

Police Aviation News

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IPAR



AeroExpo Europe

hosts

PAvCon 2010

Pribram Airport

Prague

Czech Republic

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EDITORIAL

I write this having just returned from Prague and a four day meeting with a group who The Chairman counted up as representing thirteen nations.

For more years than I care to recall I have had a desire to bring air support from many nations together in one place to meet with and learn from each other. The style and ambition is not new, these are the aims of the US based Airborne Law Enforcement Association, and I have worked with successive Presidents and officers of that association ever since I met up with Officer Chuck Perrigey in London many years ago.

Living in a country where the word President was a magic wand I understood the humour behind the actual rank of most of the post-holders. It has never left me. Chuck was the ALEA's President, was a practitioner of the ALE craft, knew his job inside out but he was 'just' a street cop. The fact that he had just returned from overflying a shoot out over a California bank was in some way important. That placed him way superior to most of the senior ranks that inhabited the Police Aviation Conferences of 1994-96.

It is against this background the PAVCon branded Police Aviation Conference has evolved as a place where police aviation practitioners can meet together in an International Forum and learn from each other.

Its sojourn to Pribram Airfield south of Prague ticked all the boxes. Everyone was directly involved in aviation, from the officer in charge of the German Federal Police who still flies hands on to the girl who served the tea in the airfield cafe. The audience was pure aviation and so was the setting.

Each of the attending nations generally acknowledge the general superiority of the UK system even though it is currently going through a damaging evolution and they seek information on how to copy that ideal by talking freely among a group that certainly consider each friends regardless of borders. No one complained about one engine or two the general aspiration is Europe wide— go for two engines as soon as possible.

Police officers from Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, and Romania along with industry from across the globe were there, often at their own cost time and passion. Add some imported US officers on their own time and plenty of passion.

This then is a report on the setting and the talk.

Bryn Elliott

Cover Image

The cover image just about says it all in illustrating existing and future police aircraft world over.

In front is an example of the Celier Xenon autogyro, a small craft currently operating in support of the Burkino Faso police in Africa. Beyond, potentially the future, is a Bell 429.

PAN

THE VENUE

Pribram Airfield, south of Prague, Czech Republic, May 28-30, 2010

A bare eight months ago the organizers of the AeroExpo Europe approached PAVCon with a view to taking the conference to the east. The plan was always to take the 'conference' to Eastern Europe to overcome the difficulties many have in flying to the UK.

To cut the story short, the deal was done.

The perceived problem for PAVCon was that the background was a General Aviation show and the worth of the facilities at this remote airfield were going to be wholly unknown until arrival.

Many of the problems turned out to be small and the facilities turned out to be far superior to even positive expectation.

The conference facilities and associated catering at Pribram are among the best I have come across in a few years. We are not talking about five star facilities and a la carte catering but modest simple facilities that provide all that might be needed to run the operation. There is a choice of rooms with disabled access, comfortable seating and tables, and lots of aeronautical atmosphere. The IT facilities are obviously a matter of choice. The downside is the actual location of Pribram in relation to central Prague—it is a long way from the city—but the associated low costs more than make up for that.

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THE SETTING

Europe's Festival of Aviation May 28-30, 2010

An unreservedly General Aviation event that has been running in Prague for just a few years, it was returning to Pribram after a less than successful sojourn to a field nearer Prague in 2009.

Even without the directly PAVCon related aircraft types attracted some fifty aircraft were either attracted or based on to the field. As befits the GA audience the majority of the attendees were of the very light category and seemingly of little or no interest to a European police aviation audience.

For the wider airborne law enforcement market there were a number of elements that we have seen within the pages of PAN in recent months. Here was a chance to see first hand the powered parachute recently in the news as 'in service' in the USA and also to see first hand the oh so tiny Xenon autogyro that serves with the security forces in the African state of Burkino Faso.

Clearly the greater interest lay in the heavy metal that the European police aviation units are obliged to adhere to—although this term is increasingly being seen as more 'heavy plastic' as construction methods alter in response to advances in manufacture. More of this later. The weather forecast was not good but day one dawned with the threat of bad weather throughout the day, the actual weather was to be far more benign—the heavy rain only finally appearing late in the day.





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One of the aircraft types drawn to the Police Aviation Conference associated exhibits was this Airborne Technologies operated Tecnam MMA or Multi-Mission Aircraft OE-FAT.

It is currently equipped with a retractable ventral FLIR Systems sensor but was also showing a Wescam as an alternate load option. In both cases the space taken up by the sensor and its retraction gear leads to a cramped cockpit area on the ground-in the air it will be a different matter.

PAN



THE CONFERENCE

PAvCon 2010

Originally intended as a cosy meet up of regular Police Aviation Conference presenters with a relatively small number of Czech police aviators in a small venue the growth of the event into one that attracted thirteen nationalities and most of the police aviation professionals from both east and west Europe was a very pleasant surprise.

The quality of the speakers and the presentations was second to none, some attendees declared themselves hard pressed to be critical. All the presentations showed merit.

The conference commenced in typical style with a warm welcome from the host nation in the person of pilot Colonel Petr Fridrich, this in turn being followed by a Keynote presentation from the German Federal Police. This presentation on the activities of the German Federal Police was given by the most senior police representative to speak. Assistant Chief Constable [Colonel] Thomas Helbig M.A. has been in charge of the national air operations for a year, since the retirement of a previous Police Aviation Conference stalwart Gunter Carloff.

Importantly Thomas Helbig is a flyer and therefore understands the product and the problems first hand. He retains and continues to hone his flying skills, mainly flying the Eurocopter AS332L1 Super Puma and the Eurocopter EC155. He has a fliers insight and favours the types he flies based upon personal experience rather than the opinions of others. There are clear reasons why the operator chose to put itself out in selecting the AS332L1 rather than similar products from the same stable.

This important theme of presentations from those that know the business rather than those briefed but unable to countenance close questioning continued throughout the event.

The Americans, Glenn Daley, Ken Solosky and Daniel L Johnson, were particularly well received with post event requests for copies of their presentations being to the forefront.

Stepping back and looking from a European perspective it might be considered that theirs

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is the furthest away from European ideals but in fact every delegate demonstrated that they knew that the trio brought to the room experiences still not regularly experienced by the Euro cops.

High Rise Rescue and Ice rescue from Daley, a different viewpoint on disaster planning from Solosky and [especially poignant in view of recent attacks on police] the ballistics of being under fire from Johnson.

None of this is new, most of the titles have been seen at ALEA Conferences for some time, and some will be there again next month in Tucson for an ever changing and hungry audience. Personally I have seen the Daley High Rise Rescue presentation three times and I have lapped it up each time. Already the representatives of two units in Germany who were at Pribram have declared a strong desire for their colleagues to see it.

Both High Rise Rescue and Major Incident Planning grew out of 911, and were pretty 'Gung Ho' and US orientated to start with. Time has now moved on and each has now embraced a broader more internationally acceptable presentation style than their origins dictated. An acceptability that the ready requests for 'More' tends to endorse.

Until warned by people who have been there and made the mistakes—regularly—most might believe that they might muddle through but therein lies the potential for making a fool of the crew if not the whole unit and the warnings offered are probably a better way of proceeding.

Being called to a high rise rescue is a once in a lifetime experience for most, as is rescuing people from the sea or ice, it stands to reason that getting pointers from those that have been there, seen it and already made the mistakes cannot be a negative experience.



The conference room was graced with plenty of natural light and had a high level of comfort. PAN

And then we come to the most pressing presentation. The one that opens the door on being under fire from the ground.

I can sort of promise you that if you sat through this presentation you may just fly a teensy weensy bit higher next time you go out to play over a hostile crowd. The ballistics of the threat are frightening and the sight of that AStar trailing smoke and flame in the skies over Brazil should never leave you.

Do you actually know what the minimum safe height from a M1 carbine is? Well, lets say that you may just need oxygen, Dan suggests that a typical .338 round accessible in the public domain will easily reach in excess of 10,000 feet. What has come out of the presentation is that safety—though not assured—may be on your side if you keep moving. To

hover is asking for trouble.

The Americas are perhaps the most likely region to face gunfire from the ground and yet it is they that fly in full view and down low where it is particularly dangerous.

Much of this is dictated by the capability of the preferred sensor size—and that by cost—but the most popular 9 inch ball effectively drags the aircraft into harms way. Operators with access to the greater stand-off capability of say a 15 inch turret are less 'in your face' to the gunmen but are still well into lethal range.

All conferences are a meeting place, most of the true personal development gain comes from interacting with like minded professionals before, during and after the 'set piece' presentations. That is the core of Networking, an overused term but in many ways more important than the public face of the event. The speaker that arrives ten minutes before their 'slot' and briskly leaves afterwards is not playing the system as it should be. No one gains from that but sadly there have been a number of instances where it has taken place.

Likewise with the seemingly standard 'This is what we do and how we do it' national presentations. At all times it is difficult for presenters new to their craft to second guess what the exact interest of the audience is. National presentations from the representatives from Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Romania and Spain were necessarily short on detail but their availability over the few days allowed the speakers and Networking to extract the detail in a less formal manner.

The manner in which different nations call out their aircraft illustrates a massive difference in style. In Britain the man on the street can directly request a helicopter from the unit [they of course have the right to say no] but most other nations have a multi-stepped procedure where the simple street request is made to the local boss, then he to the area boss and so on until the message gets to the aircraft unit. Few are as bad as the system reputedly in place in China where the request to even fly has to pass through military generals regardless of who originated the original request.

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Not every police attendee and speaker was directly air support and it was a refreshing change to see that the Belgian presentation brought together an air support officer and one of his customers.; an officer from Antwerp bringing to the event the 'end user' perspective, one that perhaps I personally identify with [albeit some 20 years down the road]. Having broken that wall down perhaps there is a greater need to bring in police officers from all areas of this user category in future. Pilots and observers/TFO's have their viewpoint but so do dog/K9 handlers, controllers, engineers and the officers on the street who stand to receive the greatest personal safety gain from air support in general.

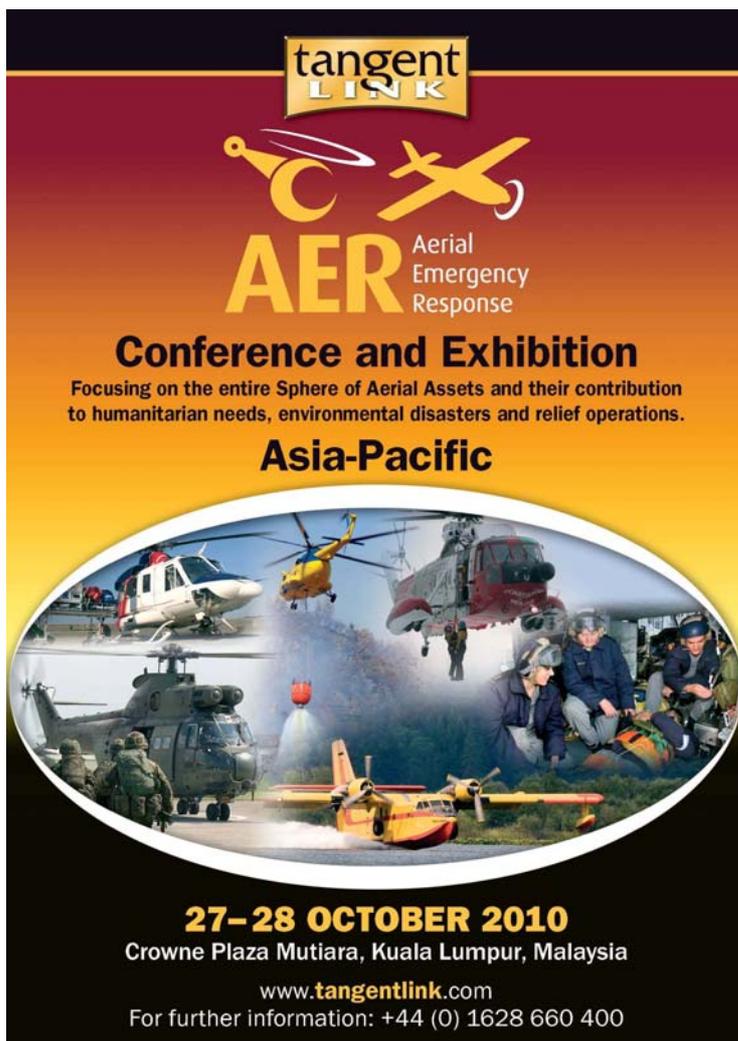
Over the years delegates have perhaps voiced most negatively over the commercial presentations.

On the one hand they are the source of finance that allows cheaper access to police to the event in the first place on the other they tend to be the source of the driest presentations served up. I will say that this time we were particularly lucky in the standard of all the presentations and there were no stand-out 'duds' to be endured, but it is not always so.

The other way to view these presentations is that they, rather than the police presentations, are the ones that paint a picture of the future. By their nature police presentations are all about history, 'What we did....' 'How we did it...' but most commercials are about 'This is what we can offer for the future...'

Whether the product takes the delegates interest of course varies immensely.

If you are a 100% helicopter operator with no intention of moving from that stance you are never likely to have any great interest in presentations on the range of Vulcanair or Diamond fixed wing aircraft, but equally having knowledge of these craft might just answer an endurance problem you face for a 'once in a lifetime' mission where a one off lease in might



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just be both economic and appropriate. Even a little knowledge of what else is out there in the market place can open doors at the most unexpected times.

In a way that is why Police Aviation News is so lucky, there are no boundaries to its content. It could be just about helicopters—that is the general public perception of what police fly in—but a look at the cover image belies the truth of this industry. Each of the three aircraft types in the image [helicopter, autogyro and fixed wing] has its place in law enforcement. PAVCon seeks to reflect that.

Many out there believe, and have believed for a long time, that Police Aviation Conferences are a waste of time and there is nothing to be learned from academics, senior officers and pen pushers.

Check!

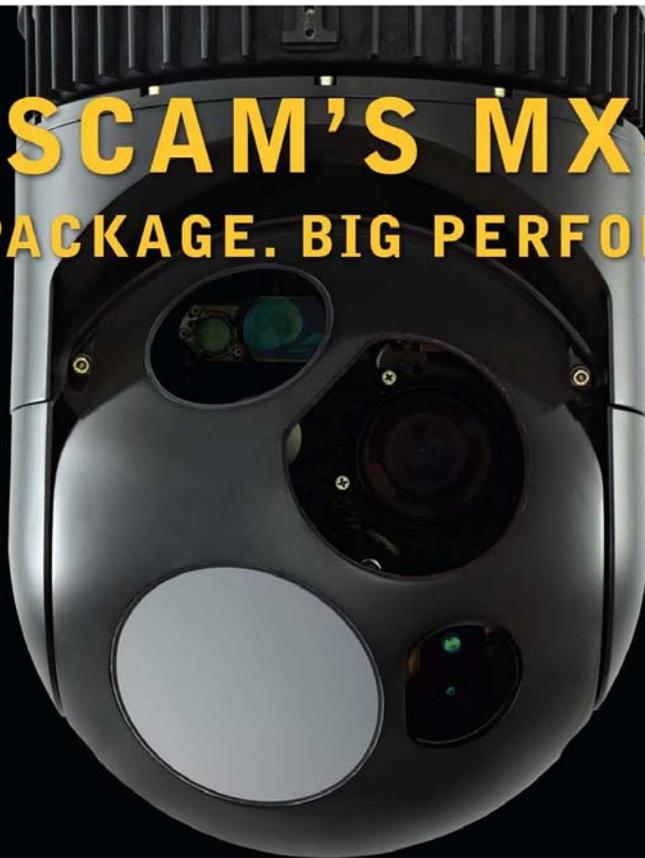
That's where PAVCon is different, it seeks to always bring current and former practitioners to the podium and to vary their output in bringing areas of likely operational experience to a wider audience.

A lot depends on the region where the event is taking place and the latest ebb and flow of 'things most likely' to be of interest.

It was noteworthy that Pribram barely touched on the subject of unmanned aircraft large and small. Currently, and with the possible exception of the US borders where real heavy hardware is supportable by direct government finance, their likely use is on the wane as the in service date slips beyond the magic 2012. Next year may well be different.

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Where PAVCon goes from here is largely an unknown. Last year in the UK venue was poorly supported by those it was designed for but fortunately industry stayed with the less cost easy access product and this year its fair to say that PAVCon was widely welcomed into Eastern Europe by police and industry alike. It may be a learning curve but it is also very much accepted as a social event for everyone.

This year is not yet over but nominally 2011 is to be held in the UK but if it has to stay away from its place of birth then it will do. Already the signs are that 2012 will be confirmed as being held in Germany.

towards 2011-12

CONFERENCE ATTENDEES 2010

- Belgium Federal Air Support*
- Belgium Antwerp Police*
- Bulgaria Police Air Support*
- Czech Republic Police Air Support*
- France Gendarmerie Air Support*
- Germany Federal Police Air Support*
- Germany Thuringia Police Helicopter Unit*
- Spain Basque Police Air Support*
- Romania Police Special Aviation Unit*
- UK Home Office NPJA*
- US Los Angeles Police Air Support*
- US New York Police Air Section*
- US Newark New Jersey Police Air Support*

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Along With the good comes the bad and PAVCon 2010 saw Ken Solosky, former Chief Pilot of the New York Police Department signing off from his post retirement position as the Chief Pilot of the Newark New Jersey PD air operation at the PAVCon podium. As far as this relates to PAVCon it will be a case of no change but the domestic situation back home went sour as Ken set off for Prague. Alas it is a scene regularly seen in US airborne law enforcement—the unit has gone.

Around three years ago in an attempt to turn around raging gang and drug problems the City of Newark has added a number of different working practices to its law enforcement solutions, among them the introduction of a 35-years old searchlight equipped DoD surplus Bell OH-58 [N12NP 73-21906]. At the time there were ideas that they would add a further helicopter 'shortly'.

Association with both the multi-aircraft NYPD operation [Bell 206/412 and Agusta A119] and the hand-to-mouth Kiowa operation [create it—manage it—fly it] gave Ken a good insight to the vast differences between large and small and he brought those knowledge based experiences to earlier Police Aviation Conferences.



Ken went in there as the sole pilot, trained up another and not only got the operation going but also managed to get a series of role equipment upgrades in place on the aircraft. The upgrades cost as much as the aircraft was worth but within weeks, just as Ken was stepping on to the Delta aircraft for Europe he got the message that the City had pulled the plug on the operation at the end of May.

I guess that if the Celier Xenon autogyro in the static park had not carried the 'POLICE' stencil on its flanks I would never have picked up the leaflet and asked the questions. But it did and I asked.

It seems that Burkina Faso, previously known as Upper Volta, and a former French African colony has created a low-cost air support operation for its law enforcement agencies. This appears to be the first known instance of a police related acquisition since Burkino Faso was granted independence in August 1960. The newly formed air force received the usual package of ex-French military types including single examples of the SA316B, AS350B, two AS565, three Mil Mi-8 and one each of the Cessna 172 and 337, but there is no reliable information about police use of these.

Last year however the country received the first two of four Celier Aviation XENON autogyros. Celier build the type in Poland as the Xenon 2 and XL but the Pribram display was by Virviky Celier Aviation the local agent in the Czech Republic.

Celier market the tiny craft as an 'astonishing design' but clearly it is not marketed for the European law enforcement market with its requirement for twin engines and SPIFR. That

Reims F406 Land & Sea Surveillance

high-end specification requirement may not be popular with many but it is a fact of life. The craft is 'safe' - a label all autogyros claim—and it carries some records of its own; they were elected Grand Champion for the year 2007 in the USA and best Light Sport Aircraft in Menton USA, in 2008 and 2009. It is perhaps another option for Department of Justice promotion alongside the powered parachute.

Engine options include a turbo version of the Rotax 912. It competes with and surpasses with ease the traditional complex, heavy on fuel and noisy Rotax 914. The Mitsubishi turbo they have installed is oversized and does not need to spool up at a max RPM to deliver power. Options to meet local regulations offer power between 100 to 135 hp.

Celier Aviation is at Nowowiejskiego 26a / 96-313 Jaktorów-Kolonia, Poland. E-mail the designer at raphael@celieraviation.eu or check out www.celieraviation.eu



One of the last arrivals among the delegates was the Chief Pilot from Gippsland Aeronautics who were exhibiting their GA-8 Airvan in the show. The type is pretty much sidelined as far as mainstream European law enforcement aviation is concerned but that will not stop either non-Europeans or commercial operators using it in a surveillance role. The Airvan has seen a ready acceptance in the USA where the Civil Air Patrol use it—compared to the usual Cessna 172 fare it is their 'large type' in the fleet.

The Airvan is now a mature, cost effective product with a demonstrated operational history that the company wishes to promote to the law enforcement community. Despite the limitations imposed by the twin rules Gippsland consider the PAVCon event to be the ideal European platform for this purpose. As a manufacturer and exhibitor at the Aero Expo at Pribram having both events together makes a lot of sense for them bringing forward the potential of flight demonstrations for the law enforcement community representatives. Such opportunities are not always available. This applies to US ALEA events as well where the exhibition, hotel and airport are all separated by a significant amount.






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More likely to see acceptance in the European law enforcement market is Gippsland's next product—the return of the Nomad twin turbine craft.

Boeing Australia Limited sold certification authority for the aircraft to Gippsland in June 2008. The sale includes technical and spares sales support and all intellectual property for the Nomad aircraft worldwide.

The Australian Government Aircraft Factory, later renamed Aerospace Technologies of Australia Ltd. (ASTA), designed the Nomad in 1965. The first prototype flew in 1971, and production concluded in 1984. Fifty-four Nomads remain operational worldwide.

Boeing Australia Limited acquired the Nomad type certificate in 1996 after The Boeing Company purchased the Rockwell group of businesses, including ASTA.



Bell Helicopter had their model 429 C-FTNB [c/n 57002] on display at the show and Gordon Harveson their local representative gave a presentation of it and their local support network based in Prague to PAVCon.

The 429 was not officially in the Czech Republic during its appearance, there was an official launch in Prague on the Monday after the show.

This airframe is expected to be the European demonstrator through this summer and will therefore be at Berlin and Farnborough among others.



For the rest background everyday Pribram continues to survive on a stock of Eastern designs, an Antonov AN-2 and a Let 410 providing lifts aloft for the parachutists when working. The airfield is modernizing and the facilities are good but it needs to overcome some pretty



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dire identity faults. Unless you have a GPS or some very accurate directions [written by some dinosaur brought up on getting places without a GPS] it's the devils own to find. Day-to-day road signage is tiny and unclear all of which places an undue pressure on the Aero-expo organizers to get their signs out quickly for exhibitor and attendee alike. Overall though a great aeronautical venue for the conference, and economic too.

As this is a blatant advertorial for the PAvCon brand, I will wrap up this report by reviewing some of the answers to the end of conference questionnaire with little embarrassment on my part—these at least are not the organisers words....

In one sentence can you tell us what PAvCon means to you?

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THANKS

Thanks to the Aeroexpo team. Paddy, Astrid and Alex, for thinking of putting PAVCon in some first class facilities at Pribram. The team are currently building up to their other show at Wycombe in the UK as I write so it is a busy time of year for them.

Thanks too to all the speakers for their time and enthusiasm, and to the Czech Police for welcoming us into their home country and bringing an operational aircraft [EC135 OK-BYD above] to the show for the delegates to crawl over.

Lastly and not to be forgotten the commercial companies that embraced the event and its aims and injected the funding that oiled the wheels that made all the other bits happen.



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