTARIO: Canadian Helicopters, as contractors to York Regional Police, based in Aurora, Ontario, are currently advertising for a base pilot based out of Oshawa Executive Airport. Minimum requirements are 1,000 hours rotary wing time, including 100 at night. Extra qualifications which "would be an asset" include an Airbus H125 rating, IR group 4 and NVG experience. York Regional Police took delivery of their H125 in March 2023 [Parapex Media]

## CHILE

CARIBINEROS: In recent editions PAN has carried news of a new manned helicopter, an Airbus H135, another acquisition has now emerged in the form of a Scheibel S100 Camcopter unmanned rotary craft. The S100 is equipped with a Trakka TC-300 sensor system.

The Carabineros are reported to have seamlessly integrated Trakka vision technologies across their AW109, EC135 and H125 helicopters. [Linked In]

## CROATIA

MINISTRY OF INTERIOR: After reporting the first of two Bell 412EPX helicopters for the Croatian Ministry of the Interior in the last issue, the second of the pair ordered has also been shipped to Bell's European Centre at Prague. Further test flights have been made there from late October

## KENYA

The Kenyan government is seeking Sh106 billion (US\$800,000) to implement crucial reforms in the police service. This includes salary adjustments.

A report, led by former Chief Justice David Maraga, was presented to President William Ruto in October last year and includes recommendations aimed at transforming the National Police Service (NPS), Kenya Prisons Service (KPS), and National Youth Service (NYS).

In August it was confirmed the National Police Service Air Wing's return to the police three years after the National Air Support Department (NASD) took control of it. NPS lost control of its air wing following an executive order from retired President Uhuru Kenyatta that placed all of the government's air assets under NASD, a department within the Ministry of Defense, in December 2020. Nothing much has happened since.

Control of the air wing by another organ led to the creation of control and command challenges. In some instances, injured police officers had to wait for hours for air rescue. That seems a familiar refrain, but I am not just harking on about NPAS in the UK, the same happened in the 1930s when the Fleet Air Arm was in control of the Fleet Air Arm and the Army Air component. It just did not work out well.

In this case the merger made NPS pilots and engineers redundant, forcing some to leave the service in search of better opportunities. The result is that much of the infrastructure will have to be rebuilt and old lessons re-learned. It all takes time. [Eastleigh Voice/PAR]

## TURKEY

JANDARMA: The Turkish Gendarmerie has received its first new T625 Gökbey helicopter.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan stated that a total of 20 of these new helicopters are planned to be delivered to various security agencies.

"On the occasion of the 101st anniversary of our Republic, we have made the first delivery of our Gökbey helicopter, designed for the needs of the General Command of our Gendarmerie," stated the Turkish President.

The Turkish Gendarmerie, which is responsible for law enforcement in the country, will receive 3 T625 helicopters.





## UNITED KINGDOM

**NATIONAL:** NPAS are sponsoring an Airspace Change Proposal (ACP) to establish an airspace trial to the north of Bristol. This 6-month trial seeks to investigate how Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS), could be utilised by police forces alongside a traditional crewed fleet. NPAS has written to a number of organisations that may be impacted by this proposal and are seeking feedback. The cut-off for responses is December 22, 2024 [Parapex]

*Editor: Reading the documentation, it would appear that the planned trial will involve a police EC135 and an unidentified drone that fits the description of a Schiebel S-100 in trials commencing on May 29, 2025. They will run for 24 weeks until November 12.*

*The area of the trial is centred on the River Severn taking in both England and Wales with the launch and landing site being Avonmouth Helipad, Portishead.*

*Initial trials will take place at night between 200 and 0400 and build up to daylight flying (1000-1500).*

*The documents state that the use of BVLOS technology will afford NPAS:*

*Long-term opportunity to reduce policing costs*

*Reduce carbon footprint of policing*

*Increase duration of operational activities*

*Respond to incidents more efficiently*

*The documents, available on the CAA website, also stated that the TRA will allow access to specific users including NPAS crewed aircraft operating alongside RPAS, to allow the trial to gather information on how they react and operate together.*

*A recent press report highlighted the fact that so far, in 2024, there have been five near miss incidents in the UK involving police drones and police helicopters. The problem, it would seem, is that the 43 regional police forces in England and Wales, those that have drone units, are not routinely informing the centralised NPAS Control Room in Wakefield, which operates police helicopters and aeroplanes, when and where the police drones are being flown. Currently there is no binding requirement to do so.*

*It is worth noting that this is the United Kingdom where for decades now it has been a requirement that manned emergency services helicopters are only able to fly if they have TWO engines. This basic rule has resulted of many heated arguments and remained constant. Yet here we have a single engine rotary craft flagrantly ignoring the rules simply because it supposedly advances the argument for having a BVLOS drone. I have said it before, someone needs to decide how they are going to get around the two engine rule.*

*If the trial drone suffers a failure and comes down in an urban environment it will kill someone—even if it is hiding under the cloak of night. You just will not see it coming.*



## PARLIAMENT

In early November the Minister of State, The Home Department Diana R Johnson DBE gave a written reply to a series of questions by Danny Kruger, Shadow Parliamentary Under Secretary (Defence) and Conservative MP for East Wiltshire.

He had asked whether there were plans to review the effectiveness of the National Police Air Service (NPAS), whether she has had discussions with cabinet colleagues and relevant stakeholders on levels of police grants in the context of procuring new aircraft for NPAS and whether she has had discussions with police forces on aerial service needs. These were fairly specific questions.

The Labour MP for Kingston upon Hull North and Cottingham replied stating that NPAS is a police-led col-

**Front Cover:** Although many observers (not necessarily experts in their field) are of the opinion that the use of large aircraft to patrol the busy sea ways south of England is a waste of resources and funding the Home Office in London has signed up for more than a year of continued use of the leased PAL Aerospace de Havilland twin.

The new contract now involves two aircraft and will cost the UK Government in excess of £33M, further boosting its very expensive "Stop the Boats" plans to deter Illegal Migrants entering Britain from France. This cover image was produced for the original contract for one aircraft signed in 2023. [PAL]



laboration governed by the NPAS National Strategic Board (NSB), which is made up of Chief Constables and PCCs representing each policing region. The NSB sets the direction for NPAS and reviews its effectiveness on behalf of the other police bodies of England and Wales.

She revealed that representatives from West Yorkshire Police, West Yorkshire Combined Authority and the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) recently met with the Minister for Policing, Fire and Crime Prevention (Diana R Johnson) to discuss policing's air service requirements, including both crewed and uncrewed aircraft. She also disclosed that The Home Secretary, Yvette Cooper, has regular discussions with both Chief Constables and Police and Crime Commissioners, which cover a wide variety of subject areas.

*Editor: In fairness she answered the questions, but it is patently clear that the answers were hollow shells of information and tell us nothing.*

## CONFERENCE

At the joint conference of the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) and the Police & Crime Commissioners (the APCC NPCC Partnership Summit 2024) held in the QEII Conference Centre, Westminster last month the Chairman of the NPCC Gavin Stephens told delegates there are too many decision makers in the current structure of 43 geographical forces in England and Wales, that leads to inertia, indecision and 'undecision' (new word alert!).

He told delegates "The world around us has changed beyond recognition yet we remain rooted in a system designed in the early 1960s, before mobile phones, the internet, even the M25 which came along two decades later."

Police chiefs are looking at countries including Australia, Japan, Norway, the Netherlands and Denmark as models for a new structure and have been in discussions for a year over the plans. The result is a plan for a new directorate that could lead a national response to certain threats.

In a speech at the same event, the Home Secretary Yvette Cooper, said she foresees a national body taking responsibility for IT, forensics and the police air service, but that this may be expanded in the future.



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She confirmed more than half a billion pounds of additional funding from central government next year to neighbourhood policing, the National Crime Agency (NCA) and counterterrorism. Police forces will be “compensated” for the recent rise in employer national insurance contributions separately from the funding boost.

*Ed: Although presented as a positive project it seems to be suffering from the usual problems. Although the new (barely in post) Home Secretary has embraced the plan and apparently promised funding some-day next year there must be a suspicion that she is reading from someone else’s script. The oft repeated wail from both the British police hierarchy and British public is the lack of visible police walking the streets. It has been so long since police stopped regularly walking the streets that no one in the service actually remembers how to do it efficiently.*

*On the aviation side many police services modelled their operations on the second-to-non-British model of a decade ago. While Europe and Australia still embrace the advanced British model, NPAS (and by default the NPCC) have abandoned it and are now apparently again searching for it. It is doubtful they would recognise it if they saw it.*

## RECOGNITION

On March 9, 2024, the Government announced the introduction of The Elizabeth Emblem. This commemorative emblem is awarded as a mark of recognition to the next of kin of those who lost their lives in the course of undertaking eligible public service.

The recognition is in the form of an emblem for the next of kin to wear at their discretion, with a memorial scroll and miniature included. The Elizabeth Emblem is silver in colour and in the form of an oval. The obverse of the emblem shall bear the inscription “For A Life Given in Service” surrounded by a rosemary wreath, as a symbol of remembrance, and a Tudor Crown. The reverse of the emblem shall be inscribed upon with the name of the person for whom it is in memoriam.



The Elizabeth Emblem, named after the late Queen Elizabeth II, acknowledges the debt to those who give their lives in public service. Their next of kin will now be eligible to receive this recognition as a mark of the nation’s gratitude. The award is only for a restricted market, primarily next of kin, and covers only those who have died since 1948.

The Honours and Appointments Secretariat arrange applications to be verified to ensure that it meets the eligibility criteria. A person eligible to receive the Elizabeth Emblem shall be the recorded next of kin or the person determined to be so. If an additional person is not recorded as the next of kin, they may be eligible for a Memorial Scroll but only, if they are: A parent of the deceased person; or the spouse or partner of the deceased person or someone who had a substantive relationship with them.

Last month the names of the first recipients of the award were announced. King Charles will award the first batch of emblems later this year. The list is of more than 30 deceased firefighters, police officers and public servants. Among those honoured is a single aviator, Detective Constable Malcolm Wiltshire and it will be awarded to his son Martin Wiltshire.

DC Wiltshire served in the Hampshire Constabulary. He died in May 1985 when the Edgely Optica aircraft he was onboard taking aerial photographs of traffic congestion crashed. Both he and the pilot, Police Constable Gerald Spencer, were killed on impact.



Malcolm Wiltshire, aged 44, (left) was married with children, they survive but his wife died three years after the crash. Gerald Spencer, was aged 37, (right) was also married with children.

*Editor: It is early days yet and no doubt many eligible next of kin are not even aware that they can apply for the award. Others may well simply be of the opinion that they have moved on from further commemoration of those that died. There are perhaps the next of kin of a dozen aviators that might be eligible for this award. Most are already memorialised in other ways.*





Two weeks ago, the NPCC was asked for a comment on how they intend to go forward with promoting this award but has not yet replied.

APSA launched an on-line international aviator memorial page in 2005. It combined the resources of ALEA and PAN and was a substantial archive, but a change in Webmaster resulted in content being reduced and it not keeping pace with later events, it is now stalled at 273 individuals only one of whom is from the UK. Neither of the Hampshire officers still appear there.



Tod Jager ©ALEA

## UNITED STATES

ALABAMA: Dale County Sheriff's Office (DCSO) based in Ozark are offering for sale their Cessna 206H fixed wing surveillance aircraft. DCSO is located in Ozark, Alabama the Home of Army Aviation, Fort Rucker,

DCSO acquired the used 2018 Cessna a year ago and converted it from civil use to surveillance configuration it now has just 470hrs since new.



Cessna 206 ©DCSO

The specification for the aircraft is that it is registered N506PA, is a Cessna Turbo Stationair HD c/n T20609556. It has Aspen Avionics, Kelley Aerospace air conditioning, a Southeast Aerospace operator station was installed Dec of 2023, Technisonic TDFM-9100, with TDAP 611 audio panel, Jet shades were installed January 2024. It has the Trakka camera and map system, but they will keep the camera because they use it on their OH-58 helicopters. The console and all of the hard mounted equipment will stay with the aircraft.

CALIFORNIA: For the past few years the City of Chino (CA) has been studying the feasibility of starting their own air support unit. Chino currently relies on air support from the Ontario Police Department or the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Office. Unfortunately, Chino and surrounding jurisdictions have had steady increases in serious crimes. In turn, requests for air support from patrol officers has increased. Chino noticed that there were often delays in air support response because the supporting air units were tied up on calls in their home jurisdictions.

After researching their needs, the Chino Police began implementing their plan in 2023 into 2024. Requests for proposals were submitted to industry for a patrol helicopter, equipment, and completion services. This was followed by requests for bids. Based on available documentation Chino has selected the Bell 505 to serve as their patrol helicopter. In a related project, the City of Chino plans to build a brand-new police substation at the Chino Airport. This new complex will include a hangar and office space for the new air support unit. The next step is for the funding to be approved. On November 19, 2024, the Chino Police and Finance Departments were presented the purchase \$3.7M plan to the City Council for approval. It was agreed.

CALIFORNIA: The Tehama County Sheriff's Office in Red Bluff, CA plans to put their SAR configured Bell UH-1H (N911NN) into service this month. Over a year in the making, the SAR helicopter program took delivery of the surplus Huey several months back thanks to the 1033 Program. The aircraft had formerly served with the Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office in Louisiana. Jefferson Parish dropped the Huey after it was replaced in service by a used Bell 429.

Over the past months the Huey has undergone extensive maintenance and modification. It has been equipped with a brand new FLIR Systems camera. The camera was donated to Tehama County at no cost other than shipping. Interestingly, one source reported that it was donated by a Netherlands based police agency while another source reported it was donated by Teledyne FLIR. The aircraft will be based at Red Bluff Municipal Airport (RBL).

MISSOURI: The Missouri State Highway Patrol based in Jefferson City Airport have disposed of a 1984 Cessna 182R Airplane - N91MP c/n 18268423 for \$174,000 after over 70 Bids, over a third of which were placed in the last day. The airframe has just under 10,000 hours on it with its last annual inspection being

undertaken in January this year. The aircraft is fitted with Garmin 500 Txi, Garmin GTN 650 and a Garmin Auto Pilot.

The State Highway Patrol has provided 60 years of aviation law enforcement service, 45 years as a Patrol division, to Missouri citizens. The Aircraft Division has operated at least 55 aircraft in the past 60 years with 118,740 hours of confirmed flight time.

The current operation has the use of a light twin, a Cessna 210 and a handful Cessna 182s and a similar number of helicopters. The agency will be retaining the tail number N91MP on sale.

NEW YORK: The NYPD's Drone as First Responder program is expanding to equip some police vehicles with drones, allowing officers to deploy the craft directly from patrol cars as needed.

This initiative, now in its third phase, builds on the department's existing use of drones to respond to 911 calls, emergency situations and to monitor high-crime areas.

For the future they are exploring additional medical related options where for example in Central Park, someone calls 911 and there's an overdose a drone might attend and drop Narcan, or if it's a heart attack deliver an AED before EMS even gets there so that they can start the process of first aid."

NEW YORK: Erie County has been operating an AS350 helicopter N338SD that is now 23 years old and suffering significant unscheduled downtime. The helicopter, "Air 1", undertakes the full range of police roles and SAR/Rescue.

The case for a replacement helicopter has been made and the \$11M funding assured to purchase an Airbus Helicopter H135 helicopter. A down payment has been made but no date of arrival for the new helicopter has been announced. The sheriff has stated that he hopes to see it in service late next year but others closer to the purchasing say it is too early to set the date.

Last month the plan appeared to have stalled. ECSO consulted the FAA and found that it was not as simple as buying and operating the new twin helicopter. Extended pilot and TFO training requirements for a H135 pushed the total financial commitment significantly higher than had been expected. The resolution of the perceived problem may be to acquire a new H125 after all.

In addition to providing service to the unincorporated portions of the county, the unit is available to 28 Police agencies and 96 fire companies in Erie County including the City of Buffalo.

Regardless of the ultimate choice of airframe, current plans suggest that the existing helicopter may be retained as a maintenance spare. Its value is now low, and it may be considered that it has greater useful value to the county in being available as a backup.

ECSO previously operated a surplus Hughes OH-6 which was also retained beyond its time as a maintenance spare before being transferred to the Down East Emergency Medicine Institute (DEEMI) of Maine back in May 2024. DEEMI utilizes Hughes OH-6, Bell OH-58, Bell UH-1H helicopters and a Champion 7CGAA airplane for Search and Rescue missions around Maine.

*Editor: Neighbouring Niagara County Sheriff's Office is purchasing a new helicopter for their aviation unit. More details coming soon.*



The advertisement features a dark blue background. On the left is the Smith Myers logo, consisting of a stylized 'S' and 'M' above the text 'smith myers'. In the center, the text reads 'TURNS ANY MOBILE PHONE INTO A LOCATION BEACON' in a bold, white, sans-serif font. Below this, it says 'DETECT - LOCATE - COMMUNICATE' and 'artemis.smithmyers.com'. On the right, there are three black electronic devices, likely the location beacons, and the Artemis logo, which is a white compass rose with a stylized 'A' in the center and the word 'ARTEMIS' below it.



NEW YORK: Westchester County Police has taken delivery of a new Bell 407GX<sub>i</sub> N536PD to replace the 2006 model that was sold by auction recently (see last month's issue). The completion was undertaken by Bell at Piney Flats, Tennessee but no images or role equipment details are yet available. [CS – Facebook]

OHIO: Cleveland Police have had the first of their MD500E fleet N952CP upgraded to MD530F specification at the MD Helicopters-authorized service centre Thoroughbred Aviation, Lexington, Kentucky.

Their first MD500E to MD530F conversion, it is the first of two that Thoroughbred is doing for that operator. Other members of the MD service network can also offer the upgrade.

The conversion process upgrades the engine from the Rolls-Royce 250-C20B/R to the 250-C30 and adds longer main and tail rotor blades, a longer tail rotor driveshaft, tail rotor gearbox extension, modified tail boom, new vertical and horizontal stabilizers, and new cockpit instruments.

The resulting performance improvements include a 12% (350-pound) increase in maximum gross weight internal load and 6% (200-pound) increase in external load, with an additional 12% (198 pounds) of useful load. The new maximum gross weight is 3,350 pounds. Out-of-ground-effect hover climbs by 92% (5,500 feet). [MDHI]

NORTH CAROLINA: The Brunswick County Sheriff's Office Aviation Unit based on the Atlantic coast in Bolivia, NC has taken delivery of a Bell UH-1H helicopter.

The military surplus helicopter now registered N62619 was 68-16568 with the military prior to serving with the California Department of Justice from 1997 and then transferred to the San Bernardino County Sheriff from 2018.

The Huey joins a Bell OH-58 Kiowa operated since 2009 and will enhance the units search and rescue capability.



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 A photograph of a road closure at night. Several police cars with flashing blue and red lights are positioned behind a metal barrier. Orange traffic cones and a sign that reads "EMERGENCY ROAD CLOSURE" are in the foreground. In the background, a sign for a "Station" is visible. The scene is illuminated by the emergency lights and streetlights.
 

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OHIO: As part of a medium-term fleet replacement strategy, the State Highway Patrol has taken delivery of a sensor equipped Cessna 208B Caravan. The new arrival replaces a 2006 model Caravan that is being traded in as part of the deal. Although delivered it now faces some months being role configured with a camera system and LE radios by CNC Technologies.

The operator has a large fleet of aircraft primarily used for traffic enforcement, including ten Cessna 182 Skylanes, most of which are at least 20 years old. One is just 18 years old. The plan is to progressively replace all these aircraft with new Cessna T206 Turbo Stationairs.

In addition to the new Caravan the State Patrol operates a surveillance configured 2018 GippsAero GA8 Airvan, and three Airbus AStar helicopters - a 1998 AS350B2, a 2015 AS350B3 and a 2018 AS350B3.

According to the state highway patrol in 2023 the aviation section handled 1,124 mission requests, which included 471 criminal searches, and 175 missing person searches throughout the entire state of Ohio.

PENNSYLVANIA: Despite the fact that they were nominally replaced by two AS350B2 AStars as long ago as ten years the two Bell 206L4 previously in service with the Philadelphia Police are only just being offered for sale at GovDeal.com. The bidding process closes on December 3 with a number of bidders interested. On November 12 the bids for both stood at \$650,000.

Both airframes are 26 years old and have around 10,000 hours flight time with an inspection due. Both appear to have flown recently. N94PD is c/n 52205 and at one time named "Helen" N95PD is c/n 52206 named "Alison." Both were taken on charge in September 1998.



They are offered devoid of role equipment, as delivered back in 1998, but during their service they have carried Skyshout, an SX-16 searchlight and a nose mounted sensor turret.

In other news the Philadelphia PD needs to enhance training and certification for two (2) Tactical Flight Officers in obtaining their FAA Rotary Commercial Pilot License — a prerequisite to transition from Tactical Flight Officer to full Pilot in Command Status. The current compliment of fully licensed pilots is three (3) sworn personnel and this drastically affects the Aviation Unit's ability to maintain flight operations and keep the unit adequately staffed. The Philadelphia Police Foundation (PPF) is stepping in to cover the costs of this training. [Undated]

TEXAS: Bell Textron Inc. has announced the signed purchase agreement for the sale of a second Bell 505 Jet Ranger X to the Fort Worth Police Department.

Since its inception, the Fort Worth Police Department Air Support Unit has used a series of Bell aircraft to advance their aerial public safety capabilities, including Bell 47s and Bell 206 JetRanger. In 2021, the Department took delivery of their first Bell 505 during a ceremony that commemorated the 70-year relationship between Bell and the Department.

With the Air Support Unit's newly purchased Bell 505, the Department plans to increase their public safety presence with the platform's versatile-mission capabilities, such as search and rescue missions. With the added benefit of its wide panoramic windows, open cabin design, and Synthetic Vision technology, the Bell 505 acts as a force-multiplier by allowing aerial crews to relay essential safety information to law enforcement officers on the ground. Combining its Safran Arrius 2R engine, dual channel FADEC, and Garmin G1000H NXi avionics suite, the Bell 505 was manufactured to perform efficiently during demanding missions.

Meanwhile Fort Worth Police have sold two Bell 206 JetRanger. Both have now been registered to Royal Leasing Company (2007) Ltd at an address in Quebec, Canada and put on the Transport Canada register. The pair previously carried the FAA registrations N206FW and N911FW [Parapex/Bell]



# AIR AMBULANCE INTERNATIONAL

GERMANY: ADAC Luftrettung, in partnership with the European HEMS and Air Ambulance Committee (EHAC), has announced the return of the AirMed World Congress to Munich.

From September 16 to 18, 2026, the event at the Bergson Kunstkraftwerk (art centre) will bring back the world's premier aeromedical conference to its birthplace 46 years after its inception in 1980. With a projected attendance of up to 800 professionals from across the globe,



The event offers a platform for physicians, paramedics, nurses, pilots, technical crew, managers, industry partners, and regulatory authorities to exchange knowledge, share best practices, and explore future trends in aeromedical operations. AirMed will be held at the Bergson, an exciting new cultural venue opened in Munich's Aubing district in 2024. The location is home to concerts, parties and gastronomy on around 20,000 square metres. Germany's largest gallery space is also located on the site.

A dual venue format also brings before the audience the newly opened ADAC Air Rescue Campus, designed for hands-on workshops and mission simulations, a format that promises to highlight a commitment to cross-professional learning, enriching the conference experience for all attendees. The venue in Oberpfaffenhofen opens next year.

ADAC now has four locations in Germany, the headquarters in Sankt Augustin, near Bonn, and branches in Halle-Opplin, Landshut and in Oberpfaffenhofen 23km from the city centre of Munich.

## INDIA

NATIONAL: Indian Civil Aviation Minister K Rammohan Naidu announced in early November a proposal to develop a network of at least 50 helicopter air ambulance units along the country's major roads.

The Minister was speaking at the Heli Power India 2024 conference hosted by the Rotary Wing Society of India (RWSI).

He also announced plans to set up a helicopter accelerator cell within the civil aviation ministry, tasked with understanding and taking actions to assist the regulatory and operational needs of the Indian helicopter industry.

By involving experts and streamlining decision-making, the unit aims to make helicopter operations smoother and more responsive to the industry's growth demands, a release said, quoting the minister.

[Helihub]

## UNITED KINGDOM

NATIONAL: Air Ambulances UK, the national representative of the air ambulance community hosted the flagship 2024 Annual Conference sponsored by SES and Awards of Excellence sponsored by Kwik Fit at the Coventry Building Society Arena on November 28.

Each year hundreds of individuals from the UK air ambulance community (both charity and commercial) to join together for an opportunity to reconnect, network and share ideas and learning. This year, the theme is 'Saving More Lives Together' and the conference will be held in a new venue and location!

The conference, sponsored By Survival Equipment Services Ltd, was from 9am to 5pm with the awards dinner and ceremony sponsored By Kwik Fit being from 7pm to 1am. At the time of going to press the winning entries had not been announced. Check out [www.airambulancesuk.org](http://www.airambulancesuk.org) for the results.

*Ed: Several air ambulance groups run medical conferences at no costs but this black-tie event is a fund raiser for the organisation and ticket prices reflect that. The least any attendee (or their sponsor) can expect to pay to attend the awards is over £150 and a non-member will be faced with a ticket price of £372. Early booking did attract discounts but these are significant prices to find for mere mortals especially if there is a dinner jacket or special dress to acquire.*

**KENT, SURREY & SUSSEX:** Close on the heels of Cornwall, the first UK charity air ambulance, came the Southeast Thames Air Ambulance and the charity that it evolved into, the Kent Surrey Sussex (KSS) marked 35 years since the charity was launched on 6 November 1989 with a low key internal event.

Since 1989 the operation has undertaken over 46,000 missions, saving thousands of lives and providing the best possible outcome for patients. KSS currently responds to around nine life or death calls every day across the South-east.

KSS started operations from Rochester Airport with a AS355 helicopter registered G-SETA on a short lease from McAlpine Helicopters and under the control of the regional health authority. Under the agreement Kenneth McAlpine, Chairman of McAlpine Helicopters undertook to underwrite the cost of the helicopter and pilot for three months while other costs were underwritten by the health authority. In those days it was the dedication off a few in industry and the medical world that launched this charitable sector into an uncertain world. It is fair to say that their beliefs have born fruit and thousands of people have had their lives saved without cost at the point of need.



*Kate Chivers when she was the CEO and driving force for the new operation in 1989*



The Kent based charity owes a huge debt to its founder, the remarkable Kate Chivers, who established it as an independent charity when an initial three months of funding came to an end, and it faced an uncertain future. She set up a lottery which raised funds for the first year of tentative operations and remained as the guiding figure for the important formative years. For more than a decade she saw the charity flying a similar AS355, surviving the trauma of a fatal accident and progressing through to introducing the latest MD902 Explorer and undertaking a move to a brand-new base in Marden.

As part of last month's staff meeting the charity presented Kate Chivers with the first KSS Lifetime Achievement Award and also undertook to erect commemorative plaques at each of the bases now in operation. This was to acknowledge her amazing contribution in establishing the charity which has expanded over three counties to develop into the organisation that is KSS today



Over the past 35 years KSS has grown to become one of the largest air ambulance services in the UK, serving a resident population of around 5M, and millions more transiting through the region every year. It covers much of the South-east of England – 3,500 square miles across Kent, Surrey and Sussex.

The anniversary coincides with the start of the KSS Christmas Appeal, 'Ready to Save Lives' which is helping ensure that its specialist doctors and paramedics will be there for people across Kent Surrey and Sussex in their most urgent hour of need.

*Kate Chivers with David Welch the current CEO of KSS at the November 15 event. [KSSAA]*



LEICESTER: The HELP Appeal, the only charity in the UK dedicated to funding NHS hospital helipads, has announced it is to fund a new, state-of-the-art helipad at Glenfield Hospital in Leicester. This significant upgrade, made possible through a donation of over £288,000 from the charity, marks another major milestone in the HELP Appeal's commitment to providing the best emergency healthcare for the most critically ill patients in our country. The new helipad will feature a larger landing area, capable of accommodating today's bigger helicopters, and facilitate quicker and more efficient transfers of critically ill patients to the hospital's specialist departments. The upgraded design includes robust fencing to protect patients and hospital staff and ensure safety around the helipad, as well as advanced lighting systems to support landings during darkness hours.

The goal is for the new helipad to become operational later this month. The HELP Appeal relies solely on charitable donations and does not receive any government funding or money from the National Lottery. Across the country, HELP Appeal funded NHS hospital helipads have seen over 29,000 landings to date.

Other recent HELP Appeal funding projects for the air ambulance community include £60,000 towards a response car for the West Midlands CARE Team, a £2M donation towards the recently completed new helipad at Salford Royal [below], and £6M towards the Sheffield Children's hospital rooftop helipad.



WALES: In April 2024, The Wales Air Ambulance Charity welcomed an NHS Wales decision to move forward with improvements to the service it provides after an independent review identified

On average, there are 2-3 people every day in a life or limb-threatening situation who need the service, but who currently do not receive it (known as unmet need).

North Wales and the northern parts of Mid Wales are disadvantaged at night as the service currently only has one overnight crew, based in Cardiff, covering the whole of Wales.

The service's highly skilled medical teams based in Welshpool and Caernarfon are underused.

The reorganisation was approved by the NHS Wales Joint Commissioning Committee (JCC) - a group comprising of the seven health boards in Wales. The recommendations were that the current crews and existing assets at the Caernarfon and Welshpool bases would merge at a yet-to-be-announced location in the middle of North Wales, near the A55 road. Reflecting demand in the regions, one crew will operate 8am until 8pm. A second crew will operate between 2pm and 2am.

However, the public perception in mid-Wales - particularly around the Welshpool base - was that they were losing the effectiveness of the service, and a well-organised campaign followed. Many campaign banners are visible for anyone driving in that area today.



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In recent weeks campaigners battling to stop the closure of the two bases have won the right to put their case before the High Court, with the expectation that could happen before the year end.

A spokesperson for the NHS Wales Joint Commissioning Committee said: "We acknowledge the decision by the Administrative (High) Court to approve a judicial review into the decision made by the NHS Wales Joint Commissioning Committee (JCC) on 23 April 2024 in relation to the Emergency Medical Retrieval and Transfer Service (EMRTS) Review. We respect the legal process and will cooperate fully. As the matter is now before the court, it would not be appropriate to comment further at this stage." [HeliHub]

**YORKSHIRE:** As this edition closed there is news in the the Yorkshire Air Ambulance is going to move it northern base due to the original site being sold.

Currently the operation flies from a purpose built hangar at Nostell Priory, near Wakefield, and a more rudimentary base near the control tower at the former RAF Topcliffe. This is now known as Alanbrooke Barracks and operated by the army. The site is sold and it is time to move on after ten years..

The current plan is to relocate its Northern Air Support Unit on the outskirts of Skipton on Swale (a rural spot with a population said to be 100 at the last count) about 3.5 miles (5.6km) from its current home at RAF Topcliffe. The charity said the new base would help it advance its capabilities and ensure its crews could operate at the highest level in the future.



The Chairman of YAA cautions that the project is still young and no plans have been submitted to either the parish council in Skipton on Swale and North Yorkshire Council. [BBC/David Thompson]

## UNITED STATES

**NEBRASKA:** Apollo Med Flight is enhancing its flight data monitoring (FDM) and communication capabilities by installing the Outerlink IRIS system on its Bell 429 helicopter, operating at Good Samaritan Hospital in Kearney, Nebraska.



The IRIS system offers a unique recording platform that captures voice, video, and parametric aircraft data from initial power-on to power-off. Unlike traditional crash recorders, the IRIS system continuously captures all engine data from start to post-shutdown. Using the IRIS FASTARS Cloud, customers can upload, process, and analyse hundreds of data parameters with ease, thanks to a simple SD card in the IRIS control head.

Currently installed on over 500 fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft, the IRIS system has demonstrated significant cost-saving benefits for customers by reducing maintenance expenses and lowering insurance premiums. With all hardware and software developed in-house, Outerlink delivers a fully integrated, user-friendly safety system that operates smoothly.



PENNSYLVANIA: The Life Flight air ambulance operated by Geisinger Health System in Pennsylvania has recently announced (via a Facebook group post by a flight nurse) that it has now transported 90,000 patients since the operation started in 1981 with an Alouette III helicopter. The current fleet numbers seven EC145s and one earlier BK117C1. Geisinger operates on its own Part 135 approval, and has six operating bases at Selinsgrove, State College, Avoca, Williamsport, Minersville, and Lehighton. [HeliHub]

## ZIMBABWE

A year ago, Zimbabwe took delivery of a large number of Ansat helicopters from Russia. The arrival of so many airframes at once appeared to be Russia dumping airframes that it could not use due to international restrictions on trade. Many parts on the Ansat, including the engines, rely upon Western technology and are therefore difficult to obtain.

More recently the local news website in Zimbabwe, Bulawayo24, has provided some insight on the first six weeks of the new air ambulance service from when it started on August 24. The landmark initial mission was to transfer a cardiac arrest patient from Chegutu District Hospital in Mashonaland West to Sally Mugabe Central Hospital in Harare.

Those initial six weeks saw 67 patients airlifted, including 21 under the age of 17. Of these, 16 were infants, three aged 6 to 12, and two between 12 and 17. In the adult age groups, 43 patients were between 18 and 64, and a further three were over 65 years old.

Figures provided in the Bulawayo24 article also suggest the majority of flights are transfers from outlying hospitals to more specialised medical centres with the Parirenyatwa Group of Hospitals and Sally Mugabe Central Hospital, along with Chinhoyi Provincial Hospital, the principal recipients. Sending hospitals were




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listed as Chinhoyi Provincial Hospital with 16 airlifts, followed by Concession District Hospital (15), Chegutu (12), and Bindura Provincial Hospital with 10.

This is a national network involving six Kazan Ansat helicopters and is fully funded by the Zimbabwe Government. The helicopters are operated by a new subsidiary of Russian operator HeliDrive from four bases at Harare, Bulawayo, Mutate and Victoria Falls.

A July report by the Zimbabwe Sunday Mail interviewed the Chief Pilot of this operation, named as the Russian-born Vadim Bagabov. HeliDrive is training local professionals to run the service, including 40 pilots, 40 doctors, 50 nurses, 10 dispatchers, and 10 engineers currently undergoing training. The article goes on to say that the Russian operator has also supplied helicopters which will be deployed in the tourism sector. Given the helicopters are all in the very same colour scheme as those operated in Russia, we are seeking clarity on whether these aircraft were donated or loaned. They all carry local Zimbabwe registrations. [HeliHub]



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# FIRE ITALY

**VIGILI DE FUOCO:** The Italian National Fire Corps (Vigili del Fuoco, part of the Ministry of the Interior) will introduce eight AW139 intermediate twin-engine helicopters in a special configuration dedicated to mountain operations and firefighting.

These aircraft, which will add to an existing fleet of 28 AW139s, are expected to be delivered starting before the end of 2025, with handover completion before mid-2026, providing a further boost to mountain rescue operations and countering fire across the country.

The Italian National Fire Corps introduced the AW139 to replace the decades-old Agusta Bell AB412 helicopters and to guarantee optimal coverage and increased responsiveness across the country.

The introduction of the AW139 marks a significant enhancement of airborne multirole capabilities with the world's most modern helicopter for maritime and mountain search-and-rescue (SAR), medical rescue, firefighting, and disaster relief duties.

In this latest special configuration, the Italian National Fire Corps AW139 helicopters feature a wide range of mission equipment for specific tasks, including various optional kits to counter fire. These alternatively encompass a belly tank, a traditional Bambi bucket, or a Bambi bucket max, allowing multiple water drops with variable water quantity. A hover pump is also available to ease water refilling in confined areas.

The seven-tonne AW139 design incorporates a large, spacious cabin accessed by two sliding doors and powerful engines. Excellent one-engine inoperative capability ensures the aircraft can accomplish the most demanding missions while maintaining the ability to fly away safely in the rare event of an engine failure. [Leonardo]

# UNITED STATES

**COLORADO:** El Paso County Sheriff and Fire Warden Joseph Roybal welcomed the Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control's Firehawk Helicopter and crew to the El Paso County Emergency Services facility in Colorado Springs.

The Colorado Legislature approved the funding (\$24M) for the long-awaited first custom firefighting helicopter in 2021, with near-unanimous votes in both chambers just months after another devastating fire season across Colorado.

The Firehawk is a retrofitted Black Hawk helicopter equipped to battle wildfires. In addition to custom technology and outfitting for fire crews, the aircraft sports a 1,000-gallon water tank, which can be rapidly released and capable of targeting hot spots.

The Firehawk helicopter and crew are housed at an airport in Broomfield, Colorado. In early 2024, the Colorado Legislature funded a second helicopter, which is scheduled to be delivered in 2025.

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**HAWAII:** The Honolulu Fire Department (HFD) has taken delivery of a new \$10.6M Bell 429 helicopter N305HF configured with the latest role equipment to replace its fleet of MD520N (including N302HF) used since the early 1990s.

HFD's new twin-engine helicopter can fly farther, longer and smarter than its three, older single-engine MD 520 Notar models. The Bell aircraft has a larger cabin, more fuel, advanced avionics, and double the horsepower to help pilots better navigate rugged terrain and handle stronger winds. The helicopter can lift 260 gallons of water and make multiple drops with one bucket -- versus one drop of 96 gallons.

Currently, rescuers have to use a rope to get to patients who are then attached and suspended from the chopper. A new hoist can lift 600 pounds, so rescuers can be dropped down to where the person is in distress and can bring up patients into the large cabin, where emergency treatment can be provided. A camera connected to the cockpit helps the pilot see what's happening below.

To accommodate the new arrival HFD' has nine pilots and is hiring relief pilots and hoist operators. The City hopes to reduce its \$2M maintenance costs in the long term.

**NATIONAL:** Sikorsky, a Lockheed Martin company, and Rain, California-based autonomous aerial wildfire containment technology company, recently demonstrated how autonomous Black Hawk helicopters can be used to fight fires. During the 30-minute flight demonstration, a helicopter using Sikorsky's MATRIX flight autonomy with Rain's wildfire mission autonomy system took off, identified the location and size of a small fire, and then accurately dropped water from a Bambi Bucket slung 60 feet beneath the aircraft on the flames.

"Government agencies, aerial firefighting operators, and investors are coming together to learn and see how both flight and mission autonomy can help prevent high intensity million-acre wildfires," Maxwell Brodie, Rain CEO, said. "Wildfires cost the United States over \$390 billion annually, and multiple risk factors are set to grow up to 30% by 2030. We look forward to demonstrating to lawmakers how autonomous aircraft can stop fires from breaking out, or continue the fight into the night, and in turbulent and smoky conditions, where crewed aircraft wouldn't venture."

A tablet was used to command the helicopter, and attendees provided real-time input and observations to the Sikorsky and Rain teams undertaking the three successive water drops.



# SEARCH & RESCUE

## ITALY

GUARDIA COSTIERA: Leonardo has signed a contract with the General Command of the Port Authorities - Coast Guard (Corpo delle Capitanerie di porto – Guardia Costiera) for the supply of an ATR42-600 Maritime Patrol (MP) aircraft. The acquisition forms part of the General Command's plan for renewal of its fleet of aircraft, which already includes three MPs based on the ATR42-400 and the ATR42-500,

The ATR42 MP, developed and produced on the basis of the ATR42-600 turboprop regional aircraft platform, will be equipped with multi-domain sensors and state-of-the-art research and communication systems. These will provide capability to transmit and receive information in real time, thereby optimising operations along the entire chain of command. The ATR42MP will be integrated into the Corps' aeronautical fleet to fulfil the multiple roles assigned to the Coast Guard, including maritime patrolling all along Italy's coastline and in international waters, carried out with the aid of the advanced technological equipment integrated into its fixed and rotary wing aircraft.

*Editor: Given the stated "fleet renewal" aspect of this purchase, we assume that the oldest of the existing fleet is slated for replacement - serial MM62170 was acquired in May 2001 and is currently based at Pescara.*

## NEW ZEALAND

NORTH ISLAND: Lowe Corporation Hawke's Bay Rescue Helicopter's current MBB BK117 has been in operation since 2018, when it was acquired and upgraded as a second-hand machine.

It has now flown over 18,500 hours serving the community and operating it is becoming increasingly challenging in terms of spares availability and cost, leading to a new airframe being sought. Avionic and automation technology is expensive, and the chosen replacement helicopter comes with a \$20M price tag.

The new Airbus H145D3 heralds a significant advancement for Hawke's Bay. The aircraft has just been ordered and is due to arrive in the region, ready for operation, in September 2026. The three-year production line waits for a new rescue helicopters and growing global demand, Hawke's Bay Rescue Helicopter Trust Chair, Blair O'Keeffe was all too aware that time to secure a new one was critical.

The purchase of the new H145 initially requires a \$3.7M deposit, which will be provided by Hawke's Bay Rescue Helicopter Trust, with the balance expected to be met through a joint funding agreement with central Government.

The rescue helicopter, a 24/7 service that's free to the patient, currently receives Crown funding, with the remaining costs funded through generous community support. Its lifesaving radius extends to Wairoa in the north and Central Hawke's Bay in the south and everywhere in between.

## UNITED KINGDOM

MIGRANTS: It was announced October 31 that PAL Aerospace, St John's, Newfoundland, Canada, had signed an airborne intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance ("ISR") support contract to a domestic security agency in Europe. This new 15-month agreement follows an initial contract that saw the company deploy an ISR aircraft 'in the jurisdiction' and expands PAL Aerospace's existing contribution to the agency's ongoing efforts to enhance border security, combat transnational crime and protect vulnerable individuals from exploitation by migrant smugglers.

This agreement underscores PAL Aerospace's dedication to providing enhanced capacity and innovative solutions that will further counter the evolving threats posed by human smuggling gangs. Expanded in

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*Police Aviation News includes materials produced for it by Ian J Commin of Insight Design of North Burnham, Slough SL1 6DS. This includes the banner titles and the PAvCon logo. In addition from time to times images specifically altered by Insight Design and others but originally produced for McAlpine Helicopters [now Airbus Helicopters UK], Oxford, will appear with permission of the original owner. In some cases it may not be possible to indicate the source of this material directly associated with the images used, or such information may have been lost. Such images may be marked 'File' or 'PAR Collection'.*

scope, this contract will see PAL Aerospace deploy a second aircraft and additional technical capabilities to augment their existing operation. Strengthening PAL Aerospace's presence in the jurisdiction bolsters the agency's ability to anticipate, monitor and interdict the irregular migration flows that precipitate small boat crossings, undermine border security, and put lives at risk.

*Editor: All very secret in not mentioning the customer but it would appear that the options were either FRONTEX or that this is an enhanced renewal of the existing single aircraft contract PAL had with the UK Home Office. The latter is highly motivated by the illegal migrant issue and was originally signed for a single aircraft in the summer of 2023.*

*It was soon confirmed via a different document that the unnamed customer was indeed the UK Home Office and that the contract was for a massive £33.9M. As if the UK was not spending enough money on the illegal migrant 'problem'!*

*The contract notice was officially published on November 29, but the contract started on October 29 and is scheduled to run to January 31, 2026.*

*The Home Office document suggests that operations can be nationwide as most regions are mentioned. This may simply be a cover all options to allow diversions in bad weather as the main area of operations is undoubtedly still Lydd on the English Channel Coast. Tony Cowan has incorporated this new development in his latest update on the 'invaders' below. The figures he quotes look like the finite ones for November as the weather in the English Channel has taken a turn for the worse.*

# CHANNEL UPDATE



*Crossing La Manche to the promised land...*

Despite the best efforts of the British and French governments, together with governments across Europe, the numbers of illegal migrants crossing the English Channel in small boats have continued to rise every year since 2018, when just 299 migrants crossed the Channel. In 2024, up to and including the 26 November, the total number of illegal migrants landed at Dover, by the UK Border Force and the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, was 33,562. In 2023 the total, for a full year, was 29,437. The previous year, 2022 was exceptional with 45,774 illegal migrants landed. However, this number, in 2022, was boosted by a surge of 12,658 economic migrants from Albania. In 2021 the total was 28,526.

The total for November 2024, up to and including the 26 November, was 2,901 migrants in 54 boats, an average of 54 migrants per boat; in the same period, 15 days were lost due to adverse weather. Nevertheless, a new record is 98 migrants travelling in one boat, a boat which would normally carry around 60 migrants! Another, unwelcome, record in 2024 is that 61 migrants have lost their lives, some of them children, crushed to death in the bottom of overloaded inflatable boats; In 2023 the total number of lives lost was 12.

**The inflatable boats used to carry illegal migrants from France to the middle of the English Channel, before being 'rescued' by the UK Border Force, carry around 60 passengers. The record, in November 2024, is 98 migrants in one boat.**



Home Office

## SOME GOOD NEWS

Fortunately, it's not all bad news. The UK National Crime Agency (NCA), now part of the Home Office, Border Security Command, headed by former senior police officer, Commander Martin Hewitt, recently reported the guilty plea and conviction of two men, Dilshad Shamo, 41, and Ali Khdir, 40, both involved in a people smuggling operation that ran throughout Europe. Shamo and Khdir are currently awaiting sentencing. This operation, based at a car wash in Caerphilly, in South Wales, was described as a 'travel agency' with customers offered bronze, silver, gold and platinum packages depending on the level of risk. For example, the platinum package would get you a flight whereas, the silver package would provide a 'comfortable ride' in the back of a lorry. The NCA estimated that this one operation has transported 10,000 illegal migrants across Europe in the space of two years. Nevertheless, this is just one operation amongst many similar operations, many funded with the hawala, cash only, banking system, making financial transactions difficult, if not impossible, to trace.



Dilshad Shamo and Ali Khadir recently pleaded guilty to a people smuggling operation that lasted for over two years. Migrants were offered bronze, silver, gold and platinum travel packages based on the level of risk and costing between £3,000 and £25,000.



NCA

**MORE AIRCRAFT**

Another development is the extension, by 15 months, of the 18 month Home Office contract with PAL Aerospace of Canada with a second Dash 8 maritime patrol aircraft to join the aircraft currently based at Lydd, in Kent. These aircraft will patrol the English Channel, to report the inflatable boats, those carrying illegal migrants from the beaches of northern France towards England. In a press release, PAL Aerospace reports that, "The new 15 month agreement follows an initial contract that saw the company deploy an ISR aircraft in the jurisdiction and expands PAL Aerospace's existing contribution to the agency's ongoing efforts to enhance border security, combat transnational crime and protect vulnerable individuals from exploitation by migrant smugglers..... Strengthening PAL Aerospace's presence in the jurisdiction bolsters the agency's ability to anticipate, monitor and interdict the irregular migration flows that precipitate small boat crossings, undermine border security and put lives at risk."

If only this were true! Since PAL Aerospace deployed its first deHavilland Dash 8 maritime patrol aircraft to Lydd airfield in Kent, in May 2023, the number of illegal migrants landed in the UK from small boats has gone up from 29,437 in 2023, to 33,562 migrants in the first 11 months of 2024. Moreover, 61 migrants have perished in the English Channel in 2024, compared to 12 in 2023. At the same time the British government has increased to the number of hotels, to accommodate asylum seekers to 220.

The Canadian company, PAL Aerospace has secured a 15 month extension to its current contract, with the Home Office, including a second aircraft, another deHavilland Dash 8, to patrol the English Channel to identify and to report small boats carrying illegal migrants



Home Office

I will leave it to others, the Home Secretary (Secretary of State for the Interior) the Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP and the head of the Border Security Command, Commander Martin Hewitt to explain why public money, some £34M, is being spent on very expensive aircraft, to patrol the English Channel, with very little effect; the numbers of illegal migrants, those landed at Dover, are going up, not down! Why are millions of pounds being spent on large, expensive aircraft, when smaller, much less expensive, 'spotter planes' are required to patrol the beaches of northern France? To patrol the 'goal line' to detect and report large inflatable boats, boats accompanied by large groups of migrants, to the police patrolling the same beaches, between Dunkirk and the Baie de Somme. To stop the boats before they set sail. To save lives at sea, in the English Channel.



Why are large sums of public money, millions of pounds, being spent on large, expensive aircraft, aircraft that patrol the English Channel, without 'stopping the boats', when much smaller aircraft, 'spotter planes', are required to patrol the beaches of northern France?

Wikipedia







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## CLOSE THE BORDER

If the UK, together with France, wish to close the cross-Channel route, used by people smugglers to transport illegal migrants in small boats, then direct action, stopping the boats on the beaches of northern France, must replace the current 'search and rescue' operation in mid-Channel. The current patrol aircraft, Border Force rescue vessels and French warships must be deployed south of the median line, into French waters. Those migrants who set sail from France must be stopped in French waters and landed in Calais. The current practice, with the UK Border Force 'rescuing' migrants in UK waters and then landing them in the UK, at Dover simply beggars belief! It simply perpetuates the problem, it encourages the people smugglers and it encourages the migrants too. It may even elevate a migrant transport package from bronze to silver, knowing that public transport will, at no cost, meet the migrant boats in mid-Channel.



**The French police can, with British support, do better, with more 'boots on the ground' on the beaches of northern France, supported by the crews of light aircraft, 'spotter planes', patrolling the same beaches, between Dunkirk and the Baie de Somme.**

## CONCLUSION

Using Home Office figures, in a 2 week period, November 3-17, 2,468 illegal migrants were landed in the UK from 43 boats. In the same period, the French police turned back just 1,103 migrants (45%) to try again, the next day, the next week, or the next month. The French police can, with British support, do better, but only with more 'boots on the ground', on the beaches of northern France. Supported by the crews of light aircraft, 'spotter planes', patrolling the same beaches, with persistent air patrols between Dunkirk and the Baie de Somme. If migrants are to be stopped from crossing the English Channel, if lives are to be saved, then Britain and France must detect and destroy the boats used to carry migrants, on the 'goal line', on the beaches of northern France. The UK Border Force should not routinely rendezvous with these boats in the middle of the English Channel, half-way between France and England, before transporting their passengers to Dover. All migrants 'rescued' at sea, in French waters, should be landed in France, at Calais.

If the British and the French governments cannot provide the required number of light aircraft, to fly persistent air patrols over the beaches of northern France, with military, or civilian aircraft, then an alternative would be to emulate the USA and form a government sponsored Civil Air Patrol. The US Civil Air Patrol, a civilian auxiliary of the US Air Force, has a fleet of some 500 aircraft, mostly Cessna 172s and Cessna 182s flown by volunteers. An alternative, with the support of the general aviation community in the UK, in France too, would be to follow the example provided by the Swedish Volunteer Air Corps, which recruits flying schools, together the owners of private aircraft, to fly missions on behalf of the civil authorities and the armed forces in times of crisis.

Janes A Cowan MBE

Note: The author is a former member of the Royal Air Force, a former maritime reconnaissance pilot, also a former police and air ambulance pilot.

There is an excellent article on the Swedish volunteer aircraft scheme in the current issue of the AOPA magazine.

<https://www.aopa.org/news-and-media/all-news/2024/november/12/volunteer-pilots-patrol-swedens-skies>







Steve Gladston, CEO and founder of HeliOperations, Portland signs the deal (Image: HeliOperations)

# INDUSTRY

HeliOperations has announced the award of a £141M contract to provide comprehensive training for German Navy helicopter pilots. The seven-year contract, awarded by the German Ministry of Defence, will ensure the highest standards of education and operational readiness for German naval pilots as preparation for operating the NH90 Sea Lion and Sea Tiger helicopters.

HeliOperations will deliver a full-service training solution, including the development and maintenance of training infrastructure, accommodation and transport of personnel. Flying training will include theoretical instruction, advanced simulator sessions, and practical live flight training by day and night using HeliOperations' growing AW139 fleet.

HeliOperations will play a pivotal role in ensuring German Navy pilots receive world-class training for a variety of maritime aviation roles. Training will commence immediately alongside the construction of approved infrastructure at HeliOperations' Portland base.

### Commitment to Excellence in Naval Aviation

Steve Gladston, CEO and founder of HeliOperations, stated:

*"This contract reflects the German MOD's confidence in our ability to provide the highest standards of training, service and support and solidifies HeliOperations' position as a leading provider of civil and military aviation training services. We are committed to supporting the German Navy's evolving operational needs and are hugely proud of our reputation for excellence. The contract is a key milestone in the company's continuing development"*

HeliOperations were the bidders of the Bell 429 for the Metropolitan Police new helicopter project, but NPAS subsequently dismissed their bid without explaining the reasons.





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David Howell, Director

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The Swiss-Made **Pilatus PC-12** was last year's most frequently flown business aircraft in the USA. Specifically, 316,328 take-offs by the "World's Greatest Single" were recorded between August 2023 and July 2024, representing 8.8% of all departures. Once again, this single-engine turboprop impresses with its versatility, safety, reliability and efficiency.

Statistically, a good 70 of the world's global fleet of over 2,000 PC-12s are in the air at any given time. In 2023 alone, Pilatus produced 101 PC-12s in the heart of Switzerland for delivery all over the world, including 48 for customers in the USA. The international PC-12 fleet has now completed well over ten million hours in the air and is used for a wide range of missions – including business travel, cargo transport, air ambulance and emergency services.

Launched in 2019, the latest version, the PC-12 NGX, is a state-of-the-art aircraft fitted with the safest turboprop engine available – the Pratt & Whitney Canada PT6. Statistics show that this engine makes the PC-12 is one of the safest single-engine aircraft around.

The **Gloucestershire Airport** at Staverton, Gloucester is the base for several important companies in the emergency services sector. Placed on the market by its current owners (Cheltenham Borough Council and Gloucester City Council) it remains up for sale but it appears that there may be problems.

In recent weeks the sellers have been adding restrictions to the sale that may deter potential future owners. The main activities at the moment relate to maintenance, training and business aircraft flying. The primary emergency services users are related to air ambulances.

Some councillors in Gloucester want a full economic assessment to be carried out before the sale, it seems uncertain whether there would be a restriction on the new owners undertaking an expansion that include reintroducing airline flights to Europe and building work that might affect existing businesses. The small green lobby have their own issues relating to noise, air pollution, air quality and carbon footprint.



An interesting project in a remote corner of the Amsterdam based European Rotors exhibition last month is German ERC Electric Air Ambulance. The craft is a variation on the several electric air taxis also coming out of Germany. Many readers will have noticed that those air taxi dreams are running out of cash and credibility – an issued not totally different from the problems besetting electric cars and the striving for Net Zero by 2030!

Potentially in favour of the ERC project is that it has a relatively unique end user aim - HEMS. It is aiming at providing a vertical lift fuselage with enough room for medical fit and at least a typical patient, doctor nurse and pilot and sufficient range and lift to undertake the typical AirMed mission. Lift is provided by eight propellers and forward motion using two wing mounted propellers.

ERC collaborate closely with medical experts to tailor their eVTOL to their requirements. They aim for a safe, low-maintenance, user-centric, and cost-effective solution for medical missions. With a 450 kg payload and high-wing safety design, the spacious 5.2 m<sup>3</sup> cabin and large rear door make loading easy, offering a fast, efficient medical transport.

Unlike competitors who started with small prototypes, ERC focuses on realistic weights and sizes from the beginning. This approach minimizes development risks and accelerates the go-to-market timeline, ensuring optimal learning in propulsion, battery technology, and flight control. As scale increases, challenges multiply—but by closely aligning with the final product, ERC ensures smoother pathways to certification.

The DRF Luftrettung, based in Filderstadt, is one of the largest air rescue organisations in Europe. The helicopters and ambulance aircraft of the non-profit organisation take off for their missions from 32 bases at 30 locations in Germany, including emergency rescue missions, transports of intensive care patients between hospitals, as well as repatriation flights of patients from abroad.

As with most air taxi projects ERC still faces an uncertain future. Currently there is a scale model and a flying rig with a flight prototype being built. As of the show the project is unique and intent on going the wholly electric route. Questions have been asked internally about hybrid and hydrogen to replace the batteries but for the moment it is all about focussing on the primary design. [www.erc-system.com]

As with most air taxi projects ERC still faces an uncertain future. Currently there is a scale model and a flying rig with a flight prototype being built. As of the show the project is unique and intent on going the wholly electric route. Questions have been asked internally about hybrid and hydrogen to replace the batteries but for the moment it is all about focussing on the primary design. [www.erc-system.com]

Also, at European Rotors in Amsterdam, **Nova Systems** and Safran announced a partnership to bolster innovation in defence and aerospace, mainly in Special Mission cooperation.



The agreement establishes a framework for Nova Systems and Safran Electronics & Defence to collaborate more effectively, enhancing the capabilities provided to end-users.

The focus is on market development and the further expansion of the market leading operational capability provided by Nova Systems' mission system solutions and Safran's EUROFLIR 410 Electro Optical System.

PAN has reported on earlier cooperation opportunities between Nova and Safran (and several other well-known equipment suppliers including Artemis from Smith Myers)

Nova Systems supported Roke Manor on a Home Office contract to demonstrate RF network coverage for the Emergency Services Network (ESN) air users at Critical Operating Locations (COLs) across the whole of Great Britain.

They provided their EC-135 systems helicopter, and the pilot and test crew were able to conduct some demanding test points and work with the customer on developing more efficient test methodologies.

Meanwhile the global leader in cellular communications solutions, **Smith Myers** has now received its King's Award for Enterprise Innovation 2024. Co-founding director Peter Myers [right] was invited by His Majesty King Charles III to a reception at Windsor Castle. The event celebrated recipients of the prestigious King's Awards for Enterprise. Recently selected for several major U.K., European and North American SAR and Coast Guard programmes, ARTEMIS provides a new and mission critical capability to aircrew/first responders and is deployed around the world in maritime patrol, border control, aerial firefighting and natural disasters.

"It was an immense honour on behalf of the entire Smith Myers team to speak with the King, who, as a pilot with flight experience of rescue helicopters, showed genuine interest in the ARTEMIS SAR solution," said Peter Myers.

The King welcomed a diverse group of British businesses to his Windsor residence for a reception honouring their innovative achievements.

This year's King's Award winners, spanning from industry veterans to exciting start-ups, were celebrated for their exceptional products and services.

As one of the nation's highest accolades for business, The King's Award grants recipients the prestigious right to display the award emblem for the next five years.



**Bristow** and Leonardo have sealed a long-term support package for AW139 and AW189 helicopter fleets designed to ensure improved maintenance and operations efficiency.

The operator will also add four new AW189 helicopters to its offshore energy services fleet between next year and 2026 to support growth and its contract schedule. Plus, Bristow is to commission a new AW139 full flight simulator in Aberdeen, Scotland in 2026. The new device will join an existing AW189 simulator at the site.

The enhanced power-by-the-Hour (PBH) agreements for search and rescue (SAR) operations and offshore energy services helicopters will provide tailored maintenance



and operational efficiency, according to the operator. The global fleet support agreement covers key per-

formance indicators, inventory management, training, Health and Usage Monitoring Systems (HUMS) and other services provided by Leonardo.

**Offshore Helicopter Services UK Ltd** (OHS UK – part of the Ultimate Aviation Group) is set to further strengthen its contribution to the growing demand for modern, effective rescue missions supporting the energy industry sector in the North Sea with the future introduction of two Leonardo AW139 intermediate twin helicopters.

These aircraft are expected to enter into operation during the second quarter of 2026. The new AW139s will reinforce the 24/7 emergency responsiveness capability of the operator to save lives in the offshore sector in the extreme conditions of the North Sea promptly taking off from OHS' base in Aberdeen.

The significant experience gained by OHS over the years has allowed a continued refinement of SAR (search-and-rescue and medical evacuation) procedures to meet the emerging and evolving requirement of the energy industry.

This expertise led to the decision to rely upon the best-selling AW139 again, leveraging both established characteristics of the types and the latest enhancements for the task through which this helicopter model continues to prove the benchmark in its category in U.K., across Europe and globally.

Most of today's SAR fleet in the U.K. and Ireland is made of Leonardo helicopter models (in particular, AW139 and AW189).

OHS' AW139s will primarily deliver medical evacuation from oil rigs, in addition to a variety of rescue duties at sea, also acting cooperatively with other operators when needed

These new AW139s will feature all-weather overwater SAR capabilities including, among others, a customized cabin layout, dual hoist, dedicated sensors enslaved to the mission console, night vision goggles for all crews on board, and FIPS (Full Ice Protection System) to fly also in known ice conditions when other types would be confined to the ground or the hangar.

The **Florida State Guard** based at Tallahassee International Airport (an official state agency) has obtained ownership of at least two Sikorsky UH-60A Black Hawk helicopters - N898VH & N70K. Reportedly the main role of the helicopters is for SAR, but they will also support the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE). The Florida State Guard has also trained members to act as Tactical Flight Officers for public safety missions. Usually, states that operate SAR helicopters do so through a state law enforcement or fire agency. At present 23 states have State Guards, but it is believed that none own and operate a large rescue helicopter. Two federally supported agencies, the Civil Air Patrol and the Coast Guard Auxiliary, use volunteer pilots and a mix of personally and government owned aircraft. [Facebook]

**Global Medical Response Bond** based in Lewisville, Texas, USA has announced two major orders for helicopters from both Airbus and Bell.

An order for 28 Airbus helicopters is part of ongoing efforts to expand its air medical fleet. The order includes six H125s, five H130s, 14 H135s and three H145s, strengthening GMR's fleet and positioning it as one of the largest operators of Airbus helicopters in North America. This follows an earlier 2024 order of five Airbus helicopters, bringing GMR's Airbus fleet to nearly 200 aircraft.

In addition to these 28 helicopters, GMR has secured options to purchase an additional 23 new Airbus helicopters over the next three years. This order could also make GMR one of the first operators in North America to utilise the IFR-capable H125, further enhancing its capacity for safe, versatile medical operations in challenging conditions.

The Bell Textron order announced was for the acquisition of fifteen IFR configured Bell 407GXis for Global Medical Response with an option to purchase nine additional aircraft, bringing its total fleet to 250 Bell helicopters.

With 387 operational bases across all 50 U.S. states and internationally, Global Medical Response provides life-saving care as the largest end-to-end provider of acute out-of-hospital patient care. Global Medical Response's air entities support emergent and non-emergent air missions, including critical care transport and emergency disaster response.

GMR employs nearly 36,000 individuals dedicated to providing high-quality care for well-known brands like Air Evac Lifeteam, REACH Air Medical Services, Med-Trans Corporation, AirMed International, and Guardian Flight, GMR's presence and capacity are extensive.

**Metro Aviation**, the world's largest family-owned, traditional air medical operator, has placed a deposit-backed order for up to 20 electric vertical take-off and landing ALIA VTOL aircraft manufactured by electric aerospace company, BETA Technologies. Metro plans to integrate BETA's ALIA VTOL into its existing network of air medical operations, to ultimately carry out both inter-hospital and scene transports.

Metro currently operates 170 aircraft for 42 operations across 27 states in the U.S. BETA's ALIA VTOL will





provide another platform to that portfolio – and with its high reliability, low cost, and vertical capabilities, it will offer increased mobility and access to rural and urban geographies with zero operational emissions. Metro has been in conversation with various eVTOL developers over the years, BETA comes across as a company with a genuine interest in an operator's perspective, was the one to legitimately capture Metro's attention.

BETA has begun production of its all-electric aircraft, including the ALIA VTOL and its conventional counterpart, the ALIA CTOL.

The company is producing these aircraft and chargers in its nearly 200,000 square foot production facility in Vermont. These aircraft and chargers will be delivered to BETA's growing base of customers, which includes global operators across cargo and logistics, medical, defence, and passenger applications, including UPS, Air New Zealand, United Therapeutics, Bristow, Blade, LCI, Helijet, the U.S. Department of Defense, and now Metro Aviation.



FIGAS BN2 in new colour scheme ©BN

The **Falkland Islands Government** has signed a Letter of Intent with Britten-Norman with a view to ordering four new BN2B-26 Islander aircraft at a total value of \$9.75M.

The new aircraft project is part of a plan to further modernise the fleet operated by the Falkland Islands Government Aviation Service (FIGAS) as it marks 75 years of operations. The order is in addition to two aircraft that FIGAS has already contracted Britten-Norman to build, the first of which is now in service. All of the new aircraft will be delivered from Britten-Norman's UK based manufacturing line on the Isle of

Wight, which the company launched in late 2023 after re-shoring from overseas.

FIGAS has been an integral part of Falkland life since 1948. Their existing fleet of five Islanders serve in a variety of roles and are essential in keeping the Falklands and its more remote communities connected. In addition to commuting flights, regular missions include air ambulance, postal carrier, freight, veterinary transport, environmental monitoring and increasingly popular scenic flights.

The BN2B-26 Islander is one of Britten-Norman's rugged piston powered aircraft variants, which has been a stalwart of the FIGAS fleet due to its exceptional Short Take-off and Landing (STOL) capability across the range of terrain and challenging conditions of the Falklands. The long-term durability of the aircraft type has been proven beyond doubt over the six decades that FIGAS has operated its fleet of Islanders. The decision to select new Islanders as a replacement for FIGAS's existing, older Islander fleet is in part down to an assessment by the team as to what aircraft best suits the tough operating conditions in the Falkland Islands, where durability and reliability are key factors in the operator's long-term success. Refinements in the aircraft in recent years also played a part in the decision. [BN]

**Clayton International**, a U.S. company specializing in the refurbishment of Sikorsky helicopters, usually for utility and fire fighting tasks, and based in Peachtree City, Georgia, USA, has acquired the entire inventory of Italian-built Agusta HH-3F helicopters from the Italian Air Force, including 26 aircraft along with a stock of spare parts and components.

The HH-3 was produced to meet a 1967 the Coast Guard need for a platform with extended range and capabilities in the SAR role. It is a variant of the HH-3E "Jolly Green Giant" employed in that role by the U.S. Air Force in Vietnam. The Coast Guard variant was known as the Pelican and was equipped with a hydraulically operated aft ramp that could be opened in flight.

The Clayton International airframes were all built under licence in Italy.



**LifePort** completes FAA STC (Supplemental Type Certificate) for Textron Aviation, Inc. 1900D. The FAA STC allows for the installation of a LifePort TLSS (Triple Litter Stacking System) that allows for the transport of three patients in a stacked configuration while leaving valuable cabin space for crew and ambulatory passengers giving the aircraft mass evacuation capabilities. Contact LifePort to learn more about the 1900D TLSS or any of our other mass evacuation products. (Pictured (TLSS) in Sky Courier mock-up)





Ohio based **Airwolf Aerospace** has received ANAC Brazil supplemental type certificate (STC) for the installation of True-Blue Power® TB17 Lithium-ion batteries for four makes and eight models of Helicopters.

The Airwolf Aerospace approved STCs are in stock for:

Airbus H125/AS350, AS355, EC-120, H130/EC130  
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Enstrom 480B and the MD 369/500

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THE NETWORKING CONTINUES



# ACCIDENTS & INCIDENTS

**12 November 2024 Bell 205A-1 CC-ATF.** Firefighting helicopter operated by Corporación Nacional Forestal (CONAF). After refilling the Bambi bucket it was transiting along the riverbank when it hit a power line with the tail rotor and crashed on the banks of the Mataquito River, Tricao, Rauco, Curicó, Maule region. Struck ground upright. The pilot was not injured and the helicopter received substantial damage.

**22 November 2024 Aerospatale AS332L1 Super Puma N368EV.** Firefighting helicopter of Nomad Aviation (Indonesia). departed Broken Hill Airport New South Wales, Australia bound for Albury Airport. The helicopter was being ferried from Malaysia to be used during the fire season for firefighting in Victoria, Australia as Helitak 340. An ELT signal was received, and the helicopter was found to have crashed near Corrong Road, 15 km W of One Tree, 40 km west of Hay, New South Wales. One occupant ('a passenger') died and one ('a pilot') suffered minor injuries. [ASN]

**23 November 2024 Cessna 182T Skylane N434CP** of the US Civil Air Patrol. The aircraft departed Fort Collins/Loveland-Northern Colorado Regional Airport, CO operating as CAP534 on a search and rescue training flight with a crew of three, sustained substantial damage subsequent to impact with mountainous terrain at Palisade Mountain west of Loveland, Colorado at about 8,000 feet. The pilot in command was Susan Wolber and photographer Jay Rhoten died and the copilot, Randall Settergen, was airlifted to a hospital and was last reported in a stable condition. [RadioReference.com]

**23 November 2024 Airbus Helicopters H145 F-HSOC** Air ambulance operated by Babcock MCS for SAMU. Received substantial damage after a tail rotor strike on an obstacle on landing at Montanel, France. Helicopter departed the HeliStation de l'hôpital de Rennes. [BEA]

## SAFETY

### AVOIDING A MID-AIR COLLISION

#### BLUE ON BLUE

A recent press report highlighted the fact that so far, in 2024, there have been five near miss incidents in the UK involving police drones and police helicopters. The problem, it would seem, is that the 43 regional police forces in England and Wales, those that have drone units, are not routinely informing the National Police Air Service (NPAS), which operates police helicopters and aeroplanes, when and where the police drones are being flown. NPAS has 15 bases with 13 in England and 2 in Wales. In one incident, it's reported there was a "significant near miss incident" when a local police force sent a drone out to an incident where a police helicopter was already present and flew "dangerously beneath it", with no warning given to NPAS about the drone deployment.

**Many of 43 regional police forces in England and Wales, together with the Fire & Rescue Service have their own drone units with very capable aircraft carrying electro-optical cameras, together with thermal imagers.**



NPCC

This danger, of an aircraft collision, when more than one aircraft attends the same incident, is increased when searching for a missing person. These missing person incidents, often a multi-agency operation, police, Coastguard, RNLI, Fire & Rescue, together with mountain and lowland rescue teams, also attract a great deal of speculation on social media, with 'arm chair detectives', together with 'mediums' speculating on what may have happened to the missing person and where they may be found? Social media can also fuel an interest from those who wish to attend the scene and take part in the search, especially if it includes a plea for help from the family of the missing person.



## SPONTANEOUS VOLUNTEERING

In a recent incident, in September 2024, a 17 year old youth was seen to fall from the Menai Bridge which spans the Menai Strait, between mainland Wales and the Isle of Anglesey. The Menai Strait is a notorious channel, some 16 miles long, with width of between 400 metres and just over 4 miles. With differential tides at each end of the Strait, the sea conditions can be very dangerous with very strong currents, overfalls and whirlpools. Fortunately, there's a Coastguard SAR helicopter unit, operating the highly capable Sikorsky S-92, based at Caernarfon airfield, at the south-west entrance to the Strait. Also, there's Coastguard Rescue Coordination Centre at Holyhead on Anglesey.

**The Menai Strait, between mainland Wales and the Isle of Anglesey is some 16 miles long and between 400 metres and 4 miles in width. One of HM Coastguard's ten search and rescue helicopter units is based at Caernarfon at the south-west entrance to the Strait.**



Anglesey Tourist Board

The immediate response by the emergency services, North Wales Police, HM Coastguard, North Wales Fire & Rescue and the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, together with the local, Coastguard S-92 rescue helicopter, was swift and exemplary. Nevertheless, after 3 days the search was scaled back as 'search and rescue' inevitably became 'search and recovery'. When the professional search and rescue services scaled back their response, members of the voluntary sector continued to search for the missing youth at the request of members of the missing persons family. One group of volunteers was the, 'Beneath the Surface Underwater Search and Recovery Group'. This UK charity uses sonar, together with a recovery dive team to search for persons missing in water.

**The very capable Sikorsky S-92 Coastguard search and rescue helicopter is based at Caernarfon airfield in West Wales.**



HM Coastguard/Bristow

Another small UK charity, Civil Air Support (CAS), which provides voluntary air support to safeguard communities and the environment, deployed an aircraft, a Cirrus SR22, from Wolverhampton Airport with a crew of 2, the pilot and an observer, on Friday, 27 September. This was at the request of the family of the missing person. Unfortunately, the regular observer wasn't available and a passenger, a firefighter, from the airport at Wolverhampton, agreed join the flight, to take air to ground photographs with his Canon camera with a tele-photo lens. In the search area the weather was far from ideal, with strong winds. The pilot reported an average of 35 knots, which made air to ground photography "difficult".

The search area, the Menai Strait, is potentially busy airspace with the proximity of Caernarfon airfield and the RAF airbase at Valley on Anglesey. It is unclear, from the reports available, if this search mission was coordinated by North Wales Police, who have their own drone unit, or by HM Coastguard, with a search and rescue helicopter based at Caernarfon. In the event, nothing was found by either the crew of the CAS aircraft, or the underwater search team. The body of the missing student, Leo Bradbury was found the next day, by a charter boat, approximately one mile north of the Menai Bridge and close to the pier at Bangor.

The Cirrus SR22 is a modern 4/5 seat, long range, high speed, light transport aircraft with a 'glass cockpit' and side-stick controls. It also features a whole-aircraft emergency parachute recovery system.



Wikipedia

I will leave it to others, including the leaders of Civil Air Support, to question the practicality, the sensibility, of deploying a light aircraft, in this case a Cirrus SR22, to search for a person missing in the Menai Strait, in adverse weather with a passenger accompanying the pilot. Did the pilot, or anyone else inform the police at their HQ in Colwyn Bay, or at Bangor, or call the Aeronautical Rescue Coordination Centre, together with the HM Coastguard at the Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre at Holyhead? If not, why not? Was the Coastguard helicopter unit at Caernarfon informed of the proposed flight, together with a request for an update of the local, prevailing weather? Those with an interest in flight safety, every licensed pilot, will be aware of the analogy of the Swiss cheese. How close did the holes in the cheese line up on this occasion?

## CONCLUSION

The increasing number of airprox's between manned aircraft and drones, including police helicopters and police drones, is a cause for concern. There may be no immediate answer, particularly with those incidents involving missing persons, where, as the result of requests on social media, the search area becomes the focus of 'spontaneous volunteering'. In these circumstances the incident commander, police or Coastguard, may be advised to close the airspace with a temporary restricted area, a Restricted Area (Temporary), also referred to as a RA(T). After consulting aviation authority Notices to Airmen (NOTAMS), both pilots and drone operators will, hopefully, remain well clear of any restricted airspace, before responding to a request for air support, request that has been generated by social media.

## POSTSCRIPT

In another search for a missing person, Victoria Taylor, 34 years in North Yorkshire, the crew of a light aircraft, searched the River Derwent on behalf of North Yorkshire Police (NYP). This search was logged by NYP as 'victim support'. After the air search the crew of the aircraft recommended that the police should search the river with a canoe, downstream from Malton. (Report - Police Aviation News, November 2024). The body of Ms Taylor was subsequently found and recovered by a police search team, using canoes, one quarter of a mile downstream from the Riverside Playground in the centre of Malton. This was where items of her property had been found after she was reported as missing by her family on the 1 October. In addition, using social media, the family of Ms Taylor requested that all those who wished to take part in the search should, first, contact NYP.



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## UNMANNED

During a recent trial, a Wildcat helicopter of 815 Naval Air Squadron shot down a Banshee target drone. This is the first time a Wildcat has detected, tracked, and engaged a drone without outside assistance, giving the aircraft an important air-air capability.

During the two-day trial, the Banshee jet flying at hundreds of miles an hour over the Bristol Channel was launched from a ramp at the Manorbier range, near Tenby, in Southwest Wales. In the video released by the RN, the Martlet can be seen to explode above the Banshee target actuated by the proximity fuse.

Martlet is a lightweight, multi-role, laser-guided missile originally acquired for use against small, manoeuvrable surface targets such as fast attack craft, jet skis and speedboats. This new adaptation will allow the helicopter to intercept up to 20 drones when carrying a full outfit of missiles.

The Sea Venom missile was successfully tested earlier this year and, when finally in service in 2026, will give the Wildcat a full set of weapons that are appropriate to different threats. Helicopters are not renowned for their air-air capabilities, but although optimised for targeting relatively slow-moving UAS, Martlet could even provide some deterrent to fixed-wing aircraft.

The UK Ministry of Defence (MoD) placed an initial order for 1,000 missiles with deliveries starting in 2013, but initial operating capability was considerably delayed and took place in 2021 with full operating capability now only anticipated in 2025.

A grand set of missiles but the potential number of drone targets will clearly swamp the system no matter how many are actually ordered. What does it cost? Around \$30,000 each based on the July 2024 procurement from Thales costing £176M./\$227M.



With the best will in the world it is difficult to see a scenario where a fully armed military helicopter would ever be able to protect an area being bombarded with the number of drones represented in this image... Are we to re-use the old wartime phrase...

***“The drone will always get through.....?”***



St Thomas and Guys blood delivery drone service commenced last month. The medical drone delivery service for the two London hospitals has been working in partnership with Apian and Wing, on the first ever on-demand drone delivery operation dedicated to speeding up blood testing turnaround times, ensuring vulnerable or high-risk patients are safe to undergo surgery sooner. The six-month trial could become blueprint for drone delivery of other medical items across wider NHS.

Moving samples between Synnovis' lab at Guy's Hospital and the lab at St Thomas' Hospital can take more than half an hour by road but takes less than two minutes by drone. This enables quicker analysis, helping to efficiently determine whether patients are safe to undergo surgery or be discharged.

Alongside the efficiency advantages, switching to drone deliveries will have significant environmental benefits by removing carbon emissions and reducing traffic congestion. Lightweight commercial drones can reduce CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions by up to 99% compared to non-electric cars and reduce transportation electricity needed compared to electric delivery vans.

The operation is regulated by the Civil Aviation Authority, which has granted the airspace approval, and NATS, the air traffic management service, is ensuring the service operates safely alongside crewed aircraft. It has been organised as a partnership between Guy's and St Thomas'; 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.

Apian and Wing have previously partnered on medical drone delivery in Dublin, Ireland, and Apian has trialled medical drone deliveries in rural areas of the UK.

*Editor: The vehicle offers a significant saving in emissions and times but the current hands-on operation remains very labour intensive pending any future automation. The organisers state that some 23 persons are involved in operating and maintaining a small number of craft. A significant number compared with one driver and a van/motorcycle.*

## MOVE ALONG THERE

It must get mighty confusing in some quarters. As October closed out there were messages appearing to state that it was *Black History Month*, and then no sooner had I taken that on board that another message was informing me that it was *Aviation History Month* – November 2024. Information overload already. My fault of course for not realising the *Black History Month* was throughout October. But there appear to be different thoughts abounding. Even though *Aviation History Month* was a US invention (no-one had heard of) it appears another source has designated November as *National Native American Heritage Month*. Well, that does not travel too well in the International sense either!

So, what is December to be? *Universal Human Rights Month* apparently and if you really want to get into the theme of things and are quick you can get into the *International Day for the Abolition of Slavery* on December 2, or the *International Day for People with Disability* on December 3. Wait a bit and you can have *International Human Rights Day* on the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month, surely that is two bites out of the same cherry?





December is ripe for picking your own favourite as there are only a handful of designated days taken by what someone thinks is a worthy cause – including *Christmas* and *Hanukkah*.

It turns out I should not have worried about missing most of *Black History Month* after all. A brief check of the Internet tells me that there are several more out there in other months and other countries! Like Mother's Day it seems that different parts of the planet allocate different days to the same title. A bit like London buses, there will be another one along shortly....

The recent election in Britain has caused a major shift in actions and opinions in the country – just as the Trump victory has in the USA.

After Trump was elected in a landslide for the Presidency in the USA The Guardian newspaper has offered its staff the opportunity to see therapists to overcome the trauma of the win. Clearly, they forgot that he is to be President of the USA not the UK and there should be no deep and meaningful interest in what the USA does! To further stir up this feeling of hurt, The Guardian went on to quit the 'toxic' social media X because the new owner Elon Musk supported Trump. Crazy they chose to announce their decision on ... X!

Elsewhere the losing Conservative Party have got themselves in a bit of a twist over politics as well. A firm run by the major Conservative donor Anthony Bamford (JCB) has funded a £8,000 helicopter trip for the Reform UK leader, and friend and supporter of Donald Trump, Nigel Farage.

Lord Bamford, who sat as a Conservative peer until his retirement from the House of Lords this year, has given out millions of pounds to the Conservative but they now think that he is not able to think and do with his money what he likes.

Fortunately, he has not lowered himself to asking permission to inject his money into hydrogen power (rather than the electric power favoured by politicians of all flavours) and we may yet be saved from the e-folly.

So what do retired TFOs do with their lives after the police service? Well Andrew Morgan, formerly a sergeant TFO with the South and East Wales air unit gives us a clue. This image appeared on Facebook last month as he took in the sights of The Palm in Dubai.

It seems you cannot take the aviation out of everybody!

Facebook

## GO GREEN

Even more confusing, for the people in the UK at least, is the news in the *Daily Telegraph* that there may be a flaw in Britain's plans to be a world leader in the drive to become a Net Zero nation. The new government, it that is more Kamala Harris/Joe Biden than the current US Government, is set on relying on wind power and other renewables. Oil and gas drilling is cancelled, and they have not quite got around to building new nuclear plants.

What could possibly go wrong?



On November 4 the weather entered the doldrums and both wind and sunlight were hard to find. The all-important renewables were generating a miserly 7.1% of the UK's power requirements, Gas, that nasty power source, was generating 59.1% and International lines to Europe were pumping across 10.8%. The remaining 23% apparently relied upon imported wood pellets, nuclear and civil servants riding static bicycles.

Meanwhile, the country sits on a few million tonnes of unwanted coal in now closed mines and in Indonesia the government evacuated at least 16,000 residents from villages around Mount Lewotobi Laki-laki that had erupted spewing a few million tonnes of pollution into the clear blue sky. Perhaps the British Government will give them a good telling off for allowing such bad husbandry of their green credentials and trying to find lots of money to pay off the developing world in their mission to go also go green.

## PEOPLE

An opening has emerged for a Futures Development Manager within the Futures and Innovations Department of the National Police Air Service (NPAS). The salary offered is £46,503 - £50,088 a year. As the leading provider of Police Air Support, NPAS is looking to utilise uncrewed aircraft technology to understand what new opportunities it may bring. This year NPAS was awarded a position in the BVLOS Integration Sandbox by the Civil Aviation Authority.

In 2025, NPAS will embark on one of the UK's most ambitious Beyond Visual Line of Sight (BVLOS) projects and they are gathering together a team to operate with it.

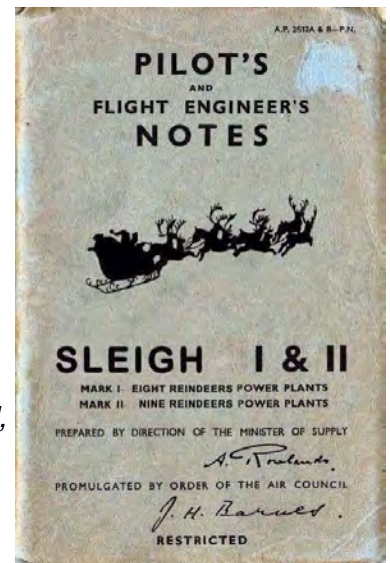
Any questions regarding the role should be directed to David Walters david.walters@npas.police.uk This post is suitable for job share. The application process will close at 23:55 hours on December 8 2024. Interviews are scheduled for week commencing January 6, 2025.

*Editor: In an emerging industry there will be limited people with existing knowledge of the subject; this will require persons with knowledge of testing and evaluation with a good knowledge of the CAA regulations. The successful candidate will be expected to liaise with industry partners, hardware providers, and government stakeholders who might be equally short on practical knowledge.*

*It is hoped that the successful candidate will have extensive experience as an unmanned operator, preferably with BVLOS operations and testing—the latter of course being elusive with a start up post like this one.*

*Back in 2017 NPAS had experts in the field. Everyone, including the 'experts,' knew it was bluff as at the time NPAS was not directly operating drones. The situation has not changed greatly since so NPAS are pretty much going in blind, even officers with the knowledge who have been in a position to provide guidance to the NPCC and NPAS have now retired.*

*With the May 2025 experiments mixing manned and unmanned in the same airspace it is debatable whether they will find a BVLOS expert with a good knowledge of manned police flight.*



*Something to study over the next few weeks*





## EUROPEAN ROTORS

Another show another venue. Who was displaying this year? There seems to be an aviation related show starting or finishing every day of the year, except perhaps Christmas and the average individual manning the booths must dread the number of days they are away from home each month servicing a need. Most companies find it physically impossible to staff the demand and the staff that do make the journey rarely see much of the place they are visiting – just the airport, transit system, hotel and show venue coming in and going out. The time is used up getting the show set up then looking after the ‘audience’ of show attendees before packing everything away and heading to the airport. Leisure time, if indeed there is any, may be restricted to a beer or taking in the view outside the venue. Very few locations are exactly pretty and the weather, hot or cold, may not be conducive to the booth clothing they are wearing – especially if it’s a business suit. Spare a thought for them – and move on.

Little surprise that underperforming venues (like Helitech) are dropped by major players facing such global demand for their time (and marketing dollars). After splitting from the hapless Helitech European Rotors graced Cologne and Madrid and this year found itself at a refurbished RAI Convention Centre in Amsterdam.

Last year attendees at European Rotors faced the glitch of the missing carpet. The planned floor covering simply did not make the show but its absence was not a real cause for concern. This year the glitch was a bit more quirky. All comers involved in the set up faced a shock requirement to meet new Health & Safety edicts in the RAI Safe Working Practices Manual. The most widespread being the need to be wearing steel capped shoes of an acceptable style. Needless to say most involved did not arrive wearing them, they are not a style that is conducive to air travel and even if they are in the checked baggage they will take up an inordinate amount of space – regardless of gender.

The requirement that the safety boots were needed emerged late in the planning (RAI knew but the wider world did not) so it was perhaps fortunate that the organisers were offering them for sale on site. – at a price. There were other onerous requirements placed on stall builders and attendees. Anyone having the temerity to want to go up a step ladder to pin an image on the wall was additionally encumbered with hard hat, high viz and in some cases a safety harness. You could not make it up! So far little feedback on whether the average fly-in visitor bought the safety gear and took it home (incurring significant additional baggage fees) or simply dumped it—certainly a cheaper option.

The result was a log jam at the RAI entrance with those that had acquired the safety boots meeting the have nots to ferry the equipment into the hall. I suspect that the requirement will not spread to widely. Exhibitors and stand builders aside the press were also constrained by the steel boots edict when photographing the arriving helicopters. In addition, they needed to acquire a hard hat at €5 a time but they were loaned a high viz jacket. You do not see many photographers wearing a hard hat by choice – it does get in the way of eye to viewer with most cameras. Perhaps in these days of point and shoot phone cameras there will be a resurrection of use of the Hasselblad style viewer!





European Rotors is still a young show but it appears to be holding on to its all important industry sponsors and will undoubtedly be growing in stature year on year. Next year it is back to Cologne.

In addition to the full role equipped Leonardo AW169 in the colours of the Guardia di Finanza introduced to attendees by Lieutenant Colonel Tommaso Santillo, Commander, Air Naval Training Group. This versatile helicopter is equipped with state-of-the-art, highly advanced sensors and plays a crucial role across a wide range of missions: from combatting illegal maritime trade to safeguarding lives in challenging coastal and mountainous regions, as well as supporting the fight against organised crime on land.

There was a rich selection of airframes from across industry including those from Airbus, Bell, Cabri, Robinson and Schweizer.



Top Right: The **Hangar Z Podcast** interview team were in town and looking for likely subjects, retired California USA policeman Jon Gray is the primary interviewer in the scheme he set up in 2020. Since the last time they were mentioned they struck a 2023 deal with the publishers of Vertical which allows them greater freedom to move around the planet getting those invaluable interviews at a small cost in editorial freedom.

Then there are the steel toecap boots....!



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