

Police Aviation News

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Issue 345

January 2025

Happy New Year

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HAPPY NEW YEAR 2025

LAW ENFORCEMENT

INTERNATIONAL

PAVCon EUROPE: The dates for the main conference and the exhibition 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 programme for the main conference and training is still being formulated, interim updates will appear on the website and via social media.

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. (check out www.aeroportducastellet.com). The nearest airport with airline routes is Marseille but both Cannes and Nice are potential options.

The venue is similar in size to that in Austria, but that location has already exhibited that PAVCon Europe runs out of space. There are some would be exhibitors who walked the floor on previous years that need access to exhibitor space. In our favour PAVCon Europe will allow companies who miss out on the prime exhibit space to walk the floor at a reduced rate. In contrast other organisations including APSA have a strict 'No Suitcasing Policy' which prohibits marketing company products/services at their events unless registered for an exhibit space.

An important positive pressure will be the content of the programme and the educational content. Securing high profile speakers will be a priority.

Marketing this year as Police Aviation and Civil Protection Conference and Exhibition might be an important angle to seek to exploit the multi role / multi mission capabilities of European police forces and the location of the event close to the sea and mountains. Several companies have requested an opportunity to promote, sponsor and lead on the training options.

The host for this year will be Cedric Soriano of Air Attack Technology based at Perpignan. Original plans to hold the event at Perpignan were set aside after the airport refused to allow the event there. This is not unusual, PAVCon Europe has successfully dealt with similar difficulties in the past at Doncaster and Amsterdam.



AUSTRALIA

QUEENSLAND: With plans for a fact-finding tour of the USA in April, the police air unit in Queensland have resorted to Social media to identify likely places to visit.

Queensland is seeking airborne law enforcement agencies within mainland US and Canada that would be in a position to have a delegation from Queensland Police to discuss any or all of a series of subjects including:

- Use of helicopters for aerial sniping and tactical insertion by tactical operators in addition to airborne law enforcement (especially if using different helicopters for the different capabilities).
- Any trials or use of Starlink in RW or FW for video downlinking.

Front Cover: REGA has been looking for its perfect helicopter for decades. Ever since they gave up their Agusta A109K helicopters nothing [including the earlier Eurocopter EC145] has been just right for all their missions.

Now, perhaps, they may have found their 'forever air ambulance' with the H145 [BK117D3] - time will tell but I guess everyone at REGA is hoping , With its 14 helicopter bases spread throughout the country, Rega provides primary medical assistance by air around the clock in Switzerland. [©REGA]

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- Drone as a First Responder (drone in a box / drone in a boot).
- Any operations using a King Air 360 or equivalent for covert or semi-covert use.
- Operators also performing aero-medical tasks.
- Agencies with operations across multiple bases that have to deal with the 'tyranny' of distance.



429 ©Bell Textron

Currently Queensland Police fly a mixed fleet of fixed with and Bell 429 helicopters.

AUSTRIA

BMI: In December last year the Austrian Air Police, the Bundesministerium für Inneres, concluded a non-competitive contract for the support and refurbishment of EO/IR systems with L3-Harris/Wescam of Canada at a cost announced as €343,690 plus VAT.

The procurement includes a service contract for the MX15Hdi turrets in the EC135P2+ helicopters of Division II/DSE/4. The contract ensures regular maintenance, repairs and access to spare parts. An annual advance payment means the costs are fixed and predictable, and the transport costs for repairs are covered. Since the FLIR systems are indispensable for police tactics, the contract requires maximum operational reliability and rapid restoration of operational capability in the event of malfunctions. Procurement also ensures reliable budget planning and minimizes downtime through prioritized access to spare parts.
[TED]

With the recent move out of the central Vienna offices and hangars the tender documents now reflect the physical Air Police address on the military section of the flying grounds of Wiener Neustadt.

*Bundesministerium für Inneres
Direktion Spezialeinheiten / EKO Cobra - II/DSE/4 – Flugpolizei
Straße der Gendarmerie 5
Wiener Neustadt
Austria 2700*

The web site address remains as before: www.bmi.gv.at

BAHRAIN

MINISTRY OF INTERIOR: Airbus Helicopters has signed a contract with His Excellency, Sheikh Rashid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, Minister of Interior of Bahrain, for the purchase of nine H145 helicopters. These aircraft will be operated by the Police Aviation Command for law enforcement missions and emergency medical services in the kingdom.

In total, there are more than 1,700 H145 family helicopters in service, logging a total of eight million flight hours. Powered by two Safran Arriel 2E engines, the latest version of the H145 (BK117) is equipped with full authority digital engine control (FADEC) and the Helionix digital avionics suite. It includes a high performance 4-axis autopilot, increasing safety and reducing pilot workload. Its particularly low acoustic footprint makes the H145 the quietest helicopter in its class, while its CO2 emissions are the lowest amongst its competitors.

CANADA

ONTARIO: In Windsor there have been discussions about the border between it and the USA.

Premier Doug Ford has stated that border security is a priority for the province, discussing one big investment he wants to make for local law enforcement in Windsor: a helicopter.

Canada and the US have the world's longest undefended international border, with a large share of those crossings happening in Windsor. Mayor Drew Dilkens referred to the border as a series of "fortified gates with no fence." He said the community would benefit from strengthened security.

While the Premier said the helicopter would be for police, Dilkens believes it would benefit border officials like the RCMP and CBSA.

"I think we need more support... we would appreciate more support. Premier, I appreciate what you are talking about with air support because it's a large space, and you need that type of investment, that type of technology in the air to help support the border side," said Dilkens.

This comes about five months after the province announced it would spend \$134M to buy five new helicopters for use in the Greater Toronto Area and Ottawa. Now, it seems more may be purchased, with one earmarked for Windsor police.

Canada and the US have the world's longest undefended international border, with a large share of those crossings happening in Windsor.

Mayor Drew Dilkens referred to the border as a series of "fortified gates with no fence." He said the community would benefit from strengthened security on the marine front.

While the Premier said the helicopter would be for police, Dilkens believes it would additionally benefit border officials like the RCMP and CBSA.

Potential much bigger in impact is the Canadian Federal Governments \$1.3Billion national project to look after their borders. The move is part of the federal government's efforts to appease US president-elect Donald Trump's concerns about the flow of migrants and illegal drugs across the border. It is primarily a Mexican border issue but any changes in legislation in the USA may also affect the far longer Canadian border.



AS350 of the RCMP ©RCMP

The RCMP plans to create a new aerial intelligence task force to provide round-the-clock surveillance of Canada's border using helicopters, drones and surveillance towers.

Trump has threatened to impose a 25% tariff on all Canadian and Mexican exports to the U.S. as soon as he is inaugurated this month unless both countries move to improve border security.

Canada will propose to the USA the creation of a North American "joint strike force" to target organised crime groups that work across borders. In addition, they intend to provide new technology, tools and re-

sources to the Canada Border Services Agency to seek out illegal trafficking of fentanyl, a potent synthetic opioid drug, using chemical detection, artificial intelligence and canine teams. Although the drug approved by the Food and Drug Administration for use as an analgesic (pain relief) and anaesthetic, it is approximately 100 times more potent than morphine and 50 times more potent than heroin as an analgesic and much sought after by criminals.

The announcement followed a promise in an economic statement to earmark the money over six fiscal years for the RCMP, the border agency, Public Safety Canada and the Communications Security Establishment. The numbers appear large, with some \$1.3 billion being promised over seven years – but that is about \$200M a year of which a great deal would be operating costs over the 24/7/365 surveillance of a 5,525 miles [8,891km] US Canadian border. - the longest in the world. In comparison the border between the US and Mexico is under 2,000 miles [3.145 km] and arguably under greater threat.

To put this project in perspective, Canada has the longest coastline in the world, with a total length of 243,042 kilometres (151,019 miles) and represents a formidable 'distraction' for the existing meagre resources. The land is only 1.6% greater than that of the USA but the population of around 40M in nine times smaller than the USA and underlines how desolate some parts of the country are.

The RCMP has identified delays in the acquisition system that will deter instant growth in their limited existing air capability. They may be faced with having to rent helicopters while they await the, yet to be identified, new purchases. Publicly the Mounties are welcoming the proposal, but it represents a substantial workload to implement.



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The Canadian border agency is working closely with US counterparts including Customs and Border Protection, the Drug Enforcement Administration and Homeland Security, as well as with agencies in Britain, Australia and New Zealand.

CHILE

CARABINOS: Schiebel has announced that they have sold a Camcopter S-100 to the Carabineros de Chile, the Chilean national police force. They are the first police force in Latin America to implement this advanced technology for enhanced operational efficiency and public safety.

With its operational flexibility in demanding environments, the S-100 system will be deployed primarily in the Araucanía region, where difficult terrain makes conventional security operations particular challenging.

This strategic acquisition underlines Carabineros de Chile's commitment to leveraging innovative technology to enhance their mission of ensuring public safety and security. The S-100's autonomous features and robust performance in adverse conditions make it an invaluable tool for addressing the unique challenges faced by law enforcement in the region.



Editor: The manufacturer has issued images of the S-100 in Carabinos markings bearing the serial numbers C-30 and C-31, but no details of the number acquired or the equipment they carry has been released.

GERMANY

SAXONY/SACHSEN: On December 16 last the Minister of State for Internal Affairs Armin Schuster and Jörg Kubiessa, the Chief of Police in Saxony were present at the launch of a new helicopter for the police air unit. The Airbus Helicopters H145 D-HSNF is the first delivery of two H145s orders announced in September 2023.



IRELAND

GARDA: The Irish Government has signed a €91.7M contract for four new H145M helicopters, one of which will be allocated to the Garda Air Support Unit.

This investment is additional evidence of the government's commitment to enhancing the Air Corps. Recent orders and acquisitions have included the delivery of two maritime patrol aircraft over the last 18 months, and the expected delivery of a military transport aircraft next year. A new Falcon 6X multi-purpose strategic reach aircraft, was contracted last month.

The military H145Ms will be equipped to satisfy a wide range of missions including maritime security missions, utility missions, intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance (ISTAR) and light attack missions. They will have enhanced electro-optical and thermal imagery features not available in the current rotary wing fleet.

The Irish Department of Defence has reportedly spent more than €1M on ongoing repairs for a Garda surveillance aircraft that is worth just a fraction of that amount.

The cost of keeping An Garda Síochána's BN-2 4000 Defender airplane in service since 2020 has been running at the rate of around €200,000 per year. The annual cost of maintenance has been rising with an average of €175,000 spent per year on servicing between 2020 and 2022 but that leaped to €271,594 last year, according to Freedom of Information figures. The bill for 2024 could be even higher, with €235,521 spent in the first ten months of last year. These costs contrast with estimates that the aircraft itself may only be worth less than €200,000 to sell.



In recent years the Defender has been exhibiting technical difficulties. It returned to Ireland in October after lengthy maintenance in the UK. ^[Irish Sun]

Editor: The BN-2 series of aircraft have been solid money spinners for BN over several decades. The basic aircraft with its piston engine has sold well and individual airframes have been remanufactured time and time again. The larger turbine powered 4000 has not fared too well in law enforcement however and this negative storyline from Ireland is not the only one. Early last year, the Garda plane suffered a near miss after an engine failed while getting ready for take-off at Air Corps headquarters in Baldonnel, Dublin. A report at the time said it was pure luck that the failure took place while the aircraft was taxiing and not during take-off.

No doubt the story in the Irish Sun has a bearing on the recent decision to acquire a Twin Otter for the Garda.

As long-term readers of PAN may recall that the Defender operated by Hampshire Police between 2000 and 2010 suffered regular issues with its availability and often related to the engines. It was the first aircraft to be unilaterally withdrawn from police service in preparation for what became NPAS.

POLAND

POLICE: With the continued arrival of the locally built Sikorsky S-70 Blackhawk helicopters into police service it is reported that Poland has passed some older police helicopters to Ukraine as part of general war weapons transfers. They are expected to be used for pilot training at the Kharkiv National University. The airframes were transferred to Ukraine by low loader.

The transfers apparently involve at least two Mil Mi-8 and a single Bell 412HP, the latter presumably SN-18XP. All were out of service before the transfer. The Bell had originally been in service with the Polish air force but was little used by either them or the police. ^[Facebook]



SPAIN

POLICIA NACIONAL: Tekever, the Portuguese drone manufacturer has announced that it has signed a multi-purpose contract valued at close to €5M with the Spanish Ministry of Interior on behalf of Spain's National Police Air Unit, with imminent delivery.

The contract will enable the National Police Air Unit to acquire multiple Tekever AR3 systems, their accessories, cameras, and access to the manufacturers Atlas Platform as well as associated training. The AR3 is the smaller single engine drone that can either have vertical lift pods or be launched from a catapult.

The AR3 was selected for its superior performance capabilities, including its proven ability to navigate challenging climate conditions. Other technical features that make the AR3 ideal for the National Police Air Unit's surveillance and maritime missions include its agile and flexible architecture, its ability to be operational in under 15 minutes, its low logistical footprint, and its capability to integrate some of the best payloads on the market.

Under the terms of the contract, the AR3 systems will be equipped with high-definition day and night gimbals, a mobile ground control station, and Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) technology. This tool is critical for the identification of objects of interest under all weather conditions, both day and night. Additionally, the SAR's extensive operational range, demonstrated by its ability to cover more than 20,000 square nautical miles per mission, makes it an optimal partner for surveillance and maritime missions.

Tekever's AI-powered analytical intelligence platform, ATLAS, was also a decisive factor in securing the contract. Its ability to enhance UAV operations with advanced functionalities such as FPV video streaming, increased situational awareness for UAV operators, and heatmap tracking for efficient flight zone review and monitoring underscores its role as a key asset.

UNITED KINGDOM

EAST ANGLIA: Norfolk and Suffolk Constabularies have been advised to review and update their guidance following a police chase where communication issues arose.

Last October the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) submitted their recommendations and following remedial action, on December 19 it was published. The report follows a pursuit involving the National Police Air Service (NPAS).

The watchdog identified "organisational learning" after the force's control room asked the NPAS to take over commentary but their updates "did not relay key moments" over the radio. This meant the control room did not have all the information needed.

The IOPC said the issue was in part due to NPAS "not observing all the activities on the ground and due to radio signal issues" and added that officers said they did not provide updates to the radio channel as they believed NPAS had primacy and/or due to signal issues. The pursuit was taking place over expansive agricultural land and the air crew were unfamiliar with local identification pointers for the location.

NPAS said there is "no guidance" on the commentary expected of them during pursuit while officers said they had not had training on NPAS commentary. The IOPC recommended Norfolk and Suffolk Constabularies review and update, their force guidance and training on the role of NPAS to "ensure it is aligned with national guidance". Training should clarify the level of commentary expected from NPAS and from police units on the ground.

Norfolk and Suffolk Pursuits training has since been reviewed and it has been discussed that National Learning objectives "do not cover the NPAS aspect".

The NPAS crew will not undertake the role of Pursuit Commander, this will be for the ground assigned assets based on risk. They will however (as detailed above) be able to upon request provide a commentary. This will be limited to, for example, locations/manner of driving/geographical features – they will not direct the implementation of any tactical options. This has been discussed and confirmed as accurate between the NPAS Regional Operations Manager and the CoP APP author.

The report also identified issues with the technology used to downlink aerial images to the control room. On the day of the incident, the downlink function had not been working and this was reportedly due to issues with its compatibility with Microsoft Edge." As the system is not dedicated to the NPAS signal it needed human input to set it up on the day and this was lacking. Rectification of these technical issues has taken place in the months since the report was presented to Norfolk and Suffolk. [EADT]

Editor: The issues surrounding this report are, at least in part, predictable. The NPAS crew was not identified in the report but might be assumed to be from North Weald or the East Midlands. The crews will have been unfamiliar with the terrain and one large field looks pretty much like another even if at some stage a conventional map reference got everyone in the right place to start with. With aircraft and ground vehicles not having the same GPS systems units will soon get off on the wrong page.

UNITED STATES

INTERNATIONAL: APSA based in Frederick, Maryland USA changed its membership management software and website during late December.



Late in the month they announced they were in the process of switching to a new membership management software after ten years with the current provider, who has decided to no longer provide membership database management. In conjunction with this change, they will also be launching a new, updated website on or about January 2, 2025. Some members have already experienced some issues accessing your account as our current provider winds down providing this service and APSA migrate data to the new software.

The final membership data transfer to the new system was scheduled for December 16. Between then and January 2, 2025.

ARIZONA: Helicopter Institute has been selected by the State of Arizona to provide a multi-year Pilot and Maintenance Training service for their Bell 429 and Bell 407 fleet.

The Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS) Aviation Bureau plays a vital role in supporting state and local communities with critical air rescue operations and law enforcement missions. Operating from four rotary-wing bases across the state, along with Sky Harbor International Airport in Phoenix, their fleet includes three Bell 429 and two Bell 407 helicopters.

Helicopter Institute is based in Texas at the Fort Worth Meacham International Airport.



407 & 429 ©AzDPS

CALIFORNIA: San Bernardino County Sheriff's Dept, San Bernardino, have changed the registration of Bell 412EPX c/n 39116 from N329SB to N306SB. San Barnardino have been swapping their registrations round, and the current fleet ends up as N305SB to N309SB inclusive.

DELAWARE: The Delaware State Police (DSP) Aviation Section has announced the acquisition of two state-of-the-art Bell 429 Global Ranger helicopters. These cutting-edge aircraft, designed to save lives and combat crime, touched down in Delaware on December 3, 2024, following a nearly year-long fabrication process in Mirabel, Quebec, Canada, and Piney Flats, Tennessee.



One of the Delaware 429s ©Bell Textron

After years of operating with a reduced fleet of three helicopters, the decision was made to increase the fleet to four. One of the existing aircraft was traded in to facilitate this upgrade as part of the acquisition process. This strategic move ensured the modernization of the fleet without compromising operational readiness. Operating with only three helicopters had previously led to an accelerated maintenance schedule, limited training opportunities, and reduced redundancy during mechanical issues. The completion work was undertaken with Bell in Piney Flats, TN and was then ferried to Summit Aviation in Delaware for further completion

In keeping with Delaware's tradition of valuing unique identifiers, such as low-digit license plates, the tail numbers of these new helicopters — "N2SP" and "N71SP" — pay homage to the proud history of earlier DSP aircraft. The existing N1SP, is an earlier Bell 429 to be traded back to Bell. The use of N71SP for the new arrival appears to memorialise the marks of the first ever helicopter the unit operated, a Bell 206B acquired in 1971 and written off in 1974. The two new aircraft have c/n 57510 and 57511, the existing N2SP is 57185.

The Bell 429 helicopters come equipped with numerous advancements in aviation technology. These include modern digital gauges, updated monitors, and an enhanced camera system. Notably, these are the first law enforcement Bell 429 helicopters to feature a rear-view camera, providing pilots with an improved field of view during take-off and landing. Additionally, the aircraft boasts a lightweight interior design, enhancing accessibility and reducing overall weight.

The DSP Aviation Section has flown 526 patients to area trauma centres in 2024, a number expected to grow as DSP paramedics prepare to carry and administer whole blood to critically ill patients. To support this initiative, the new helicopters are equipped with blood warmers for lifesaving transfusions. They also feature upgraded medical equipment, including Zoll Heart Monitors, advanced airway management devices, ventilators, and infusion pumps.

The project cost a total of \$21M, which was offset by about \$4M after the department traded in an older helicopter.



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FLORIDA: Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office in Tampa, Florida has a new Airbus Helicopters H125, c/n 9537, lined up for introduction to service. The AStar is a replacement for the 2019 H125 c/n 8646 damaged in a no injury training accident in May 2024. The damage was not terminal.

It is scheduled that the new airframe will take up the same marks, N413JM, as the helicopter that crashed. Meanwhile it appears that the crashed airframe will live on as it has now been given new marks N124AH.

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Evenlode is a series of equipment providing capability for a range of **information exchange** requirements. The new video and data encoder enables police forces to react to evolving scenarios in real time thanks to the low latency of **<120ms**; equipment can be deployed for air and ground, which provides innovative video solutions for **police applications**

Hillsborough operates four identically equipped H125 helicopters out of the David Gee Aviation Complex at Tampa Executive Airport alongside fixed wing assets.

KENTUCKY: The Louisville Metropolitan Police Department Air Unit has taken delivery of a new Airbus Helicopters H125 helicopter N502LM c/n 9510. The aircraft has now gone to Aviation Maintenance in Lexington, KY for a role completion. This is the first new helicopter purchased by the unit in over 20 years.

For many years the unit operated a single 2001 MD520N NOTAR helicopter N520AP for patrol and rescue work. It fell out of use due to the lack of spare parts and lacking factory support and was sold off. Meanwhile the unit acquired two role equipped DoD surplus Bell TH-67 helicopters, including N65231, to maintain air support. They will support the H125 when it eventually enters service. [JG]

MINNESOTA: A Bell 429 N717SP c/n 57515 registered to the Minnesota State Police was at Bell Helicopter, Piney Flats, TN from May 6 to September 26, 2024 and was then ferried to Aero Brigham at Decatur, TX, at the end of September. It is still undergoing completion work with no delivery date known.

NEW MEXICO: The Albuquerque Police Air Support Unit will be taking delivery a new Airbus Helicopters H125 shortly. The new airframe will be joining a 2019 H125 N125PD and a 1981 Cessna 182R fixed wing single they have operated since new.

SOUTH CAROLINA: The Charleston County Sheriff has taken delivery of a new Bell 407GX helicopter N430CC [c/n 56400]. This is believed to be the first law enforcement helicopter to be equipped with a Shotover M2 camera. Previous sales have been into the media industry.

The new Bell features full glazed full vision pilot doors and also carries a Trakkabeam searchlight and emergency floatation system for over water operations. [CS]



407 ©Bell Textron

TENNESSEE For decades now the effect of manned aviation on the criminal fraternity has been largely unchallenged. Time and time again the mere presence of a manned helicopter has led to suspects simply giving up and giving themselves up – surrendering – to police on the ground. The typical patrolling craft is blessed with multiple sensors several sets of eyes and a camera of varying ability. Directly compared with human eyes even the best of EO/IR cameras have a performance restricted to looking down a cardboard cling film/wrap tube.

In a recent incident in Memphis TN a suspect pinned down by searching air assets was subsequently found dead with a self-inflicted gunshot wound. Had the suspect simply given up and taken his life in a state of despair?

It remains to be seen whether the reputed future of law enforcement – the unmanned drone – will have the same effect on suspects on the ground, it may have the best camera but those ultimate human sensors, the highly flexible ‘Mark 1’ eyeball will be missing.. [AN3]

The Tennessee Department of Safety & Homeland Security, Nashville, has re-registered N760HP a Bell OH-58A (71-20394) to new marks of N820HP. It would appear that they are freeing up N760HP for a new Bell helicopter.

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AIR AMBULANCE

AUSTRALIA

QUEENSLAND: Leading aeromedical organisation LifeFlight has kickstarted a recruitment drive as it seeks to boost its engineering workforce to meet soaring demand and service new helicopters. LifeFlight is seeking six new Licensed Aircraft Maintenance Engineers (LAMEs) qualified to work on its fleet of AW139s. They will join a 60-strong engineering workforce made up of 50 licensed engineers and 10 apprentices with the majority based at the LifeFlight Clive Berghofer Maintenance Centre at Archerfield Airport. In August LifeFlight opened its new maintenance facility at Archerfield Airport spanning 5,000sqm with the capacity to accommodate up to nine helicopters and one jet.

The fleet of 19 rotary wing helicopters and four fixed wing aircraft with the organisation are placing an unprecedented demand on the support organisation. Service calls have seen more than 8,000 people helped in FY24 – up more than 11% on the previous year.

LifeFlight is not just investing in new engineers but additional doctors, pilots, aircrew, and an expanded aeromedical fleet to keep pace with demand.

LifeFlight Engineering Operations need to be capable of performing five hours of maintenance required per flight hour, so it makes sense that the workforce is expanded to handle this workload. They undertake more than 41,000 hours of maintenance on their helicopters and jets each year, but that number continues to climb.

CANADA

BRITISH COLUMBIA EMERGENCY: Babcock has leased seven new emergency medical services (EMS) configured Leonardo AW169 helicopters from leading aviation company, LCI.

The helicopters are being placed in LCI's joint venture with SMFL: SMFL LCI Helicopters Limited. The joint venture has acquired the aircraft and will be leasing them to Babcock Canada.

As a global leader in the delivery of engineering and critical support services, Babcock are being subcontracted by Ascent Helicopters, who will be providing EMS operations across the province on behalf of British Columbia Emergency Health Services (BCEHS).

The first helicopter has now been handed over, with the remaining six set to be delivered this month. This agreement means Ascent Helicopters is the first operator to bring the AW169 to Canada. The highly capable AW169s will be specially equipped with night vision goggles and state-of-the-art medical interiors completed by HeliMods in British Columbia. These modifications will enable the helicopters to meet the most mission critical operational requirements in the region.

BCEHS carries out medical emergency evacuations and patient transfers between healthcare facilities, responding to calls from over 7,800 patients a year.

LCI and Babcock have a longstanding leasing partnership, currently providing 17 helicopters for a wide variety of operational roles in markets across the globe.

ONTARIO: The Ontario government is investing \$93M to expand Ornge Air Ambulance's fleet by adding two larger, high speed fixed wing aircraft, constructing a new hangar in Simcoe County, and improving pre-hospital care. This investment in new Pilatus PC-24 aircraft and supporting infrastructure will ensure Ornge Air Ambulance service can better connect people in northern and rural communities to the care they need when they need it.



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The time scale predicted for hangar completion and aircraft delivery sees the arrival of the first aircraft in December 2027 with the completion of the hangar build preceding it by a few months. The second aircraft will follow in 2028.

The two new, high speed, Special Mission Aircraft can travel longer distances without the need to refuel, enabling Ornge to complete four long-distance transports per day, double the amount completed by Ornge's smaller planes. These aircraft are also able to transport patients with specialized care needs such as neonatal, paediatric, and bariatric patients.



The new Pilatus will be using the new colour scheme rather than the all-orange colours of the existing fleet ©Ornge

The new aircraft will be housed in a newly constructed hangar at the Lake Simcoe Regional Airport in Simcoe County. This new hangar will help better coordinate emergency care to ensure Ontarians receive the high-quality care they deserve across the province.

These new aircraft and hangar are in addition to the \$118M investment announced in 2023 to expand Ornge's fixed wing fleet to 12 aircraft, including the replacement of the existing eight fixed wing fleet, and purchase of a larger hangar in Sudbury to house the new aircraft.

In addition to expanding Ornge's fleet of aircraft, as part of this investment, Ontario is providing Ornge with a further \$25M to hire more frontline staff to improve pre-hospital care and better serve Indigenous communities.

Ornge is Ontario's provincial air ambulance and critical care land ambulance (CCLA) service provider and offers a range of air paramedic services including moving patients between health care facilities, responding to emergency on-scene incidents, and supporting health care in northern and rural communities.

The provider plays a key role in access to care for the province's northern and rural communities with approximately 98% of Ornge's fixed-wing patient transports originating in northern Ontario. They conduct approximately 22,000 air ambulance and critical care land ambulance patient transports per year, from nine air bases and six land bases across the province.

Ornge's fleet currently consists of 12 helicopters and eight fixed wing planes, with planes being used for long-distance transports and helicopters for shorter distances and emergency on-scene response. The fleet will expand to 14 fixed wing aircraft by 2030.

Editor: Beginning with new aircraft deliveries in 2024, Pilatus extended the payload-range capability of its Super Versatile Jet to achieve a maximum range with six passengers of 2,000 nautical miles (3,704 km). Pilatus also incorporated an array of new interior amenities, including a large side-facing divan which can be converted into a bed!

The new PC-24 features a 600 pound (272 kg) increase in full fuel payload and maximum payload capacity. This enables operators to increase the PC-24's maximum range by 200 nm (370 km) with six passengers on board. The PC-24 now offers a full fuel payload of a single pilot plus 1,315 pounds (596 kg) and features a class-leading maximum payload capacity of 3,100 pounds (1,406 kg).

Pilatus engineers conducted an extensive flight test campaign to expand the entire envelope for the higher design weights. At the PC-24's maximum take-off weight, balanced field length at sea level is only 3,090 feet (941 meters), allowing the use of very short and even unpaved runways.

INDONESIA

POLICE: The Water and Air Police Corps of the National Police's Security Maintenance Agency prepared air ambulances to help secure the Christmas and New Year periods.

Head of the Public Relations Bureau, Brigadier General of Police Trunoyudo Wisnu Andiko, said the National Police prepared Dauphin AS365N3 and Bolkow 105 helicopters equipped with emergency medical equipment. Both helicopters are designed to evacuate traffic accident victims or other emergency situations and provide optimal medical response in a short time.

In addition to air ambulances, the National Police also prepared referral hospitals in Greater Jakarta and outside the region.

JAPAN

NAGASAKI: The prefectural government of Nagasaki, Japan, has announced plans to deploy a second air ambulance helicopter in the region by the end of the 2025 fiscal year. The second helicopter will be used to expand the reliability of air medical services in the western Japanese prefecture. They will benefit residents of Nagasaki's numerous remote islands – many of whom rely on healthcare provision on the mainland.

At present, the prefecture's only air ambulance helicopter is unable to respond to every callout. According to a report by the Nagasaki Shinbun local newspaper, in the 2023 fiscal year, the rotorcraft responded to 906 dispatch requests – but could not respond to a further 116 due already being in action.

The prefectural government is to also renovate a refuelling facility at the Nagasaki Medical Centre ahead of the second helicopter's introduction.

Editor: No aircraft type was mentioned but in 2018 it was reported that an H145 JA905H operated by Hira-ta Gakuen, Aviation Operation Division entered service at Nagasaki Medical Centre.

LIBYA

NATIONAL: The Libyan Air Ambulance took delivery of two Bell 429 helicopters at the headquarters of the American helicopter manufacturing company Bell Textron Inc, Fort Worth, Texas late last year.

The Air Ambulance said this represent a qualitative addition to the fleet of the Air Ambulance service. The aircraft, it added, is designed with the latest technology and equipped with intensive care equipment for one bed – while another bed can be added as needed.

Libyan Air Ambulance, established in 1979, is Libya's leading medical evacuation service dedicated to providing rapid patient transport services both domestically and internationally. Operating 24/7, the organization utilizes a modern fleet of aircraft equipped with advanced medical equipment, ensuring patient safety and comfort under the supervision of experienced medical professionals. Their commitment to delivering high-quality emergency healthcare facilitates swift access to those in need, even in the most challenging and remote conditions.

The operation and acquisition of these helicopters is supported by Florida, USA, based Africair, Inc., and United Libya Systems, the local representative.



MALTA

GOZO: There has been a helipad on the island of Gozo for decades but its development into a fully functioning civil air ambulance operation has been beset with many delays. The latest announcement is that the first ambulance mission has taken place.

Prior to 2016 island to airport operations were undertaken using Mil Mi-8 helicopters and either the Italian Air Force or the Armed Forces of Malta undertook ambulance transfers. Things appeared about to change eight years ago in September 2016 with investment by Vitals Global Healthcare (VGH) in an air ambulance slated to start operations on January 2017. A Bell 412 9H-VGH operated from the heliport at Xewkija, Gozo to the helipad at St Luke's hospital where they would then be transferred by ambulance to Mater Dei. Malta air ambulance completed 57 flights during their first year of service and in March 2020 added a second ex-French SAMU EC135 helicopter to the operation.

It was more than four years ago, in March 2020, that the Gozo hospital unveiled to the people of Malta the latest air ambulance for the islands. The Airbus Helicopters EC135 was bought by Stewart Healthcare Malta to replace the current operation which still relied partly on helicopters of the Armed Forces of Malta.

At launch it was stated that the EC135T1 9H-EMS c/n 0048 was only held back by staff training - because of the coronavirus outbreak, the helicopter would not be used to transfer infected patients until staff were properly trained. Meanwhile there would be reliance on land ambulances although that involved a need to take the slow ferry between the islands.

Surprise therefore when this supposedly 24 hours a day 7 days a week service announced last month that the first medical use of the direct helicopter link between the long-established Gozo helipad and the pad at Mater Dei Hospital, Msida off the Grand Harbour area was carried out on December 10, 2024, the aircraft was the same EC135 9H-EMS.



EC135T1 9H-EMS has been in Malta for some years ©SH

According to Health Minister Jo Etienne Abela a Gozitan patient in a state of emergency was flown in from Gozo with the transfer lasting only 15 minutes and the patient being ready for an intervention in the operating room of the Department of Radiology.

Prior to its first medical use, Abela said that a test flight was conducted on December 5 following work by the Foundation for Medical Services, Transport Malta, and international aviation specialists.

The next phase of work will be to locate a helipad at the Gozo General Hospital. Abela said that from the beginning, when the Mater Dei Hospital started operating, the helipad did not meet specification and operational landings were prevented by all but military helicopters. The helipad becoming operational for transfers was treated as a priority but appears to have taken over four years to complete.

Both Gozo and the Mater Dei Hospital have had basic landing pads for decades. It is unclear what remedies were found which enabled the helicopters to suddenly succeed in transferring patients from Gozo General to Mater Dei.



SWITZERLAND

REGA: on December 5 last year the first of a total of 21 new rescue helicopters of Rega's new single-type fleet landed at the Rega Center at Zurich Airport. The Airbus H145 D3 helicopter featuring a five-bladed rotor will now be outfitted by a specialist team, so that later this year it will be ready to perform missions for seriously ill or injured persons.

In spring 2025, the crew from the Rega base in Lausanne will be the first to receive their brand-new rescue helicopter. The new helicopter is one of the most modern of its kind worldwide and brings numerous advantages for both patients and crews.

With its 14 helicopter bases spread throughout the country, Rega provides primary medical assistance by air around the clock in Switzerland. To achieve this, the reliability of the helicopter fleet is a decisive factor. Rega currently operates two different types of rescue helicopter, which will be replaced by the end of 2026. The future single-type fleet will reduce the volume and cost of maintenance work and continue to uphold the high level of availability of the entire fleet for the benefit of patients. In addition, operating just one helicopter type will save money in the procurement and management of spare parts and cut crew training time and expenditure.

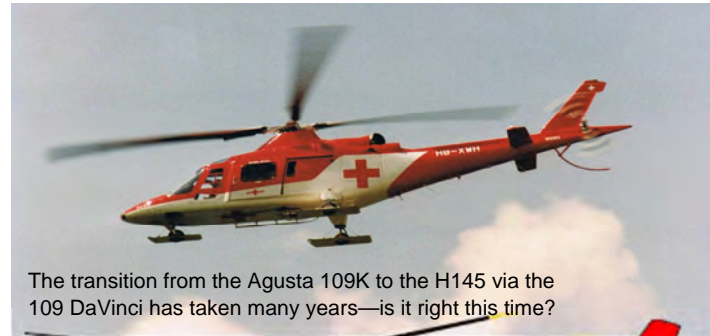
Numerous improvements compared to its predecessor

The new Rega helicopter with the registration number, HB-TIB, is the first of 21 new rescue helicopters of the type, Airbus H145 D3, to be developed in line with Rega's specifications and is the most modern of its kind worldwide. The spacious cabin, which was further improved by a Rega interdisciplinary project team in comparison with its predecessor model, offers optimal conditions for patients and crew, as well as sufficient space for specialised medical equipment.

High-tech for patients

A new navigation and avionics system in the cockpit will in future allow even more precise instrument approach procedures, while additional spotlights mean that landing sites in rough terrain can be better illuminated during night missions. In addition, thanks to the higher performance and increased payload, the crew have significantly more reserve capacity at their disposal, which means that the new Rega helicopter is also ideally suited to missions in high mountain regions. Rega is investing a total of around 200M Swiss Francs [£175M] in the modernisation and expansion of its helicopter fleet. Included in this figure are the costs of medical equipment and training.

Before the new Rega helicopter can take off on its first rescue missions, over the next few weeks the interior designed by Rega will be installed and certified in the hangar at the Rega Center. The crew at the Rega base in Lausanne will take delivery of its new helicopter – as the very first Rega crew to do so – in April 2025 and from then on will use it to carry out its rescue missions. The Lausanne crew fly around 800 missions every year for people in distress, including beyond the cantonal borders.



The transition from the Agusta 109K to the H145 via the 109 DaVinci has taken many years—is it right this time?



UNITED KINGDOM

CHILDRENS: Last month, the Children's Air Ambulance (TCAA) was celebrating a year marked by its unwavering dedication to supporting critically ill babies and children. This year, the lifesaving national charity reached its 1,000th mission—a landmark achievement that reflects its vital role in paediatric and neonatal care across the UK.

Since its first flight in 2013, TCAA has provided providing a high-speed, dedicated transfer service for young patients needing specialist care. Working in partnership with 11 NHS Clinical Partner Teams, the charity ensures that even the most vulnerable patients have access to the specialist care they need, when they need it most. These partnerships include: Embrace (Yorkshire and Humber Infant and Children's Transport Service), Children's Acute Transport Service (CATS), Children's Medical Emergency Transport Team (CoMET), ECMO, Kids Intensive Care and Decision Support & Neonatal Transfer Service (KIDS/NTS), North West and North Wales Paediatric Transport Service (NWTS), Wales and West Acute Transport for Children Service (WATCH), Southwest Neonatal Advice and Retrieval (SoNAR), South Thames Retrieval Service (STRS), Southampton Oxford Neonatal Transfer service (SONeT), and Southampton Oxford Retrieval Team (SORT).

Last year's milestone was reached on July 5, 2024, when the charity's AW169 helicopter G-NICU undertook the 1,000th mission, transferring a neonatal patient with Embrace—the Yorkshire and Humber Infant and Children's Transport Service. The journey, from Liverpool to Chesterfield, took just 33 minutes by air—compared to the two-hour-plus trip by road, exemplifying the life-changing impact of TCAA's work.

MIDLANDS: Midlands Air Ambulance Charity has confirmed it has now purchased its new H145 helicopter from Airbus Helicopters. The new air ambulance, which will replace the charity's leased EC135 helicopter, will become operational early 2025 from the charity's Tatenhill airbase in Staffordshire.

To date, Midlands Air Ambulance Charity has owned two of the three helicopters in its fleet, while the third EC135 aircraft, which has been in service for more than 18 years, is leased from Babcock Mission Critical Services Onshore. The new purchase means Midlands Air Ambulance Charity will own all three operational helicopters that cover advanced patient care across Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, the West Midlands and Worcestershire.



The new H145, registered G-HMAA, comes with additional capabilities to assist the delivery of enhanced patient care including a fifth rotor blade, which will ensure an even smoother flight, making it more comfortable for patients in transit to hospital. This also reduces fuel consumption, ensuring the new helicopter will be more economical to operate in the long term.



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Advanced technology on-board, including external cameras, will aid the pilot when landing in complicated surroundings near the scene of an incident. Plus, the increased internal capacity means additional lifesaving hospital-level equipment can be carried. This will enable the clinicians to provide additional treatments to help those in critical need, giving them the greatest chance of survival and a good recovery.

Initially built at Airbus in Donauwörth in Germany, the helicopter undertook test flights in July before being transported to Airbus' new facility in Oxford where it received a medical fit out. The aircraft was to be transferred to Midlands Air Ambulance Charity's aviation partner, Babcock Mission Critical Onshore Services, in December where the pilots will receive further flight training on the new airframe.

Midlands Air Ambulance Charity has expressed thanks to Babcock International Group (Babcock), the defence and aerospace company, for its ongoing operational support from Staverton Airfield in Gloucestershire.

During the current redevelopment of its Strensham airbase on the Worcestershire / Gloucestershire border, Midlands Air Ambulance Charity has temporarily relocated its daylight operations, including its air ambulance helicopter and critical care car to Babcock's facilities in Staverton – ensuring the charity continues to deliver pre-hospital emergency care to those most in need across the counties of Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, and beyond.

Over the past 12 months, Midlands Air Ambulance Charity has seen a marked increase in lifesaving missions across the region. With the charity's implementation of 24/7 operations in January 2024, year on year there has been 94 per cent increase in the number of missions undertaken in Gloucestershire.

Once the Strensham airbase is fully operational again, Midlands Air Ambulance Charity will continue to use the facility at Staverton to support its 24/7 operations and ensure the welfare of its critical care crews.

SCOTLAND: On 10 December 2024, the new emergency helipad on the Isle of Gigha has been officially opened by the HELP Appeal charity, and 39 Engineer Regiment of Corps of Royal Engineers, which collaborated for the first time together to build it. Previously, islanders relied on a grass "landing strip,"



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which was an unsuitable surface for their volunteer ambulance service when transporting patients to the air ambulance. It often became waterlogged and muddy, causing delays in transferring patients to lifesaving treatment at a mainland hospital.

The new helipad ensures that specialist hospital treatment at an A&E hospital or Major Trauma Centre on the mainland can be accessed within the Golden Hour and thus improve patients' outcomes.

The HELP Appeal donated £245,000 to cover the entire cost of the materials and lighting; Despite a challenging three-week schedule, which was further tightened by bad weather conditions, seventeen members of 39 Engineer Regiment worked closely with local contractors to complete the concreting phase of the project back in March, before returning to Kinloss Barracks, leaving the local contractors to complete the task.

The upgraded helipad at Raigmore Hospital, Inverness, Scotland has become a lifeline, with over 2,100 landings since 2019 — averaging close to nine landings every week.

Raigmore Hospital is the District General Hospital serves the population of the Highlands. This hospital has an accident and emergency department.

By December 2024 Raigmore Hospital Helipad had clocked up over 2,100 landings (circa 9 landings a week) since its upgrade in 2019!

FEC Heliports Worldwide Ltd, based in Buckinghamshire were part of the upgrade through the provision of helipad lighting and equipment, helping improve emergency care in the region.

These landings, including those by Scottish Air Ambulances and the Coastguard, highlight the high demand for helipads in emergency care. Thanks to a £480,000 donation from the HELP Appeal, the only charity in the country dedicated to funding hospital helipads, the helipad at Raigmore was upgraded to handle larger, more frequent aircraft while meeting new standards for lighting and size.

Since its creation in 2009, the HELP Appeal has funded 50 helipads which have seen over 29,000 landings nationwide, underscoring its immense contribution to emergency care. With another 50 in the pipeline, their impact on delivering rapid lifesaving treatment is clear.

STOKE-ON-TRENT: An investigation is under way into the Stoke Air Ambulance charity by the Fundraising Regulator. The move follows a complaint about the charity, which has been set up to raise money for a specialist helicopter to treat patients in Staffordshire. A spokesperson for the regulator confirmed an investigation had begun but was unable to share any details because it was a live case.

Phil Copeland, the chief executive of Stoke Air Ambulance charity, said he believed the complaint was an attempt to undermine the organisation's reputation and that it had received harassment online.

Stoke Air Ambulance evolved out of another charity, Helicopter Emergency Service Equipment (HESE), increasing its revenue fivefold to £54,457 last year whilst declaring spending of £59,949.

The charity had said it wanted to have a helicopter available by the summer of 2025, but the well-established Midlands Air Ambulance Charity (MAAC) already has a helicopter based at Tatenhill in Staffordshire, with an average response time of 10 minutes for the county.

Chief executive of MAAC, Hanna Sebright, said she was concerned because it costs £9M to £12 M to buy a helicopter as well as £3,000 every time it flies. MAAC's annual running costs over three bases are

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£16M.

"What causes me concern is there's no aircraft, there's no operation yet. I have not seen anything fundamental yet," she said.

"There is an external independent investigation into their practices so I cannot say a great deal more about it."

Simon Constable, the chief executive of University Hospital North Midlands which provides staff for MAAC helicopters, said there were already three helicopters based just a few minutes flying time from Stoke-on-Trent making the region is one of the best served in the country for air ambulances.

The embryo Stoke Air Ambulance boss Mr Copeland insists that it does not require millions to begin its service and that they are currently reinvesting donations into building a sustainable, monthly income stream supported by thousands of dedicated contributors.

He has stated that this year the type of helicopter being acquired will be announced and recruiting medical staff will become a priority.

Editor: An appeal was launched to raise £2.5M for a dedicated air ambulance serving Stoke and north Staffordshire in 2022. So far fundraising has failed to raise significant amounts.

WILTSHIRE: The project to turn Wiltshire Air Ambulance into Wiltshire and Bath Air Ambulance Charity is complete.

It's been over a year in the planning and to see it all come to fruition, including presenting at 'reveal' events at Hartham Park and Bath Cricket Club.



The only 429 in UK Air Ambulance Service ©WABAA

YORKSHIRE: Yorkshire Air Ambulance (YAA) announced the arrival of its third, brand-new, Airbus H145 D3 helicopter, G-YAIR, on December 19, just in time for Christmas.

Following a medical role fit at Airbus Helicopters in Oxford, G-YAIR made its maiden flight to Yorkshire to join the existing aircraft, G-YAAA and G-YORX, forming part of a rotational system that will ensure the charity remains operationally resilient.

The new addition flew up from Airbus Helicopters at Oxford Airport, stopping at the YAA HQ at Nostell Priory near Wakefield for photographs [left] before flying onto their Topcliffe base with EC145 G-YAAA returning to Nostell to join G-YORX.



This addition will provide a no-notice replacement during scheduled maintenance, unexpected repairs, and mandatory crew training. By eliminating the need for leased aircraft during these periods, G-YAIR will enable YAA to maintain seamless lifesaving coverage across the region, ensuring operational availability remains as close to 100% as possible.

UNITED STATES

FLORIDA: As Brevard County continues to experience population and visitor growth, Health First is doubling its air fleet to meet emergency and trauma needs. Brevard County has long been popular for re-location and retirement, and the county continues to attract record numbers of visitors, cruise passengers and new employers

Last month Health First officials announced the expansion of its Flight First air ambulance operation with plans to add a second full-time aircraft covering the community in Northern Brevard early this year. First Flight has served as the primary helicopter ambulance service for Brevard County and northern Indian River County for over 35 years, responding to multiple calls each day. First Flight has served as the primary helicopter ambulance service for Brevard and Indian River Counties for over 35 years.

Holmes Regional Medical Center is the area's only Level II emergency department. Along with traumatic injuries, including falls, recreational, motor vehicle, and boating accidents, First Flight also transports cardiac and stroke patients for specialized emergency care to the area's only stroke and heart hospital at Holmes. First Flight can transport a patient from the north end of the county to Holmes in approximately 25 minutes.

TEXAS: El Paso Fire Department (EPFD) has a new air ambulance helicopter. Air Methods partnered with EPFD in Texas to open a new air medical base, Fire STAR, with an Airbus H130 helicopter at Fire Station #35, located at 12230 Pine Springs

The El Paso City Council's has agreed the five-year contract with Air Methods to set up a significant and long-term commitment to improving emergency response times and patient outcomes in the region. Situated along the Mexican border, at the intersection of Texas and New Mexico, El Paso serves as the epicentre for a population of 2.5M people. EPFD, internationally accredited through the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI), is a full-service department that responds to nearly 80,000 calls per year involving fires, medical emergencies, hazardous materials, and other emergency events in the City of El Paso.



The new Fire STAR base will be strategically located at Fire Station #35, 12230 Pine Springs, ensuring enhanced accessibility and the region's capacity to provide rapid, life-saving medical transport and critical care services. Equipped with an Airbus Helicopter H130 rotor wing, the base will be operated by Air Methods and staffed with a highly skilled team, including a pilot, flight nurse, and paramedic.

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FIRE

AUSTRALIA

NEW SOUTH WALES: The NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) has been preparing for the (Southern Hemisphere) summer with upgrades to Australia's largest firefighting helicopter, including increased water-holding capacity and new night-time capabilities.

The high capacity waterbombing helicopter was delivered to its base in the town of Richmond at the end of July last year and has been in role fit in the period since then.



The Chinook arriving thanks to the air force heavylifter ©RFS

The aircraft will be fitted with an internal tank during the winter of 2024, which will enable it to carry up to 11,000L of water or retardant. The helicopter will be capable of performing night-time aerial firefighting operations and offers a substantial increase in NSW's existing firefighting capabilities.

The CH-47 Chinook helicopter can now hold 11,000 litres of water in an internal tank, making it an even better asset in firefighting efforts.

With the tank upgrade, the helicopter can fill faster, deploy more effectively, and conduct night-time operations when fire intensity is typically lower. Previously, the Chinook had a bucket that made it too dangerous to be used at night-time or over densely populated areas.

Added to the RFS aerial fleet last year, the Chinook has been instrumental in firefighting efforts in NSW and is one of only a few Chinook helicopters in use for firefighting activity globally, with the heavy transport helicopter mostly used by defence forces.

NSW has the most aerial firefighting aircraft of any state and territory in Australia. In addition to the Chinook, the fleet this season includes the Boeing 737 Large Air Tanker 'Marie Bashir', two Cessna Citations, one King Air fixed-wing aircraft and six Bell 412 helicopters.

The new tank was fitted out locally and is a permanent solution that replaces a temporary 10,000-litre bucket. It allows the Chinook to carry the largest water payload of any firefighting helicopter in Australia and second only to the 'Marie Bashir' in the RFS fleet. This expanded capability builds on the RFS's strategic partnership with the Royal Australian Air Force, with the aircraft operating out of RAAF Base Richmond.

Operating from bases across the state, including Richmond, Dubbo, Coffs Harbour and Cooma, the RFS fleet is further supported by more than 200 additional aircraft available on an as-needed basis through the National Aerial Firefighting Centre (NAFC) and other agreements. [NSWG]

CYPRUS

A tender has been issued for the provision of two helicopters to cover aerial firefighting operations for the summer periods 2025-2027. There is a renewal option to extend the contract to 5 years until 2029.

The initial tender is estimated to be worth €50M plus VAT and to cover the wet leasing of two (2) helicopters for aerial firefighting operations for the summer period of 2025-2027 with renewal option for 2028-2029. For each year, a 6-month period starting from May 1 to October 31 will be applied. Each year there is also option from 1-45 days extension at the discretion of the CA with mandatory implementation by the Contractor.

The contract scope includes the engagement of the necessary crew and engineers to operate the helicopters according to the Manufacturer's instructions and the provisions of the Tender Documents. Furthermore, the scope includes the engagement of observers on board during flights. It is highlighted that the CA has the option to request one or two additional helicopters for each summer period with supporting services.

The deadline for the Submission of Tenders is January 9, 2025 [TED: Notice publication number: 767789-2024]

FRANCE

MARSEILLE: The Ville de Marseille has issued a tender for the lease of aircraft and pilots to undertake aerial forest-firefighting services for use by its marine fire brigade for one year.

The tender for the rental of water bomber helicopters with pilots, including maintenance in operational condition and logistical support, for the prevention and fight against forest fires and natural areas, I estimated to cost €6M plus VAT.

The deadline for receipt of tenders is January 29,2025 [TED: Notice publication number: 774365-2024]

IRAQ

MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR: It has been reported from South Korea that they have sold two locally developed KAI KUH-1 Surion helicopters to the Ministry of the Interior in Iraq for use in Firefighting.

The value of the contract is stated to be 130 billion Won [£74,485,000] and to cover mid-2025 to March 2029. No details are available on deliveries, but the final date is said to be the delivery of the second airframe. An Iraqi statement said that "This is a contract for the introduction of two special firefighting aircraft, [including] expenses for training Iraqi helicopter pilots, maintenance technicians, and others are included."

The KAI Surion—a rare sight except in South Korea was developed with the assistance of Eurocopter and has enjoyed local success ©SKCG



This is the first export order for the Surion since it first flew in 2010. It serves the military, coast guard and police in South Korea, with some 200 said to have been ordered.

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JAPAN

The Fire and Disaster Management Agency plans to deploy unmanned water-cannon robots to emergency fire assistance teams across Japan, aiming to enhance disaster response and firefighter safety.

The initiative follows lessons learned from the January Noto Peninsula earthquake, where delayed fire-fighting efforts in the city of Wajima, Ishikawa Prefecture, exacerbated damage due to a major tsunami warning.

The robots, remotely operated, can navigate fire sites even during earthquakes or tsunami warnings. They will receive water from fire engines to suppress flames and are equipped with water curtain nozzles to prevent the spread of fire by creating a barrier against flying embers.

The plan is for the robots to be used in hazardous situations where firefighters cannot safely approach the scene. Funds for the project have been included in the fiscal 2024 supplementary budget. Three fire departments will receive the robots initially.



To ensure swift disaster response, additional small rescue vehicles will also be introduced, designed to navigate damaged roads efficiently. For emergency responders working under extreme conditions, the agency plans to deploy high-performance air-conditioned tents with advanced insulation, serving as rest and accommodation spaces.

Currently, Japan's emergency fire assistance teams consist of approximately 6,600 units registered with fire departments and aviation teams nationwide. Following the Noto quake, 59,000 personnel were dispatched to affected areas over a 52-day period.

Similarly, during severe flooding in the same region in September, 6,200 responders conducted rescue operations over 13 days. [Japan Times]

SPAIN

ALMERIA: A tender has been issued by the Department of the Environment and Sustainability seeking bidders for a forest fire fighting contract covering three years and worth around €29.5M

The requirement is for a support service for fighting forest fires with light amphibious aircraft and light helicopters for water dropping over the years 2025 to 2027 around Andalusia in Southern Spain.

UNITED STATES

FLORIDA: Flagler County, spanning 571 square miles in northeast central Florida with approximately 20 miles of coastline along the Atlantic Ocean, has experienced its fair share of destructive wildfires.

For more than two decades, Flagler County FireFlight has relied on the Airbus H125 helicopter to carry out missions extending far beyond firefighting. Currently operating the oldest "B3 A-Star" in North America [N911US c/n 2968], they'll soon experience significant upgrades with the addition of a new H125 c/n 9171.

In 2002, the first AS350 B3 in North America, [2968], found its home in Flagler County. Adopting the call sign "FireFlight" and bearing the tail number N911US, the helicopter quickly became an indispensable asset in the firefighting arena. The new H125, currently registered N190AH is already reg to Flagler County Board of County Commissioners and delivered in August last year. It will be reregistered as the new N911US in due course.

SEARCH & RESCUE

CANADA

AIR FORCE: FlySight, based in Livorno, Italy, has announced the integration of its OPENSIGHT suite into the AW101/CH-149 SAR "Cormorant" helicopter modernization program, complementing Leonardo's advanced HELIAWARENESS avionics system.

This integration is part of a comprehensive upgrade initiative by the Canadian Department of National Defence and Leonardo, aimed at modernizing and expanding Canada's fleet of AW101/CH-149 SAR "Cormorant" helicopters. The acquisition seeks to elevate the already exceptional performance of these aircraft in challenging Search and Rescue (SAR) missions.



FlySight will provide Leonardo with the OPENSIGHT suite, a state-of-the-art situational awareness solution that will be integrated into the HeliAwareness system. This collaboration brings below key advancements:

*Advanced Moving Map and Enhanced Reality System, with AR and advanced Video Tech
Dynamic and Flexible Architecture*

Comprehensive Sensor Integration:

Enhanced Capabilities - The integration of FlySight's technology with Leonardo's advanced avionics suite will result in:

Reduced search times in SAR operations

Increased target identification capabilities, particularly in challenging environments

Improved mission planning, execution, and analysis activities



UNITED KINGDOM MIGRANT

AS I SEE IT—by The Editor: Six months into their term of government the learning curve for the ministers continues to be steep. Sadly, the interview of Home Secretary Yvette Cooper by supposed “ace” interviewer Laura Kuenssberg on the BBC tv was, to say the least, disappointing and, in some respects, dishonest!

Despite the fact that Cooper had been the shadow Home Secretary for some years before they won the election, she seems unusually dim about the facts surrounding the migrant problem she has inherited.

There was mention of the successes of Italy and cooperation with Germany, but no mention of France who, in the week ending December 1, supposedly prevented more illegal immigrants from crossing the Channel than those who succeeded, with 122 migrants landed at Dover and 214 prevented.

Also, the Home Secretary would have us believe that more illegal migrants crossed the Channel before the General Election than after the 4 July. This is an untruth! In the first 6 months of 2024 the number of landings, at Dover, was 13,272. In the second half of the year, up to December 13, 21,608. The total for 2024, at the point of the interview, with 2 weeks to go for year-end clearly indicated a final figure of over 36,000 in prospect. In 2023 the total was 29,437.

As with all politicians, they remember only the best bits, and there are precious few best bits in this sorry tale of stopping the boats! Part of the problem is that some 150,000 have already crossing by boat illegally but that is an estimate and has to be seen against an overall immigration figure massively higher. It is the bigger number that hurts the population of the UK but the near daily arrivals by boat are the ever present trigger for that hurt.

The HS gave no timelines in reversing the numbers entering the UK illegally. The problem has dogged several Prime Ministers and Home Secretaries of different political persuasions as each made promises that have been impossible to meet. The common factor has been in the corridors of Whitehall. Politicians do not operate anything, they are not pilots, sea captains or coastguards, they ask their appointed leaders for solutions and hope that the civil servants deliver.

In most cases the long list of supposed expert supremos of the Channel command has proved woefully out of their depth. Leading a police squad or naval formation is not necessarily the same as stopping the small boats and making the transition requires the advice of the experts. The right calibre of Experts does not always exist in government.

It is patently clear that the civil servants have not delivered for a long time either in the form of meeting promises or of action. They remain secretive on how the French are performing and how many hotels are having to be requisitioned to house the stream of arrivals. Within the United Kingdom the born and bred population are having to cancel holidays and special events like weddings simply because the hotels chosen for the events are being taken off the market at short notice to house illegal arrivals who left grubby tents erected among the dunes on a northern French beach. There is little doubt they are turning negative on the subject – or as the powers that be are inaccurately claiming – “racist.”



Extreme action, the gunship option, is clearly ruled out but no one in Whitehall has yet found an acceptable alternative. Next, Tony Cowan provides the latest, unchanging, update from the English Channel.

CHANNEL UPDATE

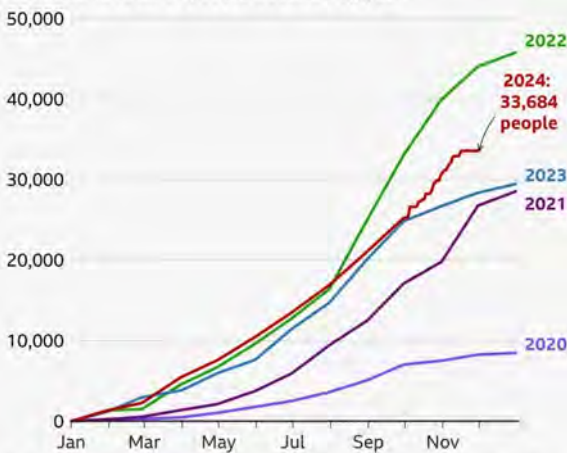
THE NUMBERS

Following a change of government in the UK, on the 5 July, the number of illegal migrants landed at Dover, after being 'rescued' mid-Channel by the Border Force and the RNLI have continued to increase. Despite the rhetoric of the new Prime Minister, Sir Keir Starmer, to 'smash the gangs', the gangs of people smugglers, the number of illegal migrants landed in the UK in the second half of 2024, compared to the same period in 2023, has increased from 18,004 in 2023 to over 23,000 in 2024. The total in 2024, up to and including the 28 December, is 36,525. In the whole of 2023 the total, number of illegal migrants landed at Dover, was 29,437. The numbers speak for themselves.

Even after we take into account the surge of economic migrants from Albania, 12,658, mostly young men, who crossed the English Channel in 2022 (there was a 93% reduction in arrivals from Albania in 2023) the numbers of migrants landed in the UK from small boats have increased year on year, beginning with 299 arrivals landed in 2018. In the following 6 years the totals were, 1,843 in 2019; 8,466 in 2020; 28,526 in 2021; 45,774 in 2022, 29,437 in 2023 and, so far, 36,525 in 2024. Nevertheless, it must be noted that the French police have had some success in 'stopping the boats'. In the first 2 weeks of December 2024, when the UK Border Force 'rescued' and landed 1,356 illegal migrants at Dover, from 23 boats, the French prevented a further 1,531 migrants from launching their boats from the beaches of northern France. However, with more support, on the ground, at sea and in the air, then it may be agreed that the French could do better!

People crossing the English Channel in boats

Cumulative total of people detected by year



To end of November 2024. Total in 2024, to 28 December: 36,525

Note: Data to 30 September 2024 is monthly totals, more recent figures are daily
Source: Home Office/Ministry of Defence, latest data 1 Dec

With a new year ahead, one must hope that the British government, and the French government too, will learn from their past mistakes. How is it even possible that people smugglers, referred to as 'organised criminal groups' (OCGs), can run circles around two of the world's super powers? Most recently, one OCG used social media to offer migrants a travel package to the UK, bronze, silver, gold or platinum, based on price, the mode of travel, aircraft, lorry, or inflatable dinghy, and the risk involved.

Crossing to the UK is very dangerous, this information may save your life

- Do not try without an engine
- Beware of fog and wind over 10 knots
- Stay far away from ships. They make big waves and don't see you
- Do not try if waves are higher than 0.5 metre
- Never get out of the boat or try to swim
- At sea, it is colder and there is more wind than on land

Check weather & waves with WINDY before leaving
The crossing can take 8-10 hours and weather can change very quickly.

FOR RESCUE CALL 112

- 112 should work even if your phone doesn't have signal.
- Say you are at sea and need rescue
- If you have french network, dial 196 to speak directly with french coastguard

MORE INFO:
Safety at sea and preparing the journey
Weather in Dover Straits
Asylum in UK
t.ly/z7hb

A handy English Channel crossing guide, published by 'InfoMigrants', a collaboration of European media sources, co-financed by the European Union.



InfoMigrants

THE WEATHER

The weather is, of course, the key to crossing the English Channel, at any time of the year, but, especially in the winter. This year, in mid-December, during a period of adverse weather, including several days with strong winds in the English Channel, the weather forecast showed that light winds could be expected by Christmas Eve, together with above average temperatures. One enterprising OCG was quick to offer a 'Christmas Special'. On the 21 December the national newspaper, 'The Daily Telegraph' carried the headline, "Small boat smuggler offers 'Christmas special' deal to enter the UK." Also, from the smuggler, "God willing, you will be in England before the new year. My dear friends, dates, 25, 26, 27; there are no waves at all. Wishing you all the best." In the three days, 25-27 December 2024, the UK Border Force landed 1,163 illegal migrants at Dover from 26 boats.

However, the favourable conditions in the English Channel during the Christmas period, the result of high pressure over the UK, light winds and a calm sea, were also accompanied by an 'anti-cyclonic gloom' with mist, fog, low cloud and restricted visibility. Despite the unfavourable weather, the Home Office deHavilland Dash 8 maritime patrol aircraft flew once on the 25 December, Christmas Day. Also HM Coastguard flew two sorties on the same day, one with the Beechcraft King Air and a second with the Diamond DA62. The DA62 flew a further sortie on the 26 December.

Hundreds of migrants waiting in France, between Dunkirk and Boulogne, to cross the English Channel in the last week of December 2024.



GB News

A THREE POINT PLAN

If the British and the French governments share a determination to control the border between England and France, which they should, then they will have to agree on a plan that will work. As they did in 2016, when the port at Calais was fortified, with security fencing, paid for by the British government, to stop migrants boarding those lorries bound for England. At the same time, the migrant camp, the 'Jungle', near to Calais, was closed.

The migrant camp, the 'Jungle' outside the Port of Calais. It was closed by the French authorities in 2016.



Wikipedia

A plan that will work, one that will defeat the organised criminal groups, must include three elements. First, continue to disrupt the supply chain that brings inflatable boats, together with outboard engines, across Europe from Tur-

key. Second, reinforce the French patrols of the beaches of northern France with more 'boots on the ground', together with more air patrols above the beaches, with light aircraft, to detect and to destroy the inflatable boats, those used by migrants. Third, those illegal migrants who are 'rescued' by the UK Border Force in French waters must, with the permission of the French, be landed at Calais and not at Dover. Stick to this plan and migrants will no longer travel across Europe to northern France. If the border is not controlled, as it was in Calais and in Dunkirk in 2016, then the consequence in both the UK and France, will be the continuation of uncontrolled immigration, immigration fuelled by Channel crossings in small boats, followed by social unrest in both countries

CONCLUSION

If the people smugglers, the OCGs can read a weather forecast and offer 'special' deals to facilitate illegal entry into the UK then, would it be expecting too much for the UK Border Security Command, together with the French police, to read the same weather forecast and then take action? Action that would stop the boats, those with migrants on board, from leaving France. Better to save lives at sea, by stopping the boats, than encouraging illegal migrants to cross the English Channel, risking their lives, before being 'rescued' mid-Channel and then taken to England. Meeting the migrants in mid-Channel, literally meeting them half-way, is an encouragement that cannot continue if the boats are to be stopped and the criminal gangs smashed.

To 'stop the boats', the supply chain, across Europe from Turkey to France, via Germany, must be disrupted. Those boats that reach the beaches of northern France must be detected and destroyed. Those illegal migrants who still attempt to cross the English Channel, in a small boat, must be landed in Calais, in France, rather than being landed at Dover, in England. Anything less will perpetuate the abject failure, by the governments of the UK and France, to control their shared border.

In 2024 crossing the English Channel in a small boat has become increasingly chaotic and risky, according to InfoMigrants.



Reuters

In 2024, the numbers of migrants, including women and children, reported by the French authorities to have perished in the English Channel, is in excess of 60; the media company, 'France24' believes that the total in 2024 is at least 73, with Channel crossings becoming increasingly chaotic and risky, according to 'InfoMigrants'. There were 12 fatalities in 2023. However, without complete records, the true total, in any year, will never be known and, most probably, it will be much higher than any official figure. The year, 2024 has been described, by the United Nations, as the deadliest year for Channel migrants. On Christmas Day, the French were reported to have saved 107 lives at sea in 3 separate incidents. Tragically, on the morning of Sunday, 29 December a further 3 migrants perished in the Channel, close to Sangatte, near Calais, with 45 rescued. The UN Agency, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) has reported that the total number of migrants to die, crossing the English Channel in 2024, is now 77.

James A Cowan MBE

Note: The author is a former member of the Royal Air Force, a former maritime patrol pilot. He was also, a former police and air ambulance pilot in the UK

A promotional banner for the World Border Security Congress. On the left is a logo featuring a globe and the text 'World Border Security Congress'. In the center, the dates '25th-27th March 2025' and the location 'Madrid, Spain' are displayed in large, bold, red and yellow text. Below this, the website 'www.world-border-congress.com' is listed. On the right, there is a collage of images related to border patrol, with the text 'BORDER PATROL' overlaid in green.



The Sikorsky Jayhawk ©USCG

UNITED STATES

COAST GUARD: Priority 1 Air Rescue (P1AR), a world leader in providing full spectrum helicopter mission training and operational Search and Rescue (SAR) Air Ambulance services, has been awarded a 5-year training contract with the United States Coast Guard (USCG).

Under this contract, P1AR will continue to provide specialized hoist operator training for ab-initio flight mechanic crew members assigned to both the MH-65E and MH-60T helicopters at the P1AR Search and Rescue Tactical Training Academy (SART/TAC) located in Mesa Arizona.

This new contract award follows the successful completion of a previous 5-year training contract where P1AR delivered a total of 58 MH-65D/E and MH-60T courses training to over 400 USCG students. During the term of the first contract an astonishing total of 95,546 synthetic hoist training evolutions were completed by USCG students utilizing both the Hoist Procedural Towers (HPT) and Advanced Aircrew Mission Simulators (AAMS).

While attending SART/TAC students receive comprehensive instructor-led ground school training, eLearning/CBT, instruction with USCG specific SAR equipment, synthetic training with both Goodrich hand Breeze Eastern hoist systems in the HPT's and virtual hoist training utilizing the AAMS devices with P1AR instructors. The rigorous academic and practical training provided at SART/TAC provides the USCG with a standardized baseline of training for all new Helicopter Hoist Operators and is a designated USCG "C" School. After successfully completing the training program at SART/TAC the FM students return to their respective USCG Air Stations for the next phase of live flight training which culminates in a qualification check ride.

Trouble with the U.S. Coast Guard's emblematic fleet of 135 lifesaving, smuggler-hunting and migrant-finding helicopters is forcing the Coast Guard aviation to update the Service's vision for their fleet of around 200 patrol aircraft and helicopters. The USCG is entering another period of rethink. It was only a short while ago that PAN was reporting that the ancient, but much rebuilt, fleet of MH-65 helicopters were to go and be replaced by the larger MH-60T Jayhawk [see header image].

Now the Jayhawk fleet has had a 19,000-hour limit imposed on it. This forces a new rethink on old plans. It has not been so confused since the 1990s Deepwater debacle.

Early last month it was reported that almost 18% of the 45-strong Jayhawk medium range recovery fleet was out of service. Eight helicopters with over 19,000 flight hours are permanently grounded.

By late 2023, over 90% of the Jayhawk helicopters were operating with more 16,000 flight hours, so, without stalling the 20,000-flight hour target, several more Coast Guard Jayhawks are set to bump up against the new 19,000 flight hour limitation and end up as hangar queens.

The flight hour restrictions have jolted the service. In a real-world sense, a cut of a thousand hours clips almost two years of service from each Jayhawk. And the likelihood that the big helicopters will never be able to run beyond 20,000 hours—never matching the incredible 30,000 hours the Coast Guard is forcing out of their smaller MH-65E Dolphin helicopters—is shaking the Coast Guard's Headquarters' support strategy that faces delay and a dose of reality.

Coast Guard leadership is finally showing signs of throwing in the towel and recognizing reality. A new aviation strategy is under development. [Forbes]

Editor: 30,000 hours out of a (Aerospaziale SA366G based) MH-65 Dolphin! It puts the hand wringing of certain other operators over operating their aircraft over 10,000 hours in the shade. Mind you I doubt very much that the number of original parts of any of the Dolphin fleet assembled in Grand Prairie, Texas 45 years ago is more than a handful.

The last plan was to replace the retiring Dolphin's with ex-US military Jayhawks but it would seem that these will not be available in sufficient numbers fast enough to fill the new gap in capability. But plans are there to crumble and decay just as the comprehensive but complicated Deepwater plan did.

INDUSTRY

Early last month, on December 6, Doncaster's MPs and politicians expressed their delight after the first plane landed at Doncaster Sheffield Airport (DSA) for the first time in over two years – paving the way for its eventual full re-opening.

The on-site hosts for the day were **2Excel Aviation** who retained a facility on the airport even after closure. They were faced with hosting five MPs, including two Secretaries of State, an incredible ask for any Company. Combine that with an extended group of dignitaries, including the local Mayor, two television crews, drone operators, South Yorkshire Police and flying the first arrival into Doncaster for more than two years and it's an entirely different beast.

The 1977 Piper Panther PA31 Navajo, operated an unlicensed flight to the 2Excel hangar, landed with mayor Ros Jones among the civic dignitaries welcoming it – the first since the former RAF Finningley base was closed by owners Peel in November 2022.



Renewed movement in Doncaster ©2Excel

The arrival is the first step to City of Doncaster Council's planned re-opening of the airport, with commercial flights scheduled to take off by Spring 2026. For this ceremonial occasion 2Excel had permission from City of Doncaster Council to bring back one of its aircraft to the site as part of a winter maintenance programme. The company, which has occupied the former Vulcan bomber hangar alongside the flight line since 2017 has continued limited operations on site since the airport closed two years ago but had to relocate its aircraft fleet to other airports and airfields around the country.

Meanwhile the other high-profile occupants of the former airport, The **Vulcan to the Sky Trust** (VTST) has received confirmation that Vulcan XH558 is to remain at Doncaster Sheffield Airport, ending a period of uncertainty that accompanied the expiration of the airport's previous lease in June 2023. With Doncaster Council preparing to announce its selection of a new operator for the airport – with predicted opening a



Avro Vulcan ©Flight

year away Vulcan's long-term home has been secured. "While there are still details to work out, we have the support of the City of Doncaster Council to stay at the airport... and that means a great deal to us all," said VTST Chief Executive Marc Walters. He added that "this is fantastic news for the charity and its supporters as we feel that XH558 is in the right location, owing to her history and links with the airport, former RAF Finningley".

Prior to announcing the closure of the airport in 2022, its owners the Peel Group had indicated that the VTST's agreement (including parking provision) would not be renewed when it expired in June 2023 and "would therefore have to leave the site at that time". However, although two potential sites were identified, these would have necessitated dismantling the aircraft and moving it and the English Electric Canberra they also look after, by road to a new location.



Meanwhile a few miles down the road **Hybrid Air Vehicles** (HAV), developer of the Airlander 10 airship, is preparing to start work on its flagship production facility at Doncaster's Carcroft Common site following receipt of the first funding instalment from the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA).

Announced in partnership with the City of Doncaster Council earlier this year, HAV's 50-hectare site will have capacity to produce up to 24 aircraft a year.

In Parliament the **Home Office** replied to a question posed by former police chief Lord Hogan Howe asking for the latest assessment of costs for ESN, the Emergency Services Network set to be the replacement service for Airwave; when the first police force will receive a functioning radio system; and when the roll out to all forces will be completed.

In its 2021 Business Case the Programme estimated the total cost of providing critical emergency services communications between 2015/16 and 2036/37 to be £11.3bn. This is the combined cost of running the current system Airwave while developing ESN. A revised Programme Business Case setting out a new timetable and costs is expected early next year. This will reflect an extension of the evaluation period from FY2036/37 to FY2043/44 and extended run period for legacy Airwave systems by approximately three years. The plan is for the network to be live for first users in early 2027 and are targeting full transition by end of 2029. [Hansard]

Editor: Note that the recent 'first use' aviation network trials storylines involving Richard Watson and the back-up team and helicopter of Nova operating out of Blackpool in November 2024 do not therefore count as 'live for first users.'

In December last year **Bell Textron Inc.** announced the SUBARU Bell 412EPX has received European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) certification and can begin flight operations throughout the European Union.

Bell secured multiple orders for the SUBARU Bell 412EPX platform in Europe, including one aircraft to Sarajevo Canton Ministry of Interior and two aircraft to the Republic of Croatia's Ministry of Interior. The aircraft will be used for civil protection, firefighting, medical transport and natural disaster support. On a global scale, Bell recently announced signed purchase agreements for the SUBARU Bell 412EPXs to San Diego Fire-Rescue, the Japan Coast Guard, and Japan's Nara and Miyazaki Prefectures.

With eleven aircraft variants spanning over four decades, the Bell 412 possesses a long history of supporting critical missions, including firefighting, law enforcement and search-and-rescue operations. Combining its increased maximum internal weight of 12,200 lbs., external weight of 13,000 lbs., and ability to carry 5,000 lbs. with a cargo hook, the SUBARU Bell 412EPX stands-out in its class for its ability to transport multitudes of public safety supplies. The SUBARU Bell 412EPX's robust main rotor gearbox with dry run capability enables operators to benefit from increased horsepower to perform public safety operations more efficiently.

In a remarkable rescue operation, a 66-year-old hiker from Varese, missing in the Valgrande area, was found injured but alive, thanks to **Smith Myers** ARTEMIS systems.

The hiker had been missing since Sunday, November 17. Despite intensive search efforts by rescue teams, he remained unlocated until the intervention of the Drago 150 helicopter from the Fire Brigade of the Lombardy Flight Department. This state-of-the-art Leonardo helicopter is equipped with the award-winning Smith Myers ARTEMIS Mobile Phone Detection and Location System (MPDLS), which once again played a decisive role in another successful rescue for the Fire Brigade.

On the morning of November 19, favourable weather conditions allowed the deployment of the Drago 150 helicopter. Utilizing the ARTEMIS system, the helicopter was able to locate the missing hiker's mobile phone, even in the challenging terrain of Valgrande. The system's ability to locate phones using 2G through to the latest 5G networks enabled the rescue team to locate the exact position.

smith myers

TURNS ANY
MOBILE PHONE
INTO A LOCATION
BEACON

DETECT - LOCATE - COMMUNICATE

artemis.smithmyers.com

ARTEMIS

The rescue teams were promptly directed to missing hiker's location, where they found him injured but alive. He was immediately provided with medical assistance and transported to the hospital in Novara, where he is currently receiving care.

This most recent Italian rescue follow just days after another successful rescue of a father and son from perilous blizzard conditions in Norway. smithmyers.com

The winners of the **2024 Oscar Kilo Awards** have been announced, recognising the work of UK police when it comes to providing staff wellbeing support.

Presented by Oscar Kilo, the National Police Wellbeing Service (NPWS), in recent years the awards celebrate policing work or projects that have made a difference to the wellbeing of officers and staff.

The National Police Wellbeing Service (NPWS) was launched in 2019 to provide support and guidance for police forces across England and Wales to improve and build organisational wellbeing.

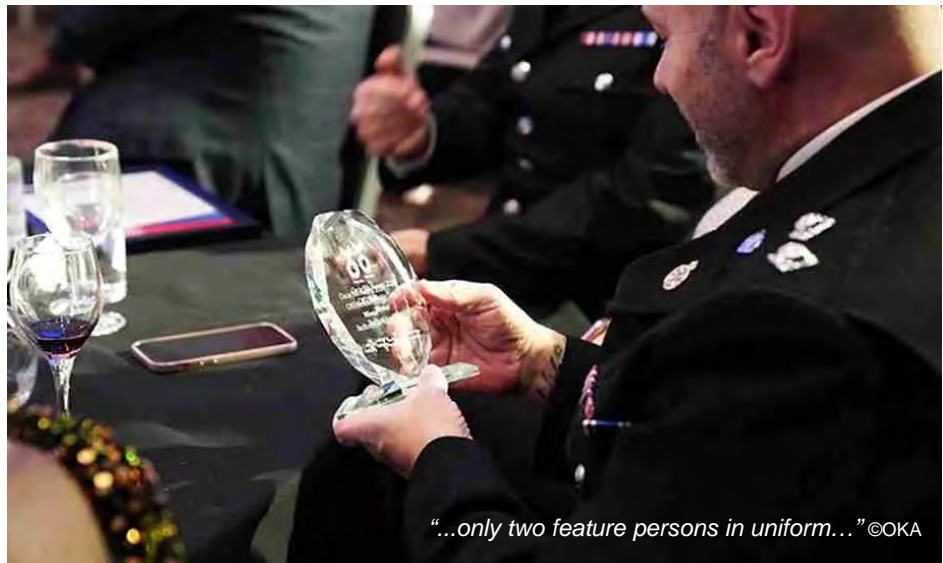
It is an evidence based, sector specific service which has been developed for policing, by policing, and is designed to meet the unique needs of police forces, officers and staff and is a cooperative arrangement between NPWS, the College of Policing, the National Police Chiefs' Council and the Home Office:

There are over 40 police services in the UK and over 20 winners, so Oscar Kilo Awards have been created to recognise the amazing work that has been done and continues to be done, across UK policing when it comes to providing wellbeing support for the people who work for you.

Editor: It's nice to see some awards being bandied about. These are new and no doubt created to try and overcome the apparent issues faced by modern UK police forces/services in providing a service in difficult times with some staff who find policing 'difficult' to administer.

A quick visit to the website for Oskar Kilo may ring alarm bells though. Of the 21 images posted of winners only two feature persons in uniform. The awards seem then to be for wellbeing programmes administered by civil staff and not obviously directed at serving officers.

<https://www.oscarkilo.org.uk/oscar-kilo-award-winners-2024>



"...only two feature persons in uniform..." ©OKA

It appears that the awards are open to over 40 forces and that 17, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Cheshire, Gloucestershire, Gwent, Hertfordshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, London Metropolitan, Nottinghamshire, PSNI, Surrey, Sussex, Thames Valley, Warwickshire and West Yorkshire, are listed as 'winners' or runners up. Pretty good odds available for those bothering to apply it seems!

Time to reserve judgement on the worth of the OKs for the future I guess?

Meanwhile, that reminds me. 40 years ago, the serving police officers locally made it their business to make contact with their local retired police, police widows and civil staff at Christmas. They mostly got at least a greetings card paid for out of central funds. No more it seems. Is that good for the mental wellbeing of the old flock? Where does wellbeing begin and end?

Watson Farley & Williams advised GD Helicopter Finance ("GDHF") has agreed a €77M finance agreement with Bank of China Limited, London Branch ("Bank of China") and Helaba Landesbank Hessen-Thüringen ("Helaba"), supported by Bpifrance Assurance Export ("Bpifrance"), for the acquisition of multiple factory new Airbus H160 helicopters to be delivered between 2024 and 2026.

Ireland-based GDHF plans to rapidly grow its large portfolio of the newest technology, efficient, cost-effective, multi-mission helicopters via order books and lease to customers globally.

Heli-Austria GmbH have acquired the 2008 MD902 900-00125. This was previously operating as G-LNDN with London Air Ambulance from 2015.

Now registered as OE-XLN it was seen departing Gloucester / Staverton Airport on December 13, 2024, bound for its new home in Austria. [MJ]

Daher has opened a training facility in Colomiers, France, to address the demand for skilled workers in aerospace. The Daher Learning Centre near Toulouse includes a technical workshop where up to 40 peo-

ple can be trained simultaneously.

The centre offers customized programmes in fields such as systems mechanics, assembly fitting, and cabin integration. Training ranges from one- to three-day short modules to months-long career transition courses. In 2024, Daher trained nearly 700 individuals at various facilities, and the company intends to increase that number to 1,300 in 2025.

As the aviation sector faces increasing demand for qualified professionals, it is hoped that the new centre will become a key player in supporting workforce development through academics and hands-on training.

CENTUM, a global company specializing in mission-critical airborne systems, has announced a new partnership with Helisul Engineering, part of Helisul Group, one of the largest helicopter operators in Latin America. This collaboration represents a solid step in CENTUM's international growth strategy, expanding its reach in over 20 countries and building on shared goals for innovation and service. With over 52 years of experience, Helisul operates a fleet of 80 aircraft, 26 hangars, and 15 bases across Latin America. The company offers a wide range of aviation services, including aeromedical transport, aircraft maintenance, and cutting-edge projects in eVTOL and drone technology. CENTUM and Helisul aim to enhance mission-critical operations by utilising CENTUM's cutting-edge airborne systems for applications such as SAR missions, emergency communications, border surveillance, and law enforcement. The partnership combines technological expertise with an extensive operational network to deliver solutions to meet specific demands.



Police Scotland will provide farming communities with a specially designed, waterproof sticker that can be displayed on tractors, excavators and other rural machinery, encouraging police to stop them to verify ownership and permitted use during set hours where the machinery is not routinely used by the owners.

This will ensure anyone illegally in possession of the vehicle on the road network is more quickly identified and arrested.

Each month Police Scotland's Rural and Acquisitive Crime Team compile a report of rural crime, and it has found that in Scotland, in particular, the Borders, along with areas in the North of England experience between £250,000 and £400,000 worth of rural vehicle machinery, tools vehicle theft each month.

In Scotland, 98% of the country's landmass is classified as being rural, thereby having a sparse population and limited police.

Officers have worked alongside the Scottish Partnership Against Rural Crime (SPARC) and Northumbria, Durham and Cumbria Constabularies, to design the sticker, which will be offered to rural communities free of charge, either during engagement at their properties, from their local officers or when police attend agricultural events within the division. [ADS]

2Excel, better known for its fixed wing operations in support of the UK Coastguard and migrant channel surveillance, Leonardo, and the UK Ministry of Defence, have announced that the Flight Test Aircraft 'Excalibur' has successfully completed its first phase of modification and flight testing. The airframe is based on a modified 757 airliner.

The milestone saw Excalibur, now equipped with new side and belly pods, assessed for stability during flight. The aircraft will now undergo further engineering work at QinetiQ's Boscombe Down facility in Wiltshire.

This is excellent news for the 16-year partnership that started with fitting a small camera to a Blades Extra light aerobatic aircraft to make a surrogate UAV, via the development of new sensors using Scimitar Navajo, and now moves forward with Excalibur.



The Robinson Helicopter Company (RHC) based in Torrance, California, the world's leading manufacturer of civil helicopters, secured approval from EASA authority, Argentina, Japan, and India for its improved empennage on select Robinson helicopter models. This follows the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) prior approval of the same configuration for the R66 in 2023 and R44 and R22 in 2024. The new empennage includes a symmetrical horizontal stabiliser and tailcone.

In addition to previously announced approvals, the new empennage is now standard on:

- All newly manufactured Robinson helicopter models in Europe
- R44 and R66 helicopters in Argentina
- R44 Raven I and R66 helicopters in India
- R22 and R44 helicopters in Japan

Since securing approval from the FAA, the company has delivered nearly 700 retrofit kits, in addition to about 250 new production aircraft with the new empennage. Robinson Helicopter is currently offering a retrofit kit for existing R44 and R66 aircraft at a discounted rate of \$3,600 USD and R22 aircraft at \$4,850 USD. This offer will remain available until the end of this year. The symmetrical horizontal stabilizer is a key improvement that enhances the safety and performance of Robinson helicopters. By improving roll stability, particularly during high-speed flights, it contributes to a smoother and safer flight experience. Additionally, the symmetrical stabiliser helps reduce the right-rolling tendency when the aircraft is operated outside of the approved flight envelope.



The **RVL Aviation** management team recently visited ZeroAvia, an industry pioneer in hydrogen-electric engine development. The company's innovative work is helping to shape the future of aviation and bring us closer to zero-emission flight.

RVL management were inspired by the technology being developed by the team driving this transformation. ZeroAvia's commitment to sustainability and innovation resonates with RVL's goal to foster a greener, more sustainable future.

Hydrogen-electric propulsion isn't just about cleaner skies. It is also about reimagining the way we think about air travel, and its impact on the planet. This does not necessarily mean flying less, it means flying differently.

At **Hangar One Avionics** and **CNC Technologies** they have found it hard to stay active on social media with the work load throughout 2024.

The team has delivered so many great Surveillance, Rescue, Fire, Government and VIP platforms to the US market – and more to come next year - that have had less reason to push themselves into other markets.

The year end project for Riverside Sheriff has the new Shotover M2 camera on Cal Meeker's LH Downpost utility mount. The stabilisation is described as "epic" and the Shotover GEAR-750 Mapping System adds new capabilities to this surveillance and rescue platform helicopter. Ongoing collaboration with Airbus Helicopters is just one example of delivering one of the highest quality assets to USA first responders.



Bell 429 (msn 51518) registered Dec24 C-GCPO to Bell Canada. This is for the **Canadian Coast Guard** and **may** be a replacement for C-GCQS which was written off on September 1, 2022.

ACCIDENTS & INCIDENTS

10 December 2024 Airbus Helicopters AS350B2 N913WB. Law enforcement helicopter of the Los Angeles Police Department. Was severely damaged in a hard landing and rollover accident whilst training in at the Joint Forces Training Base in Los Alamitos, Orange County, California. The crash occurred around 1 p.m. during a low-altitude training manoeuvre, Red flag wind warnings were in effect, and strong gusts reportedly caused the helicopter's rotor blade to hit the ground, forcing an emergency landing. The helicopter came to rest on its right side. The two occupants walked away from the crash unharmed and declined further medical aid.

10 December 2024 Robinson R44 Raven II A-01 Policia Nacional Paraguay was in flight with three aboard when the pilot in command noticed a low rotor RPM. He tried to make an emergency landing in an open space, where he made a hard landing. The main rotor cut the tail, and the helicopter overturned. Substantial damage but not known injuries. [ASN]

16 December 2024 Eurocopter AS350B3+ N617GC. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (of Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 361 and Granite Coast Mapping) departed San Diego-Brown Field Municipal Airport, CA to undertake an unspecified border security mission when it crashed some 5 miles north of the Mexican border, killing the pilot and sole occupant. Air interdiction Agent Jeffrey Kanas. The crash took place near the southern border in California, coming down in a private field near Potrero Road, north of State Route 94 and around 44 miles east of San Diego. Airframe on its left side with the cabin destroyed. No fire. [Fox]

22 December 2024 Eurocopter EC135P2+ TC-HYD. Ai ambulance operated by T C Sağlık Bakanlığı [Turkish Ministry of Health]. Operating in foggy conditions with four persons on board. Took off from ground level helipad at the Muğla Training and Research Hospital, using Cat A lift profile and reversed into the top of the 10-storey hospital building falling [30 metres?] to the ground killing all on board, two pilots and two medical staff. Some damage to the windows of the upper floor meeting rooms hit. Airframe broke into three main sections, cabin, tail boom and Fenestron. No apparent fire.

22-Dec-24 Cessna Citation 680A Latitude 5A-DFN. Air ambulance sustained damage to the right-wing tip after being struck by the front windscreen of a single deck airport bus at Tripoli-Mitiga International Airport, Tripoli, Libya. Significant localised damage caused to the bus glazing and the wingtip of the aircraft. No injuries reported. [ASN]

SAFETY

Next month, Cranfield University and the University of Greenwich will be conducting airliner evacuation trials at the Cranfield campus, Cranfield University, Bedfordshire.

This research, part of a larger aviation project, aims to improve evacuation from airplanes. The exiting behaviour of adults (18-65 years old) will be observed through experiments designed by the University of Greenwich and managed by Cranfield University. The choices made by passengers and the role of different aspects of the cabin environment will be explored.

They have invited a broad group of people to take part in evacuation trials from a large, unconventional, and novel blended wing body (BWB) airplane cabin mock-up. An emergency evacuation will be simulated and, along with approximately 200-250 other participants will be positioned around the cabin filming exit behaviour. This will be followed by the completion of a questionnaire. Once done, the process will be repeated two further trials followed by questionnaires.

At this stage of the trials the mock-up will be stationary at all times, and it is ground-based. Audio will be used in the cabin to simulate the start of engines, taxiing and take-off but no theatrical smoke will be used in the cabin to simulate an emergency and Emergency evacuation slides will not be used during the trials. The trials are scheduled to take place on six dates in February [4, 7, 11, 14, 18 & 21st]

Certain Airbus and Leonardo helicopters due to meet a deadline for installation the Helicopter Terrain Awareness and Warning System (HTAWS) have been given an extension for the fitting of the equipment. Airbus Helicopters H145/H175 helicopters and Leonardo Helicopters AW139/169/189 helicopters operating under a SPA.HOFO Specific Approval are required to be fitted with HTAWS with enhanced capabilities from 1 January 2025. Helicopter Operators and the OEMs, Airbus Helicopters and Leonardo Helicopters, have indicated that the work to upgrade HTAWS cannot be completed in time to meet that implementation



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date. Airbus Helicopters have proposed an alternative solution in their Technical Note ref. TN M001A0509E99 Issue A dated September 2024. Leonardo Helicopters have proposed an alternative solution in their document No. MULP3440X001 Issue A dated October 2024. Neither of these are considered to provide an equivalent level of safety to the requirement but may represent potential interim mitigations pending achievement of full compliance. This exemption is granted to meet urgent operational needs to permit continued operation until 30 June 2025 while any mitigating provisions are agreed and implemented, and while programmes for achieving full compliance are produced and agreed with the respective OEMs. It replaces Official Record Series 4 No. 1615 and extends the applicability to include Airbus H145 helicopters.

UNMANNED

The British Army has demonstrated a high energy laser system that can shoot down drones. The weapon has been fired from an armoured vehicle for the first time and successfully destroyed flying drones.

It works by directing an intense beam of infra-red light in the form of energy towards its target using advanced sensors and tracking systems which maintain lock-on and accuracy in real time.

Unlike conventional munitions, laser weapons are virtually limitless in terms of ammunition supply, which means they could represent a cost-effective alternative to some current in-service weapons.

The laser has been developed through a collaboration between the MOD's Defence Equipment & Support (DE&S) and Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) – known as Team Hersa – and an industry consortium led by Raytheon UK.

The system laser damages the structure of the drone. Reports state that the system has been used on hovering drones rather agile ones, so we have no up to date reflection of the overall capability compared with say conventional weapons.

In the UK, heliguy have obtained permission from the UK CAA to conduct BVLOS drone-in-a-box operations in an atypical air environment (AAE).

The Operational Authorisation enables heliguy™ pilots to conduct remote operations with DJI Docks in non-segregated airspace.

heliguy™ will use this as a blueprint to work with enterprise organisations to perform BVLOS Dock operations on their behalf at site-specific locations within AAE environments across the UK.

Missions can be conducted from either the Remote-Operations Control Centre (ROCC) at the company HQ, or from their Drone Command Unit - a fully-equipped mobile control room.

The Operational Authorisation has been a year in the making and has involved their regulatory specialists, training department, surveying team, and drone-in-a-box technicians working together to formulate a workable (and officially acceptable) programme.

Each additional location will require CAA permission and will be subject to a thorough BVLOS implementation process conducted by heliguy™ - including site visit, risk assessment, drone-in-a-box installation, and using flight plans based on 3D models collected via VLOS flights.

Missions will be conducted by an experienced pilot team using DJI FlightHub 2.

The waiver facilitates aerial photography, videography, mapping, and autonomous flight management, provided for the purposes of security, surveying, infrastructure inspections, search and rescue, and product demonstrations/evaluations.

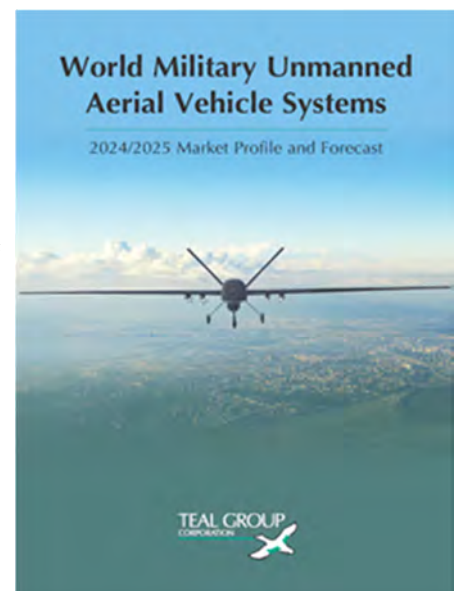
It is a pity that Christmas has recently passed by because the perfect present for your drone specialist dropped onto the editor's desk on December 20.

It is the annual sector study of the unmanned world from the Teal Group Corporation.

Teal Group's *World Military Unmanned Aerial Systems Market Profile & Forecast* annual sector study, authored by Steve Zaloga, David Rockwell and Tom Zoretich, it allows clients to identify lucrative potential business opportunities in the increasingly dynamic international military UAS market. It contains a wealth of timely intelligence and analysis on the systems, as well as requirements on a country-by-country basis.

But is it a snip at \$2,995?

Coming soon is the World Civil Unmanned Aerial Systems. Same price I am afraid.



MOVE ALONG THERE

Last month I commented on the problem created by several days, weeks, months picking up often spurious or at least unworthy titles that everyone was supposed to take to heart. As was suggested, not everyone is taking these 'important dates' too seriously.

Last month in the British Parliament some deep discussion was had over fireworks. Many of these diverse dates result in celebration and the expectation is that fireworks will be let off to mark them. The main sources for complaint are from the animal world – and humans on their behalf.

Unfortunately, in this increasing diverse world the number of such days is increasing out of all recognition. Fifty years ago, the UK was only faced with Bonfire Night (November 5) and New Year (December 31), when the fireworks launched were, at best, underwhelming. Now the multicultural make up of society has added at least Chinese New Year, Diwali, the festival of lights. What is worse is that the supposed financially challenged (poor) celebrants can now seemingly find vast amounts of money for these launches and the calibre of fireworks is louder and showier than ever before.

In the United Kingdom the police are complaining that their budgets are being cut. Less money in the pot means that police numbers are to be reduced yet again. It does not seem to matter that the number of officers in each police service are significantly higher than 30 years ago, and I think we managed quite well.

I see that the man from LBC is ranting about the "right wing" UK press ranting about Sir ***** Starmer and Sir **** Khan and their rantings but he does not seek to excuse his own (quite understandable) rantings about the now much maligned Conservative government over recent years!!!!

Meanwhile the world (well the Eastern Seaboard of the USA and East Anglia in the UK) has been perturbed by unidentified objects in the skies.

There have been reports of objects, assumed drones, in flight where they should not be over New York, New Jersey and USAF bases in England.

No-one knows what to do and the resultant efforts by government officials on both sides of the Atlantic to keep the public happy have been less than satisfying. In their confusion the British police are declining to answer questions about whether there is even a problem, are police drone experts (do such people even exist?) being drafted into East Anglian USAF bases to solve the problem of UFO drones, or not? No one will say. Over in the USA the answer to the problem seems to be that they know all about the objects (many caught on damning video) and there is no problem. Meanwhile temporary flight restrictions proliferate!

With the total number of UAS TFRs over the state of New York reaching 67 before Christmas – the majority covering New York City – one pilot was moved to comment that the chart/sectional looked ridiculous. Safety was not served with the TFR overlay on a moving map turned off.

It looks like the people of Britain will have to take their holidays in foreign parts. So many middle ranking (and rank) hotels have been taken over by the Home Office to entertain the flood of migrants that there are fewer and fewer beds available to the stay-at-home holidaymaker! Thankfully so far even the Home Office cannot afford to take over The Ritz or Buckingham Palace (yet).

A pleasant surprise in the Editors post just before Christmas was the arrival of the pin signifying over thirty years membership of the Airborne Public Safety Association (APSA). Of course, I joined the police centric Airborne Law Enforcement Association (ALEA) in the summer of 1994 while still serving and walking the streets of London, UK. We had high hopes that our international meetings in the Capital would lead to a wider European membership of ALEA/APSA but it was not to be even if what became the PAVCon Europe police aviation conferences managed to thrive.

Overall, the camaraderie of the ALE members remains pretty much the same. I do not regret one moment of membership.



PEOPLE

Steve Fitzgerald, the former unit executive at Lancashire Air Support (UK) and the Cayman Islands air operation has taken on new challenge closer to his Blackpool home. He has now joined the CEO Thomas Lloyd and Partners at Minerva Defence and Security team based in Crewe, Cheshire as the Head of Aviation and Director of Project Noctua. He retains his interest as the Press Officer with the Lifeboats (RNLI) in the Northwest.

Project Noctua is a developing project that is set to transform emergency response by delivering innovative UAV solutions using to support Law Enforcement Agencies, Ambulance Services, Fire & Rescue Services, and HM Coastguard. By integrating cutting-edge unmanned aerial technology, to enable faster, safer, and more efficient operations across critical missions. From real-time situational awareness to search and rescue, surveillance, and emergency response coordination, Project Noctua seeks to empower frontline teams with the tools they need to protect lives, safeguard communities, and respond with precision.



A rare sight is an inflight image of the Hungarian Air Police MD900 Explorer aircraft.. This undated image is of R907 which is understood to be the former West Yorkshire Police G-YPOL acquired in 2018.

The right hand image shows R906, the former G-SUSX in the hangar alongside the original fleet of MD500E helicopters introduced in 1990 and still operational.





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MISSING PERSON

In the United Kingdom the number of persons reported as missing by their family, or friends, is over 170,000 per year, of which nearly 96,000 are adults and nearly 75,000 are children. By definition, a missing person is, *“Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established will be considered as missing until located and their well-being or otherwise confirmed.”*

Fortunately, of the number of persons reported as missing in the UK, only 3% of adults are missing for longer than a week and only 1% are still missing after a month. For children, 79% are found within 24 hours, 90% are found within 2 days and less than 2% of children will still be missing after a week. On average, in the UK, a person is reported as missing every 3 minutes! Nevertheless, despite the fact that the majority of missing persons will be found within a few hours, or a few days, the response by the emergency services, principally the police, will be very fast, with a large number of responders requested to join the search, on the ground and in the air. These responders will come from the ‘blue light’ emergency services and from those volunteers who belong to the UK’s voluntary sector search and rescue organisations.

In the case of the search for Victoria Taylor, 34 years, reported in the November 2024 edition of Police Aviation News, the response, by the police, was exemplary. It was thought that Victoria had entered the River Derwent near to the centre of the market town of Malton in North Yorkshire. The North Yorkshire Police searched the river and the local countryside with police officers, some with search dogs, a police helicopter, police drones, canoes, a boat equipped with sonar and, from the voluntary sector, a ‘spotter plane’ from the Northeast Civil Air Patrol. Despite the extensive search, which included family and friends, searching under the direction of police search advisors, Victoria’s body was not recovered from the river until some 3 weeks after she was reported as missing, close to where some of her possessions were found, close to the river.



The missing person searches for Victoria Taylor, in North Yorkshire and for Tom Voyce in Northumberland included an Airbus H135 helicopter from the UK’s National Police Air Service.

NPAS

More recently, in Northumberland, one of England’s largest counties, which shares a border with Scotland, the former international rugby player, Tom Voyce, 43 years, was reported as missing, by his family, when he failed to return home on the evening of Saturday, 7 December. Again, the response by the police, in this case Northumbria Police, was exemplary. The search operation included a helicopter from the National Police Air Service, police drones, police officers on the ground, some with search dogs, HM Coastguard volunteers and, from voluntary sector, two mountain teams; North of Tyne Mountain Rescue and Northumberland National Park Mountain Rescue Team. The Northeast Civil Air Patrol, with aircraft located at airfields in County Durham and in Northumberland, was placed on standby, to continue the air search once the weather improved.

Tom’s 4x4 vehicle was quickly found, in the River Aln, a short distance downstream from Abberwick ford where it’s believed that Tom tried to cross the river at night. The river was in flood following the aftermath of Storm Darragh. In the following days the river was searched by the Northumberland Police Marine Unit, together with the volunteers from HM Coastguard. Tom’s body was found, by the police, in the river, at Abberwick Mill, 5 days after he was reported as missing, a short distance from where he had attempted to drive across Abberwick ford.

CONCLUSION

In the UK, in the overwhelming number of cases of persons reported as missing the result is that the missing person will be reunited with their family and friends. Sadly, there will be occasions when ‘search and

rescue' becomes 'search and recovery' with the expectation that the missing person's body will be found and recovered. In these circumstances, the police will have primacy. It is the police who will coordinate search activity, by their own officers, by members of the voluntary sector, for example, mountain rescue teams, together with other volunteers, members of the public, all of them acting under the direction of the police search advisors. There is no place for 'armchair sleuths' and 'keyboard warriors', fuelled by social media, and no place for 'spontaneous volunteers' who, on the majority of occasions are often more of a hindrance than a help!

James A Cowan MBE

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



Northumbria Police Marine Unit, together with HM Coastguard, searching the River Aln at Abberwick ford near Alnwick in Northumberland.

Both images Northumbria Police

The body of Tom Voyce was found in the River Aln, near Abberwick Mill, by officers from the Northumbria Police Marine Unit.

