

Police Aviation News

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IPAR



German Federal Police EC155 at ILA Berlin last month

The new MDHI

- one year on

ILA Berlin

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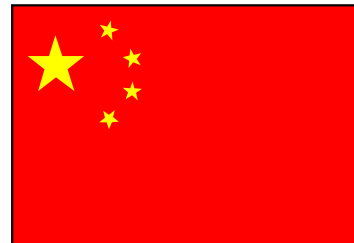
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LAW ENFORCEMENT

CHINA

BEIJING: At the 3rd China International Exhibition on Police Equipment at the Beijing Exhibition Centre Beijing, in the Peoples Republic of China [PRC] it was announced that four AgustaWestland helicopters will join the Beijing police next year to improve its airborne law enforcement capability in the lead up to the 2008 Olympic Games.



The contracts have not yet been signed but it is predicted that the first of the quartet will be handed over next April – a little over one year before the Olympics. The others are due to be delivered by October 2007.

It is said that in order to demonstrate that the company wants to be part of the coming Olympic Games, they agreed to give the fourth helicopter free of charge. No type has been specified and a finite announcement is not expected from Italy for some days.

It is an important market and all of the players have plans to be there when the 'feeding frenzy' starts with a vengeance.

On the eve of the Exhibition Eurocopter issued a press release reaffirming its commitment to China. There has been a 40 year relationship between China and Eurocopter and the European company naturally calls it a privileged partnership. More and more China will rely on helicopters to perform a growing scope of public missions such as search and rescue (sea, mountains and natural disaster), fire-fighting, police, surveillance, emergency medical services, etc. And it is clear that the majority of a growing number of helicopters in China have a EC stamp on them – although the majority are of course 'Chinese Copies.'

Between May 24-27 China Police 2006 was the bi-annual technology showcase for the country and in some ways the barometer of helicopter growth in the country. More than 300 companies from 16 countries participated in the exposition.

The numbers of police and security helicopters grow but considering the size of the country they cannot be seen as anything but a tiny resource. Just one here and another there does not look too promising when you consider that the next China Police expo will coincide with a very security demanding Beijing Olympics in 2008.

Pilot training from scratch is underway to boost numbers but until the AgustaWestland order there have been no large scale airframe purchase announcements made, leaving just a short time left before the Beijing task becomes critical if it is to be undertaken by a civilian organisation.

The largest security operator of helicopters in the PRC is the long westernized Hong Kong Government Flying Service (GFS), it operates the EC225 and EC155 to undertake surveillance & security, medical and SAR missions but has no equal elsewhere in the PRC.

Oi]oi How well the PRC finally undertakes the Beijing Olympics task is one are worthy of observation. [EC/China Daily]

GUANGDONG: Helicopters are playing an increasingly important role in fighting crime in Guangdong Province, which borders Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions. Police there have pledged to make more use of helicopters in the future to tackle crime.

At a police aviation work conference held in the city of Foshan Zhu Suisheng, deputy director of Guangdong Provincial Department of Public Security, said his department would try to introduce a more efficient system to authorize the use of helicopters this year. Public security departments in cities across the province can apply to use police helicopters from the provincial department when they are needed but it remains a complicated and time-consuming procedure. This attitude does not promote the furtherance of police aviation in the PRC.

Ed: It is noteworthy that Zhu 'refused to reveal' how many helicopters Guangdong police owned at present. The provincial Department of Public Security established its first police flying fleet in 2002, when it acquired two Eurocopter helicopters [a 120 and a 135], these are dedicated airframes bearing marks in the police registration sequence. In addition the various police forces in the province can call upon a number of aircraft operated by commercial companies so the exact numbers would vary. These include an MD500, MD600, Robinson R22s and R44s but these undertake other work. The only 'Police' MD900 that was available was lost undertaking harbour work. It was a commercial aircraft rather than dedicated to police work.

CZECH REPUBLIC

In April Eurocopter ordered a number of FSI UltraFORCE II EP sensor pods for installation on EC135T2s destined for the Czech Police.

The UltraFORCE II EP extended performance multi-sensor imaging system is the latest development in FLIR's line of UltraFORCE products. Inside the 4-axis stabilised gimbal is a 640 by 480 Quantum Well Infrared Photodetector [QWIP].[FSI]

Ed: The first of eight EC 135T2 was introduced to service with the Czech Police Aviation Department in Prague in January 2004, this was used in the HEMS role. Of the eight four were assigned to HEMS and four to the police role equipped with European Union financed sensors and searchlights. According to the original schedule two additional machines were to be delivered in 2004, two in 2005 and one each in 2006, 2007 and 2008. From the timing of this announcement it is the latter machines that are fully equipped.



MALAYSIA

NATIONAL POLICE: The Malaysian police force is looking to acquire eight additional helicopters and seven fixed-wing aircraft.

Industry sources say the police informed manufacturers attending last month's DSA 2006 show in Kuala Lumpur that it has been allocated 600 million ringgitt (\$165 million) in Malaysia's new five-year budget, fully meeting its request for 15 aircraft.

A request for proposals is expected to be issued within the next few months. The police force operates several Eurocopter AS355 Squirrels on surveillance and patrol missions, but has been looking to introduce medium-sized 10-seat helicopters to transport SWAT teams and bolster its anti-terrorist capability. The AgustaWestland AW139, Eurocopter AS365 Dauphin and Sikorsky S-76 will probably be evaluated. Sources say the force plans to acquire six of the new type plus two more four- to five-seat light twin-engined helicopters.

The Malaysian police is also looking to bolster its fixed-wing fleet, which includes several Pilatus PC-6s and Cessna Caravans, for transport and patrol missions, seeking another seven aircraft, but manufacturers say the force will probably require twin-engined aircraft and exclude single-engined models from the competition. [AvBuyer.China]



TURKEY

NATIONAL POLICE: MD Helicopters, Inc. (MDHI) finally presented the last five MD 600N® helicopters of a long standing order for ten machines to the Turkish National Police (TNP) for inspection and acceptance.

One authority from the Turkish Police Aviation Department stated that the TNP have been successfully operating the five helicopters previously delivered by MDHI and are quite happy with the performance.

The ceremony and presentation were held at the MD Helicopters facility followed by a company-wide celebration for TNP representatives and the company's 250 employees. [MDHI]

An advertisement for BMS. The top half shows a white helicopter with the registration 'N119SP' flying in a cloudy sky. The text 'A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words!' is overlaid in large blue font. The bottom half shows a first-person view of a firefighter in a yellow jacket and helmet holding a blue handheld device. The device's screen displays a live video feed of a building on fire, with the sign 'Friedman's supermarkets' visible. A white arrow points from the helicopter in the top image down to the handheld device. The background of the bottom image shows the 'Friedman's supermarkets' building with smoke rising from it.

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EDITORIAL – MD UPDATED

It is now close to a year since Patriarch Partners, LLC, an investment firm based in New York and Charlotte, North Carolina took over the ailing MDHI. Founded in 2000 by Lynn Tilton, Patriarch provides innovative financial solutions, strategic direction and operational expertise to more than 67 companies. Lynn Tilton serves as Chairman of the Board and Acting-CEO of MDHI. Funds managed by Patriarch Partners own a majority and controlling interest in MDHI.

At the time many thought that the rescue would wreck Patriarch. Investment in aviation industry is well known as the quickest way to lose a fortune. And that was not so far wrong of the mark - vast sums have been poured into MDHI for little visible return but on the face of it perhaps the lady's shoulders are broader than they appear.

Certainly Lynn Tilton's spectacles soon lost their roe tint as it became clear what a disaster area MDHI was. Her wish to buy the company out of trouble by settling the massive debts and keep the meagre amount of goodwill that remained cost dear. It would clearly have been cheaper to buy up the assets of the company after it had completely failed and to trade under a new name. The lady it seems does not work like that.

Even if 'New MD' is a very different company to the old they will still have to trade through the bad blood left behind. All the promises made by 'New MD' at the time of the take-over and repeated at Helitech turned largely to dust. The situation was far worse than appreciated by Patriarch at the time their cash assets were put on the line. A new leadership team of Robert W. René interim Chief Executive Officer and Randy Kesterson as Chief Operating Officer eventually gave way to a company with Lynn Tilton firmly at the helm. By the start of 2006 the wiser new team were telling it as it is.

The learning curve continues steep and very expensive. The pundits suggested that 'Under normal circumstances industry would expect a 9-12 month recovery timescale for a company so severely damaged.' But Lynn Tilton was having nothing of that. Last September she firmly believed that the company would turn around in as little as 3-6 months. She was wrong and she candidly acknowledges that now in her now well grounded enthusiasm for her helicopter company and now they are looking at a more mature appreciation that stretches the turn-around well into 2007 – if not 2008. There are rumours that she now has her own helicopter and even a desire to learn to fly it.

It is unlikely that any similar 'mature appreciation' would have been made public in the days since McDonnell Douglas was swallowed up by a Boeing only really interested in acquiring the AH-64 Apache – certainly many of the customers have never uttered a word on the subject in that time.

In the light of the difficulties that are now becoming public knowledge the marked lack of public criticism directed at MDHI by what are supposed fully accountable public bodies – the police - in the UK has been a truly remarkable aspect of this whole sorry tale, even if some were luckier than others in the downtime stakes. Indeed it could be said that some sought to provide substantial succor to the ailing company by hiding the unpalatable truth over a number of years.

Fortunately it was a less tight ship in the USA and many horror stories did get out about dire aircraft [mainly MD600Ns operated by Federal operations] and awful spares problems. Hopefully that is all now of the past and it seems that a great deal has been achieved – especially in the truth stakes. The 'New MD' are telling themselves the truth and consequently now telling the customers what to expect in public - even if it is unpalatable.

Recently one publication fielded an inaccurate report of a press conference at HAI and the result was that Tilton issued a full transcript of the whole meeting. In that document she was very critical of some parts of the aerospace industry. In short the 'Big Boys' were not being supportive in her recovery plans and that has resulted in major changes in Mesa's production plans. A transcript and video of that meeting are available on the MD website.

The old company suffered mainly from turning itself into a completion centre for bought in components. Over a period of time they slid into a situation where they manufactured noth-

ing significant. This had a knock on effect in that they were selling airframes at a bare profit and only getting a meagre profit out of the spares as they passed through Mesa. Then AOG aircraft were not flying so they consumed even less profit producing spares. Everyone in the industry is supposed to know that the real profits lie not in new aircraft but the spares, but MD were not either handling or manufacturing them in sufficient numbers and consequently they were not generating the profits. The result was that R&D was at a virtual standstill - regardless of positive public announcements. When the cash ran out the outsourced spares stopped and further depressed the profits. Eventually the whole operation ground to a halt. 'New MD' has reopened the profitable spares lines by unblocking the debts. Most spares are back on-line but there are remaining problems with some specific lines. Where the company cannot ensure a continuous flow of parts from industry alternate arrangements are being formulated. The Flexbeam on the 900 rotor head remains in short supply as [predictably] Kaman struggle to resume production. It's getting better all the time but it is most certainly not resolved. At this point in time the 900 remains a low production type and that means that the production of parts by large outside agencies is a batch operation. If MD get the number of parts to be produced in each batch wrong it can result in shortages until a new batch is commissioned. That happened to the Flexbeam, the number proved wrong. Spares are further complicated by the company reversing or duplicating the previous outsourcing to resolve issues with reticent suppliers, availability and to kick-start profits. It may have seemed strange to some when it was announced that new MD500/600 fuselage production was going to a Patriarch owned automotive company, Global Automotive in Mexico, while another Patriarch owned company - Heritage Aviation - is now producing spares - just two examples of a range of 'in-house' opportunities offering the bonus of improvements in Group profits.

Meanwhile the numbers employed on real work at MD Mesa is again growing. The New MD comes across as a 'Happy Ship' and one willing to talk its range of fine if elderly products up - but only on the basis of what is achievable. Another real innovation is to have a R&D facility with real people looking at options for the future. Plastic MD500s, new engines and extended 900s with a new larger back door may never happen but they are being reviewed as the company tries to catch up on so many wasted years.

The mirage of a higher performance long tail MD900 of the type promised so long and so often to the Dutch KLPD is now in fact closer. Looking back at the number of times PAN fell into the trap of repeating the empty MD promise 'we will deliver next month' it's a wonder there are any readers left! Perhaps fortunately that was countered by the publication being one of the few actually asking any questions for many years!

The 'long-tail' is flying as the LUH demonstrator aircraft but remains much as it was over a year ago to have the final civil certification items signed off. And yet a year ago the old MD was suggesting delivery of it was imminent as they sought to keep the hapless KLPD on the hook.

One thing is certain, as Eurocopter announces orders in excess of 550 for its EC135 and ever more AS350s displace MD products in the USA, the market needs the pressure of a once more successful MD to ensure that products and the prices remain keen for the customer.

Things will be tough, the customers have had their tenacity severely tested and ominously by 2007-08 MD will be going head to head with an even wider range of alternative types including such as the 429 from Bell - assuming that Bell do not again lose the plot like they did with the 427.



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UNITED KINGDOM

RESTRUCTURING: As suggested in the last edition the incumbent Home Secretary, Charles Clarke, and the figure with the greatest will to force changes upon UK police forces was in danger of losing his post. Since the last edition the Rt Hon Dr John Reid MP has taken over and the pressure to force the changes appears to have stepped down a gear. It remains early days though.

The Home Office itself is now under more pressure than the police were last month as the number of public disclosures on poor performance in the ministry abound. Jobs are under threat. Those civil servants in the Home Office who were apparently busy thrashing the police have now been temporarily distracted looking over their shoulders ...

CAMBRIDGESHIRE: As this edition went to press it was reported that the delivery of the MD900 G-CMBS to the Cambridgeshire Constabulary had finally taken place. The aircraft has been in role completion at PAS, Staverton, Gloucestershire for nearly 6 months.

METROPOLITAN: Amid continued rumours that it is becoming increasingly difficult to attract pilots and engineers to undertake police work anywhere across the UK the police in London have again been advertising for additional pilots and engineers. This time the advert is full-page. Licensed engineers are now attracting well in excess of £42,000 in London and pilots over £50,000.

It has long been known that attracting pilots and engineers to police operations in competition with the airlines was going to be increasingly difficult. Airline work is often better paid, more glamorous and less stressful than chugging around in relatively small circles in the dark and working unsocial hours. Money aside there is a very positive image derived from spending the end of a flight in some exotic Marriott Hotel for a few days when compared to the option of dossing down in a bunk bed between flights in a crew room. The engineers might get less exotic options but many of the best know full well that they are becoming a rare commodity that industry fails to nurture at its peril.

The Met were advertising for pilots in the same publication just six months ago and are back again for another try. The need to attract was further underlined by the appearance of their Chief Pilot, Brian Baldwin in the back pages of a later edition of *Flight* offering some hopefully useful pointers to prospective pilots.

Potentially likely to make the situation worse CHC the contractor for UK SAR from 2007 are also advertising for helicopter pilots, engineers and SAR winch operators. In CHC's case they are not disclosing the salary on offer so it is difficult to see whether this is an exact 'head to head' battle for the dwindling resources. CHC probably have some advantage in that they can offer places for Co-Pilots who are required to only have 750 hours where they have a similar hours requirement to the police for their P1 pilots. [Flight/IPAR]

Ed: Other reports cite that Bristow, one of the world's leading helicopter operating companies, has said it was 'scouring the world' for helicopters, crews and technicians. The alarm bells are ringing and it is probably about time that someone in UK air support considered setting up an in-house training initiative.

UNITED STATES

ALABAMA: The Jefferson County Sheriff's Department now has a refurbished helicopter to serve as part of the departments new Air Support Unit with volunteer reserve pilots operating it.

The Jefferson Air Support Unit located in Birmingham, AL was slated to get two OH-58s in January 2004 from the 10-33 Program but learned in late 2003 that the DoD put a stop on the aircraft until the 2007 fiscal year. The latest delivery was therefore somewhat against the odds in timescale terms. [IPAR]

CALIFORNIA: San Diego Police received the first of their four Eurocopter AS350B3 helicopters in May. The aircraft cost the city about \$3M each but are not yet entering police service. Deliveries will continue at two month intervals to McClellan-Palomar Airport in Carlsbad, where the aviation company Jet Source, will role equip them at a price less than that quoted by the factory.

Jet Source will add at least a half-dozen police radios for communication across various frequencies, infrared cameras, video cameras, search lights and loud speakers, a hoist line and a laser designator. From August this year the existing fleet of Bell helicopters, which includes machines 38 and 32 years old, will be gradually replaced as the role equipping is completed. Two of the Bell's were originally drug confiscations and the remaining two are 1993 models bought by the department. All are performance limited and are generally restricted to operating with just the two crew and cannot be used for rescue missions.

The 350 series has a single engine and single overhead rotor, and can seat five to six passengers. The copters will cruise at about 145 mph, compared with 110 mph of today's fleet. The 350 series also can carry a fire-fighting bucket but that is not a primary mission.

The San Diego City Council approved the \$12 million expenditure for the fleet last year and will finance the helicopters over seven years, the existing fleet will be sold, for about \$1.7M.

CALIFORNIA: The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department also took possession of an AS350B3 last month, the newest addition to their air fleet and the fifth A-Star for the department. San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department patrols 20,000 square miles, the largest county in the continental United States, with a jurisdiction that runs from the Los Angeles County line eastwards to the Arizona and Nevada borders. The region has a wide variety of terrain—from desert to mountain—along with extremes in temperatures as well as high mountain altitudes up to 11,400 feet, which presents a series of potential problems for any helicopter.

FLORIDA: Alachua County Sheriff's air unit located in Gainesville has secured half a million dollars to upgrade one of their helicopters. The ten-year old unit is a joint operation of the Sheriff with Gainesville Police operating Bell OH-58 and MD500 helicopters.

One of Alachua County's OH-58s is now outfitted with downlink equipment to send a live picture to the ground from almost any spot in the county.

The microwave signal can be sent to a mobile suitcase receiver, a mobile command bus, and soon the Emergency Operations Center, which acts a staging area during a natural disaster. [W CJB TV20]

FLORIDA: Citrus County has bought a brand-new AS350B3 helicopter costing more than \$2.4M.

From July the new A-Star replaces two of the agency's ageing aircraft. One of the two birds being traded in is military surplus dating to the 1960s and in fact had been shot down in Vietnam.

The new craft comes with a hoist that can be used to rescue people trapped in the woods or on sinking boats and a fire fighting capability. The Coast Guard now handles sea rescues, but must cover an area from St. Petersburg to the Panhandle.

The price of the new helicopter will be reduced by selling its two predecessors for around \$518,000. The remaining amount, after a \$117,085 down payment, will be financed through a \$1.8M loan. The 10-year debt service will be incorporated within the agency's budget, which is \$24M this year, and will not require any additional county funds.

FLORIDA: The county commissioners have agreed to fund a new helicopter for Seminole County Sheriff's Office. They approved \$3M toward the purchase, \$1.25M of which will come from a Sheriff's Office reserve account and the remainder from a general fund.

A new aircraft is needed to replace the county's Vietnam War-era Bell UH-1H helicopter,

which has operated as Air Rescue 3 since 1999. During a refurbishment it was found that repairs were no longer economical and measures put in hand to replace it.

FLORIDA: An 44 –years old woman got so upset at the noise of a Orange County Sheriff's office helicopter flying above her house that she fired a rocket at it.

The helicopter was looking for a stolen car in the area of 36th Street, when the woman fired the device and as she was intent on firing a second deputies arrived and arrested her. No damage has been reported to the aircraft.

The woman is facing a felony charge of shooting or throwing a deadly missile into an aircraft. [Media]

ILLINOIS: Predicted some time ago Bell Helicopter has announced that the City of Chicago has placed an order for a new Bell 206B3 for use by its Police Department. Scheduled for delivery November 2006, the 206B3 will be used for aerial law enforcement missions throughout the City of Chicago. [Media]

IOWA: The future of the state's only police helicopter operation based in Cedar Rapids is once again 'up in the air.' Cedar Rapids currently spends more than a half-million dollars a year on the operation. [KWVWL Media]



NEVADA: In Reno the Washoe County Bell UH-1H police helicopter N911NV used for rescue missions has been grounded indefinitely because it needs a \$1M engine. The Huey has a high-speed electric rescue hoist that can carry 600 pounds and lift three people at once. It's also used to deliver dive teams to search areas, carry SWAT team members to isolated areas and recover bodies.

The area's RAVEN program (Regional Aviation Enforcement) has no money in the budget meaning that the aircraft will be unavailable for the peak summer season. The sheriff's office will be applying for competitive federal grants, but no money is guaranteed.

RAVEN also has two OH-58A helicopters and a 1978 fixed wing aircraft, a Cessna T-210, that Reno wants to sell. The Cessna is used to transport prisoners. When it's sold, a plane will be rented to transport inmates. [Media]

NORTH CAROLINA: Wilmington Police Department an agency with more than 300 employees, 252 sworn police officer positions will soon start to operate a DoD surplus Bell OH-58C helicopter to undertake crime patrols.

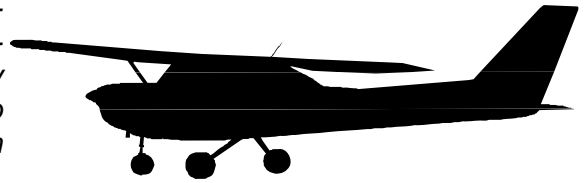
The aircraft was obtained free from the military and will be made flightworthy over the next few months with the aim of introducing it to service in time for the summer. Currently the airframe, 0-16808 marked 08J remains in its military marks and the upgrade and repaint is expected to cost some \$400,000. The Wilmington PD averages more than 140,000 calls for service each year. [Media/IPAR]

TEXAS: After a lengthy competitive process Bell Helicopter were able to announce that the City of Dallas has placed an order for a three new Bell helicopters for use by its Police Department. The three helicopters will replace the aging existing fleet of aircraft the Police Department has been operating over the past twenty years. Bell are to provide two model 206B3 and a single 407.

Introduced in 1996 the Bell 407 has 650 in service today. The 206 is considerably older having been introduced in 1968 and now over 5,000 have been built and have logged over 40 million flying hours over the years providing airborne police protection.

Bell Helicopter provided the first helicopter ever used for law enforcement to the City of New York in 1948. Today some of the most sophisticated airborne law enforcement aircraft in the world are produced and equipped by Bell Helicopter. [BHT]

Ed: Bell Helicopter continues to state that they provided the first helicopter ever used for law enforcement to the City of New York in 1948. Unfortunately for this misguided statement there are pretenders to that throne in Sikorsky, the UK, Avia and the Czech Republic.



WASHINGTON: Since the early part of this year the Washington State Patrol based in Olympia has had two of its Cessna 206's fitted with FLIR cameras. These are the first such aids made available to the State Police fleet and they are being financed by a \$1M grant from the Defense Department.

The camera is mounted in a black gimbal on the pilot side of the Cessna. Inside the plane is a control panel with a joystick that the flight officer who accompanies the pilot can use to control the camera. There is one large screen mounted inside and a smaller one near the pilot, so both can see what the camera sees. The gear also includes a digital video recording system, a microwave downlink sends real time images to five locations including the State Patrol facility in Bellevue and one at the Emergency Operations Center at Camp Murray south of Tacoma.

The grant also allowed the State Patrol to buy four portable receivers with screens. Two are

An advertisement for FLIR thermal imaging cameras. The background is a dark blue gradient with a silhouette of a helicopter. In the foreground, a white and blue helicopter is shown from a front-three-quarter view, with two pilots visible in the cockpit. The text is in yellow and white. Two FLIR camera models are shown: the StarSAFIRE™ HD and the Ultra 8500™. The FLIR logo and website are at the bottom right.

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meant to be hand-held and are about the size of a large book. The other two are about the size of a large briefcase.

The State Patrol has used small airplanes since the late 1950s to patrol the freeways and roads, they currently have two Cessna 206 aircraft, three Cessna 182s and two King Air B200s for transportation. [Seattle PI/WSP]

AIR AMBULANCE

CANADA

ALBERTA: Generous Albertans have put STARS well on course to buying two new, state-of-the-art helicopters and new training equipment.

The air ambulance service announced last month that its Vision Critical Capital Campaign, launched in 2003 to meet the province's growing emergency medical needs, has now raised more than CAN\$25M.

The new aircraft, to be delivered in 2008 are likely to be the Agusta AW139, capable of carrying as many as three patients, are equipped with de-icing equipment and able to cruise 30 knots faster than the current BK117s. One is to be based in Calgary and the other in Edmonton. [Sun]

CAYMAN ISLANDS

The three island group in the Caribbean Sea and British Crown Colony are talking about extending the existing air ambulance provisions.

The matter was discussed at a public forum of a panel of Health Services Authority (HSA) Board members. Although the HAS does not directly operate it there is a procedure for emergency air evacuations using fixed wing aircraft but there are no crews allocated so operations can be constrained by pilot flying hours. If an emergency occurred when pilots of the local airlines have no flight time left, this could and has resulted in delays. A helicopter service has now been proposed.

ITALY

The Valle d'Aosta Regional Airport (in extreme north-west of Italy) is named after Corrado Gex, a well known aviator which worked in Valley both as pilot and politician.

Gex died 40 years ago in a plane crash.

The region is mainly devoted to tourism and mountain sports, attracting climbers from all around the world intent on taming the more famous of the local peaks – Mont Blanc, Matterhorn, Gran Paradiso and Monte Rosa – and the airport is therefore the home to well developed rescue organisations serving the local populace and visitors alike.

The airport is the permanent base of local HEMS, normally an AirGreen AB412 and one Helops Agusta A109 Power.

On April 30 the authorities organised a ceremony at the airport to remember Corrado Gex and this provided an opportunity to show off new AirGreen AW139 which will be based there from next June. It performed a rescue demonstration, this being followed by similar demonstration by a Guardia di Finanza AB412, also involved in rescue missions locally.

The local Civil Protection showed their own project in development - a radio-controlled model helicopter equipped with a system able to safely sample air in such as a contaminated disaster area for transport to a laboratory for analysis. The next development in this project is to equip it with an infra-red camera. [Dino Marcellino]

NEW ZEALAND

Wanganui has the most up-to-date air ambulance for its size in the islands. It is already in such demand that the official launch party late last month had to be delayed while it completed a task to Auckland Hospital.

The new Air Wanganui Commuter Ltd aircraft is a \$1.6M King Air C90 and it has a new

\$90,000 hangar built especially to house it. The Wanganui Air Ambulance Trust provided \$140,000 worth of new equipment for the King Air.

The King Air was acquired a year ago as an addition to the Air Wanganui Piper Mojave. Both are used for charter work and to train pilots from throughout New Zealand as well as being air ambulances. [Wanganui Chronicle]

UNITED KINGDOM

EAST ANGLIA: A long standing plan to build a helipad financed by public subscription at Kings Lynn's Queen Elizabeth Hospital has been dealt a blow with health bosses deciding the site cannot be used – in case they need to sell it.

Locals raised more than £60,000 in just nine months to build the landing pad for the East Anglian Air Ambulance helicopter. The project had moved on to the detail planning stage and had recently gained official planning permission from West Norfolk Council. Ground condition tests had also been carried out to confirm the site's suitability for a helipad.

Three other sites on the hospital's grounds have been put forward as alternatives – but planning permission may need to be applied for again – imposing delays.

GREAT NORTH: After the severe financial problems of the past year the Cumbria based BO105 'Pride of Cumbria' has now commenced operating 7 days a week with doctors and anaesthetists on board on a regular basis.

Airframe upgrade plans move towards bringing an AS365N Dauphin 2 into service. The replacement aircraft is due in the UK and due for refurbishment by PDG Helicopters at Inverness with a view of an introduction to service later this year. The Dauphin c/n 6009 will be familiar enough in that it has been purchased from Bajan Helicopters who in turn purchased it from London HEMS. Definitely full circle. London HEMS are now in partnership with Great North on the medical side and by chance their old airframe is coming home via them to provide extra space to carry incubators and specialist teams.

Since Great North restarted a 5-day operation with the Bolkow they undertook 227 tasks carrying 180 patients, 91 from RTCs, 31 Mountain Rescue casualties and 17 transfers

Meanwhile Jim Martin the former pilot of the BO105 is slowly returning to health assisted by light work for PDG and the Great North Charity. Jim who was injured in a mountaineering accident has been taking tentative steps back into the air – albeit as a front seat passenger on a short flight from Cumberland to Inverness.

Jim still needs a couple more operations on his left leg as the tibia is not yet united, so he is now looking at the end of the year before he can seek to get back his licence. His wrist and pelvic injuries are healing well though.



At the beginning of last year, the Great North Air Ambulance Service was forced to ground two of its three helicopters. Since that time one [Cumbria] has returned to the air but the Northumbria aircraft remains off-line.

Since then there have been campaigns to attract sufficient public support to ensure all three helicopters bases can be available. Great North is now talking up the return of the third airframe to service this summer using a Bolkow BO105 [presumably the displaced Cumbria airframe].

As the cheapest suitable airframe in UK HEMS service the Bolkow costs on average £35,000 a month to run five days a week. Currently the service brings in £20,000 a month from the region, but is still £15,000 short. The service brings in £2,389 each month through a recently introduced 50p a week campaign. It recently received a £100,000 legacy from an anonymous woman, from Otterburn. www.greatnorthairambulance.co.uk [Northumberland Today]

Ed: It is strange to note that the Great North AA started in Northumberland a decade ago and that somewhere the fundraising went awry enough to result in the massive downsizing exercise that even yet has not recovered in its heartland.

IRELAND: In Northern Ireland there are continued calls for a flying doctor service, a service largely unavailable since 72 Squadron stood down its Wessex HC2 helicopters in the Province.

An answer to a parliamentary question revealed that a recent health department study found that a Helicopter Emergency Medical Service (HEMS) would be of 'no advantage.'

SUSSEX: A new air ambulance service could soon be operating in East Sussex following the appointment of a campaign manager Tony Thorn.

Tony, who joined the charity from St Catherine's Hospice in Crawley where he was corporate executive, said: 'The need for a dedicated air ambulance to compliment the existing medical services supplied by Sussex Ambulance Service and the police helicopter at Shoreham is vital.

The appeal has got off to a great start with more than £50,000 raised already, which has enabled the Kent Air Ambulance to respond to emergencies in Sussex.

David Philpott, chief executive, said: 'I am confident that Tony will be successful in helping us to reach our second goal of £250,000 so that we can place the order for a second helicopter.'

WALES: A third air ambulance will be on call in Wales this summer, providing cover in the mid and south-east regions and based in Powys for three months from the middle of June.

Air ambulance chiefs will assess whether there is a need for it to be based permanently in the county.

Wales' two existing helicopters are based at Swansea and Caernarfon and currently serve the whole country with help from a helicopter in England.

YORKSHIRE

The air ambulance in this north-east region is set to become one of the first in the country to extend its flying times to 12 hours every day at a cost of an additional £3,000 a month.

From 1 May to 3 September the crew will be available to respond to emergencies between 9am and 9pm during the summer period. Currently, the life-saving helicopter's contract with Medical Aviation Services provides a pilot for up to 10 hours a day, during daylight. The aircraft is not presently equipped to fly at night.

Historical data shows that the best way to balance a 12-hour shift was between 9am and 9pm. Demand for the service soars after 6pm in the summer with people leaving work and taking up their hobby, be it walking, motorcycling or horse riding."

With Paramedics who man the aircraft drawn from all parts of Yorkshire, the increase to a 12-hour shift will mean an excessively long day for those who live up to a two-hour journey away from the helicopter base at Leeds/Bradford Airport. As a result the Charity is looking for a hotel or guest house close to the airport which would be willing to accommodate four members of our aircrew for a total of 70 nights through the summer. As we are a charity, we would be incredibly grateful if this could be provided at a reduced rate or even free, or a donation given to offset the costs."

Anyone interesting in helping is asked to contact the Yorkshire Air Ambulance Charity Office on 0845 120 6060.

Yorkshire Air Ambulance's new Ryedale satellite base is nearing lift-off following the reaching of an agreement with the Fitzwilliam Estate and the acquisition a one-acre piece of land near Eden Camp Modern History Museum, near Malton.

Martin Eede, the chairman of Yorkshire Air Ambulance, will now sit down with architects and sketch out plans for the air base, before submitting the blueprints to Ryedale District Council.

If the application is given the green light by Ryedale's planning department, the air ambulance will move to the base before the end of the summer. The £500,000 development will include offices, a hangar, crew quarters and a take-off and landing pad. Its location means that it is easily within 10 minutes of any accident or incident in the Ryedale area. [Malton Today]

UNITED STATES

Allegheny General Hospital has selected four American Eurocopter EC145s to replace four MD-900s being used by Allegheny's LifeFlight AMS service. With over 40,000 missions under its belt, Allegheny General Hospital's LifeFlight AMS is a familiar sight in the skies of west Pennsylvania, southeastern Ohio, northern West Virginia, and western Maryland.



The decision to buy the four EC145s came after Allegheny conducted a competitive bidding process in which Agusta, American Eurocopter, and Bell took part. Two of the EC-145s will be delivered in early 2007; the other two in mid-2007.

CALIFORNIA: In its second critical report in six months about how San Bernardino County handles air ambulance services, a grand jury has suggested that the Board of Supervisors appear to have a conflict of interest over the need for additional EMS services.

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There is no criticism over the work currently undertaken by Mercy Air, just that they need more helicopters. Mercy Air Services Inc. is the only company with a permit to provide air ambulance services in the county, although other helicopters can respond to incidents under mutual aid agreements but cannot undertake lucrative transfer work.

The Grand Jury report queries the lack of competition. The Board of Supervisors has been accused of blocking a second air ambulance service from getting a permit to operate in the county.

A county spokesman has denied adopting a non-competitive policy. In November, the grand jury accused supervisors of endangering public health in order to protect a campaign contributor by failing to vote on a permit application for a second air ambulance service. County officials said allowing in a competitor to compete with Mercy Air for non-emergency transfer could lead the company to reduce service.

HAWAII: Troubled Hawaii Air Ambulance [HAA] struggling with personnel and operational issues after a fatal crash in March, is acquiring three more planes and three new managers. One of the newly-acquired aircraft enters service this week. Two more will arrive over the next two months. All three will be under seven years old.

The aircraft are Beech King Air C90B aircraft with fewer than 2,000 hours air usage that will be medically equipped and based at either Honolulu and Hilo, both of which bases will be staffed 24 hours per day.

Of HAA's existing fleet of Cessna 414A aircraft, one plane is flying while three other Cessnas are being refurbished following extensive voluntary inspections. Once all planes return to the air HAA will have seven aircraft. [Pacific Business News]

MASSACHUSETTS: UMass Memorial Medical Center has taken delivery of a new Eurocopter EC145 helicopter operating the LifeFlight service. The helicopter was flown to the hospital's University Campus from Colorado where it was customized for UMass Memorial with the latest technology available in emergency medicine.

The UMass Memorial LifeFlight crew members, some with decades of experience in the field, were instrumental in the customisation of the helicopter's interior and worked closely with the vendor, Air Methods Corporation, to create a design and layout that fit the program's unique needs. The new twin-engine aircraft, which is leased through and maintained by Air Methods, is a fully outfitted air ambulance, complete with on-board oxygen, suction and electrical systems to support mountable emergency medical equipment such as heart monitors, intravenous pumps and other lifesaving devices. The helicopter can accommodate a physician, flight nurse, medical resident, and up to two patients on stretchers per flight, along with the pilot; there is also a fifth seat that can be used by additional medical personnel.

The staff includes four pilots, seven specially trained flight nurses and 12 communications specialists who provide 9-1-1 dispatch service not only for LifeFlight but also for the City of Worcester and Town of Shrewsbury in a new Emergency Medical Services Command Center. Each year the UMass Memorial communications specialists field approximately 25,000 emergency calls and dispatches LifeFlight on more than 1,100 missions.

The LifeFlight program, which began in 1982, UMass Memorial emergency personnel have cared for more than 23,500 patients across a 130-mile coverage area that stretches from southern Connecticut to New Hampshire and from Boston to Albany, NY. In addition to victims of accidents, the helicopter transports patients requiring urgent tertiary care, such as emergency cardiac catheterization and cardiac surgery available at UMass Memorial. The new, quieter aircraft will replace the hospital's current helicopter, a BK117, which has flown more than 10,000 patient missions and was the industry standard for 20 years. The program has more than 2,500 pre-identified landing zones, including small airfields, community hospital grounds, ball fields and highways to allow for the quickest possible access for patients in need.

FIRE

UNITED STATES



JUMBO TANKER: Evergreen the developers of the Boeing 747 into a large capacity drop fire-fighting aircraft undertook a series of demonstrations of its capabilities in the fire and environmental roles during a tour of the USA late last month.

The tour started in Sacramento, California on May 19 and was scheduled to be completed back in the same state at San Bernardino at the end of the month [May 31] following demonstrations at Aberdeen Proving Grounds, Maryland, Scott AFB, Illinois, Tallahassee, Florida and Boise Idaho. [Evergreen]

SEARCH AND RESCUE

CHINA

Chinese rescue boats saved 330 Vietnam fishermen on boats swept away at sea by Typhoon Chanchu last month.

The rescue efforts were sparked by calls from the Chinese Embassy in Vietnam to the China Maritime Search and Rescue Center. Twenty-two Vietnamese fishing boats are thought to have been blown off course by Chanchu, with hundreds on board. The Chinese Ministry of Communications said it also requested help from the maritime rescuers in Hong Kong.

Rescue teams brought aid, food and other supplies to the lost fishermen and helped repair their boats, many of which were found near the Dongsha Islands.

A Chinese rescue ship saved 97 Vietnamese fishermen in the South China Sea and continued to search for other Vietnamese missing in the wake of the typhoon, the rescue ship also recovered 18 bodies. [News Agency]

IRELAND

CHC has gained an extension of its current SAR contract in the Republic of Ireland from July 2007 to July 2010 continuing the use of the existing helicopters.

The contract award covers the provision of services from bases at Dublin, Waterford, Shannon and Sligo. The service will be provided through CHC's wholly-owned subsidiary, CHC Ireland, utilising a fleet of six Sikorsky S61N aircraft, featuring upgraded SAR equipment for the contract renewal. The contract is anticipated to generate revenue of approximately CAN \$74M (€53M) over the fixed three-year term.

UNITED KINGDOM

AIR MED: Oxford based air ambulance, charter and freight operator Air Med is looking to expand the range and number of its current fleet of eleven aircraft.

The current fleet includes the only two Piper Cheyenne aircraft in the UK, four Piper Se-



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neca, three Piper Chieftains and a pair of Cessna Caravans. Plans are to add very light jets of a type yet to be selected to the two aircraft used in corporate work – one Seneca and a Cheyenne. The company's air ambulance work – some 60% of the whole – will remain the primary operations for the foreseeable future. [Flight]

MCA: Within days of the launch of a new transportation scheme intended to fly firemen out to stricken vessels a cruise ship fire in the English Channel placed the scheme under a real test.

In the event the fire on the cruise ship Calypso with more than 700 people on board was been put out before the fire teams arrived on board. The vessel got into difficulties about 15 miles off Beachy Head when the port engine and engine room fire started. It was initially tackled by the crew until the firefighters arrived at the scene by helicopter and four lifeboats. The May Day call had been made at about 0400 BST from the ship sailing from Tilbury, Essex, to St Peter Port in Guernsey. The vessel was put under tow by the Coastguard tug Anglian Monarch.

Ed: Since the announcement of the new scheme there have been muttering from an eastern fire brigade about a nominally identical scheme in Essex that was allowed to wither and die after a similar high profile public launch. Notwithstanding this instance of proving that the scheme works as intended there may be grounds for ensuring the scheme is watched in case it too is left unfunded.

L-3 Communications WESCAM has received an order from Keystone Helicopter to provide four MX-15i electro-optical and infrared (EO/IR) systems for installation on Sikorsky S-92 SAR aircraft. The aircraft will be provided to Canadian Helicopter Corporation for deployment to the United Kingdom (UK) to support UK Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) SAR operations.

The WESCAM MX-15i single line replaceable unit (LRU) provides the most technically advanced multi-sensor EO/IR with evolutionary performance features enabling 25% lighter weight, increased range performance and an expanded ease-of-use control suite. The improved Digital IR camera boasts a 20% increase in IR range, allowing missions at night or in less than ideal weather conditions to result in a higher SAR success rate. The MX-GEO Gen. 3 package includes a series of new technologies, GEO-Scan, Automated Video/GEO-Tracking and Adaptive-GEO, each of which aid in delivering maximum geographic location accuracy and significantly reduce operator fatigue in demanding and stressful SAR operations. www.wescam.com.

RAF SAR: HRH The Prince Philip Duke of Edinburgh presented a top Search and Rescue award to Master Aircrewman (MACR) Nicholas Petch last month.

The Billy Deacon Search and Rescue Memorial Trophy has been won by MACR Petch for



his 'exceptional fearlessness in the face of danger' while saving the lives of casualties in March 2005 when a mother and two children were swept off the sea wall at Scarborough North Bay.

Conditions at the scene were described by the captain of one of the helicopters involved as 'stormy seas being tossed over razor sharp rocks – absolutely horrendous!'

Nick Petch (37) joined the RAF in 1987 and served on Nimrod aircraft before volunteering for SAR duties. At the time of his award winning rescue mission, he was based at RAF Leconfield near Beverley, Humberside. He is currently serving at RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus.

Sponsoring the award jointly with Breitling UK, Bristow Helicopters established The Billy Deacon Trophy to further the memory of their winchman who was tragically lost in 1997 whilst carrying out a mission with the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) in Shetland.

The Billy Deacon Search and Rescue Memorial Trophy is awarded annually to a Winch Operator/ Winchman from the Coastguard, Royal Air Force or Royal Navy for meritorious service during Search and Rescue helicopter operations from bases throughout the UK.

The Scotsman newspaper has highlighted one aspect of the recently announced shake-up in UK SAR that has not been addressed. Where it will have its bases.

The newspaper point out that in Scotland the SAR bases are only safe from closure or relocation until a single contractor moves in during 2012 – the same will apply across the UK.

Currently SAR services are currently provided by the military and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency civil contractor operating some of its bases. There is currently a measure of base overlap and duplication between the civil contractor and the military, but when a single contractor takes over in 2012 it would undoubtedly be uneconomic to continue with this and there is no sign that there would be compulsion on the new operator to maintain all 12 of the current SAR bases if the existing level of cover can still be provided.

With the current generation of Sea King and S-61 helicopters is being replaced by faster aircraft with much greater ranges it might be expected that some will go.

Ed: The Scotsman is suggesting Lossiemouth as a Scottish victim, but further south there would seem to be little financial point in keeping both the recently acquired base at Lee-on-the-Solent and nearby Portland despite the high profile campaign that rescued the latter a year or so ago.



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INDUSTRY

Canada's **Field Aviation** has certified an air-operable cargo door air deflector modification for special-mission and maritime patrol variants of the Bombardier Dash-8.

The modification will be fitted to three Dash-8-300s being completed for the Swedish Coast Guard to enable the dropping of liferafts but is aimed at wider use including the dropping of paratroops, smoke-jumpers, emergency equipment and supplies. [Flight]

UAVS, the UK's Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Systems Association (UAVS), will hold a Special **UAV Forum** on 19 July 2006 during this year's Farnborough International Air Show.

The UAV Forum, on Wednesday July 19, will be held in the Conference Centre during Farnborough International. The Keynote Speaker will be Lord Sainsbury of Turville, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Science and Innovation in the UK. It will also feature presentations from the UK's Director, Equipment Capability (ISTAR) at the Ministry of Defence, the Executive Director of AUVSI, Frost and Sullivan on UAV civil and commercial market analysis and the DTi regarding export trade control issues.

In full cooperation with the UK CAA the **Farnborough International** Air Show July 17-23 will feature UAV's flying – thus stealing the march on the intention of the Paris Air Show to be the first to do this at their 2007 show.

There are significant safety measures incorporated into the flying and control that will be undertaken – including a strict and low weight limit on the types allowed – but it remains a first at a public air show.

The small size of the craft allowed – the largest will probably be under 12 feet [3.5 metres] span – might mean that the audience will probably only see them via large video screens even then the visible image may well be of the downlinked image from the craft rather than of the craft themselves, the audience may well just be observing themselves.

Gyrocams Systems has developed the industry's first remote wireless hand controller that operates the camera up to a half a mile distance.

The Gyrocams product line now provides the user with the option to use the standard

kneeboard or wireless hand controller. This leap in development will provide customers with the option to upgrade their current kneeboard controller to the new digital wireless feature.



Low-flying Cessna 172s fly in grid patterns over major cities, capturing eagle-eye images of every square foot from just about every direction.

Instead of just the straight-down views that distant satellites gather, the planes photograph America's varied landscape at a 40-degree angle from a few thousand feet in the air. The images are detailed enough to pick out fire hydrants in Chicago, lilac trees in Rochester and the levees of New Orleans before and after Hurricane Katrina.

The small company behind all this, **Pictometry** International Corp., has found plenty of business, notably in the realm of public safety.

So far, Pictometry's aerial images are mostly used by law enforcement and other government agencies.

In Arlington County, Va., the first county mapped in 2001, firefighters quickly sized up the damage when terrorists slammed a jetliner into the Pentagon. Police in Atlanta were able to scrutinize the layout of an apartment complex where suspected gunman Brian Nichols retreated after a courthouse rampage in March 2005.

Images of New Orleans taken in January 2004 gave searchers a better idea of what they were supposed to be looking at after Katrina howled ashore and helped evacuated residents decide whether or not to return home.

And without leaving the office, property appraisers all across Massachusetts - the only entire state mapped so far - can now pick out every swimming pool and rooftop deck that was built without a permit. <http://www.pictometry.com>

Aerospace Filtration Systems, Inc. (AFS) has been competitively selected by Bell Helicopter Textron Inc. to provide a fully integrated high-performance inlet barrier filter system for the new Bell 429 helicopter as part of the FAA Type Certified design.

AFS was also recently selected by Bell Helicopter to equip its 417 and Armed Reconnaissance Helicopter (ARH) with the AFS IBF system and also by AgustaWestland to develop a filter system for the A119 Koala. AFS also produces certified commercial filtration systems for a range of Bell, MD, Boeing and Sikorsky helicopters.

Wintech International has advised that they have been appointed the authorised UK representative for Vectorbeam Technologies the manufactures of the all new TrakkaBeam (A800) Tactical Search Light.

The TrakkaBeam has been specifically designed for airborne use and incorporates the latest design and fabrication technologies available to date, which offers superior searchlight performance, reduced weight (typically 39lbs) and envelope size.

At the heart of the TrakkaBeam (A800) is its proprietary lens configuration technology. This delivers a superior 800 watt beam with uniform intensity across the whole beam spot, providing an extremely consistent light source which illuminates the target more effectively, while eliminating black holes or hot spots often seen at the centre of conventional searchlights.

The TrakkaBeam search light offers a range of options to suit specific role requirements. These include an internal multi filter wheel. (Up to six different filters can be activated at a touch of a button from the cockpit. Filters can range from Extremely covert IR to be used in conjunction with NVG's or Thermal imaging to UV.

Slaving capability via RS422 or RS485 connectors, slip ring integration for 360° continuous rotation, dovetail mounting for ease of instalment and interchange ability.

Ian Winkworth, Wintech International. E-mail; ian@wintech-int.net +44 7905764088



The 400th **Eurocopter** to be delivered into the Canadian market was turned over to Great Slave Helicopters www.greatslaveheli.com in a ceremony held at Eurocopter Canada's Fort Erie, facility in Ontario. With 64 rotorcraft in its fleet Yellowknife, NT based Great Slave Helicopters is one of Northern Canada's largest commercial helicopter operators.

It has taken delivery of a new Eurocopter EC130B4 for use by its group of companies across Canada. Great Slave Helicopters serves the oil & gas exploration, diamond mining, forestry, fire fighting, and construction industries in Canada's Western Arctic.

Sales of **QinetiQ X-Nets**, which are proven to bring vehicles quickly and safely to a complete standstill, have passed the 2,000 unit mark, providing military, police and civilian authorities with a valuable life-saving tool. X-Nets have already been successfully deployed or are currently undergoing evaluation with a number of overseas customers and have generated in excess of £3.5M in revenue for QinetiQ.

The US military is currently the single largest user, having recently ordered an additional 600+ units, many of which are now being deployed in theatres of operation including Iraq, Afghanistan and Haiti. Here they are typically used as mobile checkpoints to control vehicle flow, such as peacekeeping operations and during terrorist alerts. X-Nets can also be used for asset protection, to cordon off regions or roadways and to stop vehicles entering or leav-

ing defined locations such as inner city 'rings of steel', buildings or airports. When deployed in pursuit management, X-Net allows specific vehicles to be targeted. The current version of X-Net is a man-portable device that is able to bring a range of road vehicles to a complete and safe standstill, typically within 75 metres, irrespective of being fitted with standard or run flat

South Korean aviation company **Korea Aerospace Industries** Ltd. (KAI) has signed a US\$150M preliminary deal with US-based Bell Helicopter Textron Inc. to supply helicopter parts.

Under the deal, KAI will provide Bell Helicopter Textron with fuselages for the U.S. company's 429 for 10 years. The two companies will sign an official contract during the first half of this year, KAI said.

The deal calls for the two companies to form a joint development team, conduct a test flight of the 429 model in the third quarter of this year and put it on the market in the second half of next year, KAI said.

The two companies and Japan's Mitsui Bussan Aerospace Co., Ltd. agreed to co-develop the 429 model at an international helicopter exhibition in the US state of California a year ago. The agreement also grants KAI an exclusive right to produce and sell the model in the South Korean and Chinese markets, it said, adding that KAI has secured orders for over 150 helicopter bodies so far.

A year ago **Ikanguru** Limited launched MetSMS a TAF and METAR service providing up to date weather reports available to pilots via SMS messaging.

The service has been very popular within the GA scene with a growing regular user base. Initial marketing targeted a range of GA magazines [Today's Pilot, Flyer and Pilot] and now they are seeking to widen their audience.

Pilots can use the service via their mobile phones by texting their chosen weather report and airfield at a cost of 50 pence per message.

Users are able to receive TAF and METAR forecasts for a specific airfield location in the UK by entering a simple code when sending a text message. Simply type in MET, then a space, followed by TAF or METAR or BOTH, then a space, followed by a UK airfield. Then send the message to 83070.

An example request would be to text MET METAR EGLL this would request a METAR for Heathrow airport, within a minute you'll receive a METAR weather forecast for the UK airfield you requested. For example: 'EGLL 060950Z 17006KT 130V2109999 FEW010 SCT090 07/06 Q1020 NOSIG'

If you want to know more visit www.metsms.com or Dave Hewson, the Technical Director of Ikanguru on +44 870 766 0987.

Eurocopter has been awarded the American Helicopter Society's **Igor Sikorsky International Trophy** on May 10 in Phoenix, Arizona, for achieving the high-altitude world record with an AS350 B3 landing on top of Mount Everest in 2005. The award was granted almost precisely one year after the world record was achieved in May 2005.

Thermoteknix have announced its latest innovation in thermal imaging which was launched in the USA at the SPIE Defense & Security Symposium in Orlando, Florida - April 19th, 2006. The MIRICLE(r) 307K is expected to be the most exciting infrared camera of the year incorporating the highest resolution uncooled alpha-Silicon long wave microbolometer detector in the world's smallest camera package. Measuring just 1.5 inch cube, this breakthrough technology is aimed at both commercial and military applications where its VGA resolution, ultra-compact size and rug-



ged, environmentally protected housing are perfect for Forward Looking Infrared (FLIR), ground and portable surveillance and security systems.

The MIRICLE 307K joins the Thermoteknix MIRICLE 110K family of uncooled miniature thermal imaging cameras.

In common with the MIRICLE infrared camera range, the MIRICLE 307K will be available in a choice of housings including hermetically sealed, gas purged and ruggedised for unattended field or aerial use.

Flexible lens arrangements include bayonet interchangeable and threaded mounts with lens options from wide angle to telephoto and dual field of view available.

The MIRICLE 307K will be available in fully assembled camera units for end-users as well as a range of custom engine and core configurations, including Thermoteknix' unique silent, low profile shutter, for OEM, system designers and integrators.

Thermoteknix Systems Ltd is based in Waterbeach, Cambridge, England and can be contacted on +44 1223 204000 or via sales@thermoteknix.com www.thermoteknix.com

The new Series 406-16 Homer-Decoder from **Techtest Ltd** delivers major capability improvements for Search & Rescue operations by decoding and displaying 406 MHz message data including the latitude and longitude of location-protocol emergency beacons and transmitters. This unique, stand-alone unit incorporates an integral NVIS-compatible display with intuitive menu options to provide a comprehensive range of homing and data decode functions capable of simultaneously tracking up to 10 beacons. The unit requires connection to just two antennas for full homing and 406 decode functionality. In addition, by interfacing with on-board GPS navigation equipment, the Homer-Decoder can also display relative bearing and distance, thereby further reducing SAR crew workload and enhancing effectiveness of the rescue mission. The Series 406-16 Homer Decoder is capable of decoding all approved COSPAS-SARSAT protocols and provides traditional left/right steering advice in its homing mode on 121.5, 156.8, 243 and 406 MHz.

ACROHELIPRO Global Services Inc. has announced it has been awarded a contract for repair and overhaul of approximately 50 Rolls-Royce 250 (RR) series engines by the Department of Homeland Security, Customs and Border Protection (CBP), El Paso, Texas.

CBP Air is currently operating approximately 50 helicopters that require some model of RR 250 series engine. The contract is to provide repair and/or overhaul of these engines beyond the scope of their internal maintenance capabilities.

This contract is for one base year with four, one-year renewal options. The total contract is worth over \$11M.

The **UK MOD** has just awarded an £8.45 million, two year contract to a team that comprises QinetiQ, Thales UK and SELEX Sensors and Airborne Systems (S&AS) which also has the management lead, to develop world class high performance Thermal Imaging (TI) technology for a wide variety of military applications.

This new programme, known as ALBION will develop the next generation thermal imaging technology which offers higher resolution, greater sensitivity and lower cost than the current second generation technologies.

This important work will see three types of thermal imagers developed using cadmium mercury telluride (CMT) focal plane arrays. These new sensors will offer significant military advantages in the detection, recognition and identification of targets at night and in poor visibility. This technology can be applied in a range of environments and will be used on land, at sea and in the air.

According to **GIS association**, Russian terrorism and transnational crime fighters are going to carry out monitoring of poppy fields with the help of new satellites.

In the past the poppy fields in Afghanistan were being tracked from such as the MIR ISS using still and video cameras and employing false colour. The information was given to se-



curity services who then arranged visits. Before long the Afghans hid the poppy within other crops.

New satellites are intended to resolve this problem with better resolution than previous devices. The system may also be helpful in tracking cereal crops and revealing forest plantations suffering from pests.

Saywell International Limited of Goring by Sea, Worthing, West Sussex has announced the completion of it's acquisition of Wessex Aerospace Ltd on Friday 26th May 2006. This acquisition will further enhance Saywell International's already extensive inventory of BN Islander & Trislander spares.

For further information please contact one Saywell International on +44 1903 705700 or E-mail ben.wilson@saywell.co.uk or chris.taylor@saywell.co.uk

A few years ago there were attempts by various companies to market specific mini-monitors for issue to officers on the street enabling them to receive downlinked images from police aircraft. In the main the limited market quickly dried up. The devices were relatively cheap but they had a single purpose and the image presented was very small no matter how good the clarity.

With the inexorable move forward of technology the same idea of downlinking aerial images to individuals can now be met by standard equipment.

It is now fairly common for a wider range of officers to have access to lap-tops, tablets, PDA's and 3G mobile phones with wireless access in their day-to-day operations.

Technology, such as that offered by development house **ImageBase Technology** Ltd www.imagebase.co.uk can offer the interactive image communications that bring together a range of image sources into one screen and allow operators to add information to the transmitted image that might for instance point out items of interest to other recipients whilst maintaining real-time digital voice communication. A captioned arrow highlighting a point of interest on a document, map, still or video image is less likely to lead to confusion than giving just a verbal description. The ability to send this information to a range of recipients with a mix of devices clearly enhances remote conferencing and briefing.

The encrypted system operates over PSTN, GSM, 3G, GPRS, ISDN, SATCOMS, LAN/WAN. The technology preserves both the original image and altered transmitted image for evidential purposes.

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ACCIDENTS & INCIDENTS

30 April 2006 Eurocopter AS350 N. California Highway Patrol. The helicopter made an emergency landing at Oakland International Airport after reporting engine trouble. The helicopter was able to land safely and nobody on board reported any injuries, it was towed to a hanger to be worked on. [Media]

1 May 2006. Eurocopter EC135T2 OE-XEH. Austrian Air Ambulance of OAMTC. Two people were seriously injured and three 3 lightly injured as a result of the helicopter crashing in Salzburg. The helicopter was approaching a hospital when for no apparent reason it crashed into a planted area just behind the hospital car park.

The seriously injured are the pilot Martin M (33 from Salzburg) and the patient Erwin H (53 from Obertrun). The 37 years old flight rescuer Josef K, the 35 YO emergency doctor Eva F, and 42YO flight nurse Gerhard T suffered minor injuries.

5 May 2006 Eurocopter BK117B2 C-FKCM. Air ambulance. STARS Air Ambulance of Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Aircraft undertaking pilot-training Captain & Pilot-Trainee. No injuries reported. No patient. During a practice hover-autorotation after touch-down, the main rotor blades contacted the upper wire strike protector causing it to be bent, other damage to cabin ceiling, skylight windows and main rotor blade leading edges.

9 May 2006 Helicopter. The helicopter crashed in Heihe, Heilongjiang Province, China as it was rushing firemen to a forest fire, injuring seven people aboard. The crew commander was listed in serious condition. The craft belongs to a civilian aviation company in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. Experts cited a defect of the copter's hydraulic pressure system.

11 May 2006 Helicopter N. Air Ambulance. An Aeromed helicopter flying a patient to Spectrum Health Butterworth Campus from Muskegon detoured to the Gerald R. Ford International Airport Grand Rapids, Michigan when a warning light showed an engine problem.

The pilot landed without incident, and officials learned that concerns of an engine fire were unfounded.

11 May 2006 Mil Mi-14. The military helicopter went down into the ocean near the Sakhalin Islands in Russia. The crash happened as the Mi-14 was involved in joint rescue exercises with Japan when it went down off the Russian island of Sakhalin, killing one of the 13 people on board. The rotor blades hit the water, flew apart and it sank.

16 May 2006 Bell 206L N???? Air ambulance, Air Evac Lifeteam 54 based at Sweetwater, Texas. Suffered birdstrike en-route to Abilene. Diverted and landed without incident.

24 May 2006 MD Helicopters MD900 Explorer G-CMBS. Cambridgeshire Constabulary. Aircraft being delivered to RAF Wyton from Staverton, Glos when an emergency was declared causing its return to Staverton for an uneventful landing. Reported to be an 'oil leak.' [Glos Echo]

24 May 2006 IAI Westwind 1124 N???? Air ambulance. Air Trek Air Ambulance; Punta Gorda, Florida. Aircraft containing two Pilots, two Flight Nurses, one Flight Physician and a patient suffered an electrical malfunction causing a diversion. The aircraft experienced an electrical malfunction, the pilots declared an emergency and landed at Exuma Airport, Bahamas. They were not able to have the runway lights turned so suffered a hard landing with the aircraft going off the end of the runway. No injuries. Patient transferred in different aircraft. [Concern]

25 May 2006 Helicopter. Mercy Flight helicopter made an emergency landing in South Buffalo. The helicopter was en-route to pick up a patient when a warning light went on. The crew landed safely at the intersection of Hopkins Street and Lockwood. The helicopter returned to Buffalo Airport without further incident. [WTVB]

FLIGHT SAFETY *uninhabited problems*

On April 25, 2006, an unregistered Predator B aircraft, collided with the terrain approximately 30 statute miles northwest of Nogales, Arizona. The unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) was registered to the US Customs and Border Protection agency. The public use flight was operating in visual meteorological conditions. An instrument flight rules flight plan had been filed and activated for the flight. The UAV sustained substantial damage. There were no injuries to persons on the ground. The flight originated from the Libby Army Airfield (HFU), Sierra Vista, Arizona.



The flight was being flown from a ground control station located at HFU. The pilot reported that during the flight one control console 'locked up', prompting him to switch control of the UAV to another.

The pilot stated that after the switch to the other console, he noticed the UAV was not maintaining altitude but did not know why. As a result he decided to shut down the GCS so that the UAV would enter its lost link procedure, which called for the UAV to climb to 15,000 feet above mean sea level and to fly a predetermined course until contact could be established. With no engine power, the UAV continued to descend below line-of-site communications and further attempts to re-establish contact with the UAV were not successful.

Ed: Long predicted by those who oppose the wholesale use of unmanned vehicles of this sort the loss of this single airframe might well serve to set back the use of UAV's in the commercial [as opposed to military] sector for a considerable time.

The case for the UAV has been further harmed by recent crashes involving some rotary wing unmanned craft: the Boeing X-50A Dragonfly on April 12 and the full scale Bell Eagle Eye on April 5. The Dragonfly crashed in 2004 and this was a modified version.

Still the UK CAA has agreed to allow small UAV's to fly at this years Farnborough Air Show.

PEOPLE

Insp. **Andrew Moore** has taken over as the head of the Lancashire Police force's Air Support Unit with direct responsibility for ensuring the department is flying high, using top technology to drive down crime in Lancashire's neighbourhoods. Insp. Moore is based at BAE in Warton.

He already has more than 12 years' experience as an operational police officer, working formerly in the force's Pennine Division and later in Community Safety at Hutton Headquarters.

During the first three months of 2006, the helicopter assisted in 719 incidents, which included helping arrest almost 150 suspects, searching for over 50 missing people and being involved in the recovery of drugs worth £30,000.

On November 17 2005, Deputy **Rob Gray** jumped out of a helicopter and into a Polk County swamp to rescue an elderly bird watcher stranded in chest-deep water.

Gray loaded the bird watcher into the helicopter, where he was airlifted to waiting emergency medical personnel. The deputy remained behind in the cold water, until the helicopter was able to return and pick him up.

Gray, a flight officer for the Polk County Sheriff's Office, was recently named deputy of the year by the agency for his rescue.

ILA 2006 - BERLIN AIR SHOW

16-21 May 2006

The bi-annual event staged at Berlin's Schoenefeld airfield, is the German equivalent of the UK's Farnborough or the French Paris but it remains still a youth in comparison. It is however expanding.

It has become Europe's biggest exhibition of General Aviation aircraft and this fact tends to boost exhibit numbers. Some 1,000 exhibitors from 40-plus countries show 300 airplanes.



In among the aircraft in the GA park was an unusual sensor equipped airframe from Diamond Aircraft in Austria. The craft is aimed at a range of customers including 'law enforcement' but it is not clear what exactly.

The air show tends to be set in themed areas not mixed, GA is all together as are military, commercial and helicopters.

In the heavy static park and later flying the Russians had a Beriev Be-200 water bombing flying boat. The Ministry of the Russian Federation for Civil Defense, Emergencies and Elimination of Consequences of Natural Disasters (EMERCOM of Russia) were at the show discussing the use and capabilities of the Be-200 in the forest fighting role. EMERCOM also brought one of their BO105s to the show.





It is not immediately obvious that a major air show would attract them but over the years ILA has become a great meeting place for German police air support. Although this location is to be the Berlin International Airport of the future [leading to the closure of the more famous existing airfields] it is not actually in Berlin itself and as a result the based local police unit is actually Brandenburg with its EC135s.

This police connection made it therefore quite fitting that ILA was also a launch event for an important police body. PACE decided to go public in setting up a stand in the covered area and run its first ever self promotion exercise manned by a mix of PACE members including locals from Germany, one from the Netherlands and another from Slovenia. They shared their booth with the German BfPP who took a large number of images of the event and these can be seen on their web site under ILA2006 via <http://www.bfpp.de/index.php?inc=ila2004&navi=bfpp>



In the helicopter static display Eurocopter was showing an EC155 B1 [see front cover]. This was on loan from the German Federal Police, Bundespolizei [formerly the BGS]. The Bundespolizei operates a total of 15 of these aircraft, part of a total fleet of 102 Eurocopter helicopters in their service. Although the displayed airframe retains its green hue all are now taking on a blue colour scheme replacing the former dark green.

In the indoor display area the Bundespolizei were exhibiting an EC135 in the new blue scheme—this aircraft being regularly attended by what must be one of the prettiest pilots in

European police service.

Eurocopter were displaying a corporate Austrian example of the EC135 in the static area to underline an order book for the type now standing at over 550 units. It is the company's top seller and the best-selling light twin-engined helicopter worldwide.

The larger EC145, or BK117C2 if you prefer, has firmly established itself as a rugged, reliable workhorse in the law enforcement and EMS markets worldwide. Orders for the newer version stand at 95 aircraft, and more than 80 have already entered service. In 2005, new orders for a total of 20 EC 145s were booked, predominantly in the American and European EMS (Emergency Medical Services) and law enforcement markets. The annual production rate has been increased to 25 in 2006.



An EC145 operated by the Croatian EMS service HIKO was in Eurocopter's Static Display.

A few days after ILA the Czech's were running their annual Helimed CZ 2006 show at Hradec Kralove a distance from Prague an event that presents a relaxed 2 days of flying and static displays, as well as a chance for a get together. PAN hopes to publish some images from this next month.

The group were at ILA promoting a new World Congress AIRMED 2008' which will be held in Prague from 20-23 May 2008. www.airmed2008.org

Stephens
POLICE AVIATION

Police Aviation Conference & Exhibition 2006
14 - 15 November 2006,
Olympia Conference Centre, London, UK

AIRMED
PRAHA 2008

World Congress
AIRMED
2008

20 – 23 May 2008
Praha
Czech Republic

www.airmed2008.org

ACPO-APA 2006

Summer Conference & International Policing Exhibition ExCel London.

Billed by one leading security promotion association as 'Bigger and better than ever' the show was a major disappointment and did not meet the promised description.

The result of moving this prestigious event south from its former location co-existing with the 'May Series' of similar events [an interesting compendium of security, health and safety, facilities and fire shows] at the NEC Birmingham was not inspiring.

There have been no reports on the success by the NEC to replace ACPO with their own police show – International Police Expo – just a few days earlier in May but the effect on the ACPO event of the move have not been at all positive.

Where the Birmingham crowds had been drifting between all the different but broadly associated shows in the NEC the ACPO show could be seen as alone and so small in the vastness of ExCel. Furthermore there were mutterings about the lack of a visible presence on the floor of an identifiable member of ACPO itself. There were some Police Authority members to be seen but it appears that in the main the ACPO delegates [quite clearly the targets of the whole show] were travelling protected by an effective camouflage at this event. Even the new Home Secretary the Rt Hon Dr John Reid MP kept on putting off plans to attend. So much so that he had not arrived as some exhibitors were striking their displays at the end. His predecessor had been scheduled to make a significant speech.

The footfall was down greatly and if nothing else there was a massive over provision of free mugs, pens and other give-aways for the exhibitors to lug back to the office – or dump. Abandonment was evident on some stalls as the vendors left early on the last day.

Fortunately in downsizing to the footfall of a typical trade show there were still reports of some useful positive business contacts made by the few. So all was not lost and it may be that many traders will again return for next years event at the G-Mex Centre in Manchester.

There were reports of a UK air support unit visiting the stand of downlink providers Domo so all was not lost on the typical readership of PAN.

Aside from Domo though only FLIR Systems were there to fly the air support flag. McAlpine Helicopters were in Scotland for the Superintendents Association meeting the week before but they have shunned both the ExCel event as well as the NEC show where they had been a regular sight for many years. Perhaps all it was is that the NEC event did not just roll over and die when ACPO-APA left, perhaps there is need for a re-think on how important the conference really is to the industry – especially when the delegates, the real attractions, cannot be seen.



FUTURE EVENT CANCELLED

It is understood that due to operational difficulties the proposed 3-5 October 2006 Helitech:06 to be held at Cuatro Vientos, Madrid, Spain will not now be held.

Negotiations with the Spanish authorities were ongoing until the recent fatal accident involving 2 aeroplanes from Cuatro Vientos Airport. This has resulted in the future of the airport being called into question by the authorities and as such Helitech cannot now take place in

October.

It is the intention of the organisers of Helitech to hold an event on the European mainland in the alternate year to Duxford but they will not now have time to source an alternative venue in time for October this year.

DIARY

- 10 June 2006 American Heroes Air Show. Seattle, Washington. Since 1993, the admission-free American Heroes event has been dedicated to educating the public, the media and elected officials as to the unique capabilities and dynamic role of helicopters in law enforcement, fire service, public safety, homeland defense and national security. With different event elements being added over the years, the Heroes event has become more than just an exciting air show to profile helicopters. The 'Code 3 Career Fair,' which brings together recruiting teams from law enforcement, the military; fire and public safety agencies to discuss career opportunities with event guests. FREE Admission. Contact: Jen McSkimming Email: Jen@HeliGirl.com
www.heroes-airshow.com
- 15 June 2006 Simulation Training for Emergency Response and Homeland Security in Berkshire, UK. A one day Forum The forum aims to address the methods of training and technologies now available that can provide efficient and cost-effective ways of bridging the gap between the expense and logistical difficulties of running live exercises and the issue of non-realistic scenarios of table-top exercises. For further information call +44 1628 550043
- 16-18 June 2006 POLAIR 2006 Hosted by the Metropolitan Police at Rochester Airport, Kent. <http://www.polair.org.uk/updates.htm>
- 17 June 2006 Vertical Challenge Helicopter Air Show at the Hiller Aviation Museum, San Carlos Airport 601 Skyway Road, San Carlos off Highway 101. Call +1 650 654 0200 www.hiller.org
- 17-18 June 2006 Air-Britain Classic Fly-in 2006. North Weald, Epping, Essex.+44 1992 524510 +44 1376 344441 www.air-britainflyin.co.uk
- 24-25 June 2006 AeroExpo - An International Exhibition for General Aviation from the team behind GA BUYER EUROPE Magazine. Wycombe Air Park, Buckinghamshire, UK. Police Aviation News and a number of market sector related vendors including Headset Services, Honeywell, L-3, Pooleys, Powervamp, Red Box and TLC Helilift will have stands or positions in the static park. +44 20 8255 4218 www.expo.aero
- 24 June 2006 American Heroes Air Show. Los Angeles, California. FREE Admission. Contact : Jim Paules. Email: jim@heroesairshow.com
- 5-6 July 2006. Public Sector Security 2006, Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, Shrivenham, Swindon, UK. Symposia At Shrivenham eunice@symposiaatshrivenham.com URL: www.symposiaatshrivenham.com/pss06
- 12-13 July 2006 Enforcement Expo. IX Center Cleveland, Ohio. Cygnus Expositions. Burnsville MN. www.enforcementexpo.com
- 18-23 July 2006. Farnborough International. Farnborough, Hampshire. From Monday 17 to Sunday 23 July 2006, the Aerospace community will congregate at the 45th Farnborough International Airshow (FIA). FIA offer's Exhibitors and Visitors an exclusive platform to showcase a wide range of products and services and presents an ideal setting for business to be conducted with a global audience.
- 14-15 November 2006. 8th Heli-Power at London, Olympia. Heli-Power is a military and paramilitary helicopter event. This year, running in parallel with this conference the organisers are to run their 4th Police Aviation event. The previous event was held in London in 1997. www.shephard.co.uk

