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Special Edition ALEA Conference 2010

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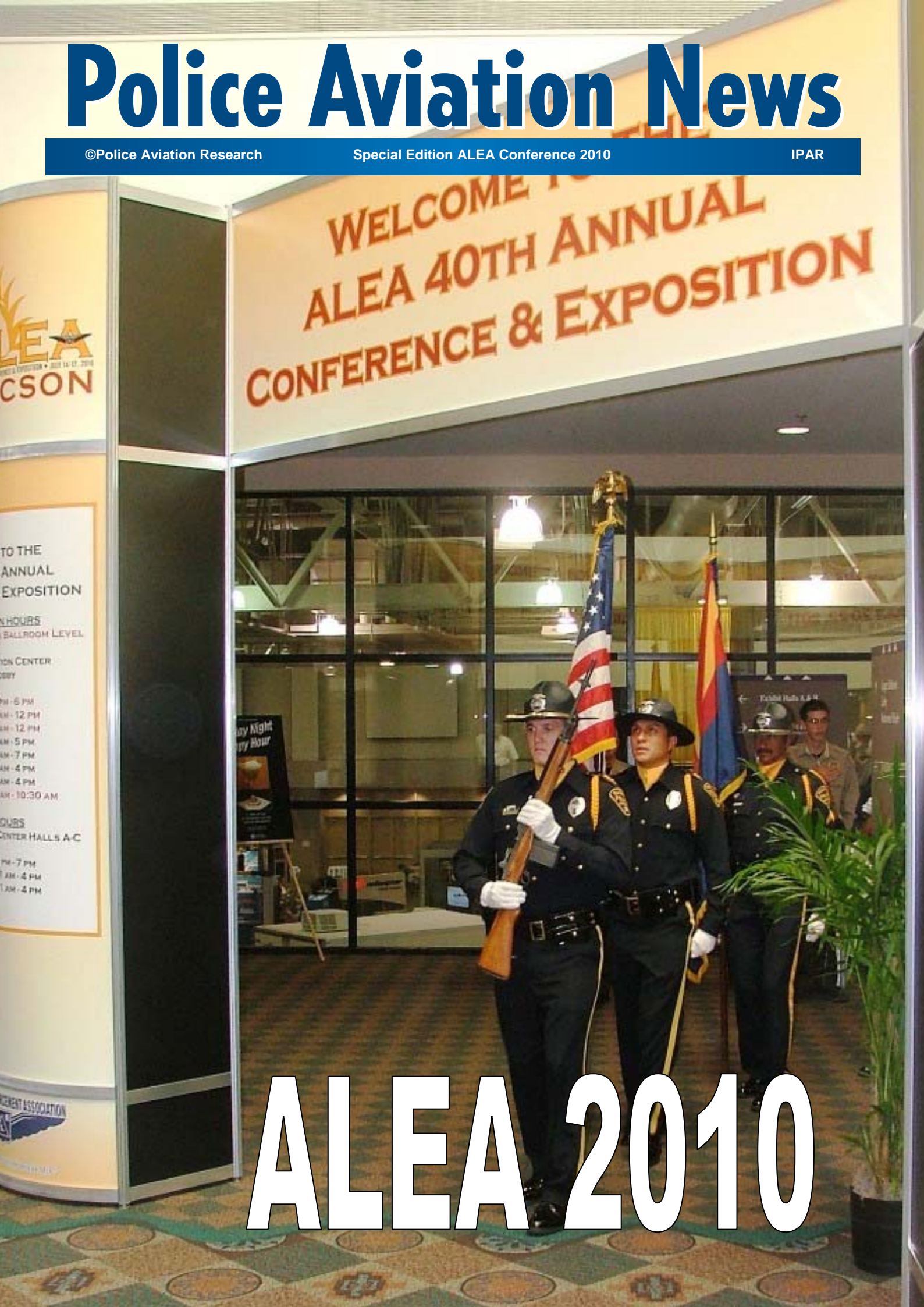
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AIRBORNE LAW ENFORCEMENT ASSOCIATION [ALEA] ANNUAL EXPO TUCSON, Arizona, USA July 14-16

Following tradition this year's Annual Conference and Exposition took place under the searing summer heat of a southern US State – in this instance Tucson, Arizona. As explained before the plan is to offer the membership a high quality hotel and venue at low cost to the ALEA, as a rule US citizens avoid flying to the southern states so it is low season for them and offering keen prices. Unfortunately it is high season in the rest of the world and getting to these locations from elsewhere in the world is expensive.

If there was a flaw it was that the main event Hilton group hotel was a considerable distance, a few miles, from the *Convention Center* in Downtown Tucson. Both superb in themselves but with transport difficulties incorporated. It is not that the journey is in any way arduous, it is simply an added cost and it reduces the free flow of delegates between hotel and show.

For the long distance traveller, the future does not promise a great deal of change, it was announced that the decision had been made to hold next years conference in New Orleans as planned and then move to a regular four year cycle that would take in Reno, Nevada, Orlando, Florida and Houston, Texas with each fourth year being a 'wild card' location. It is never likely to migrate to a temperate area location, even the best quoted prices around the East Coast were at least double those in the hot southern states. I have never visited either New Orleans or Reno but both Orlando and Houston are venues that exhibit all that is best about keeping the hotels and venues close at hand.

Before the start of the event ALEA predicted that attendance numbers in Tucson might be down. Politics rears its ugly head once again.

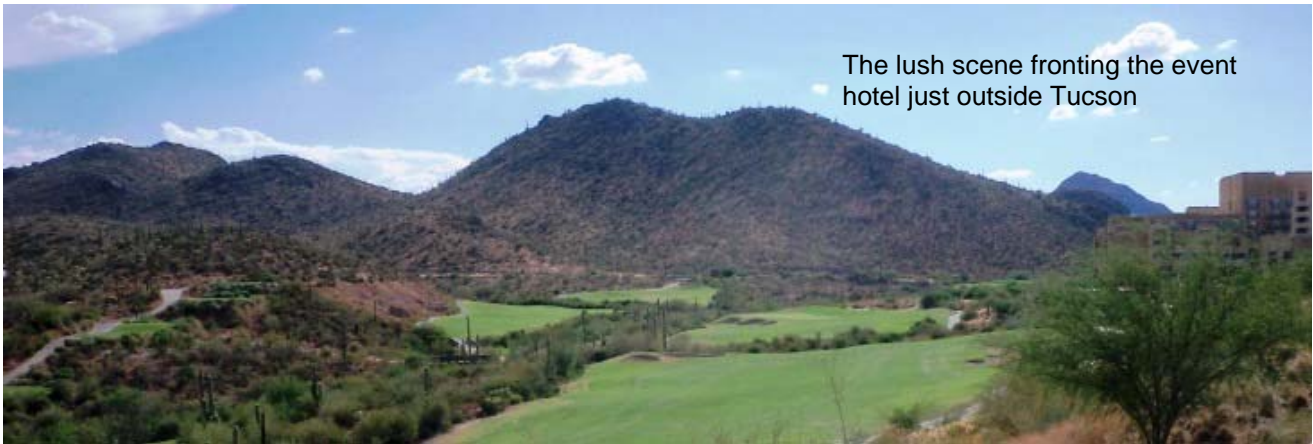
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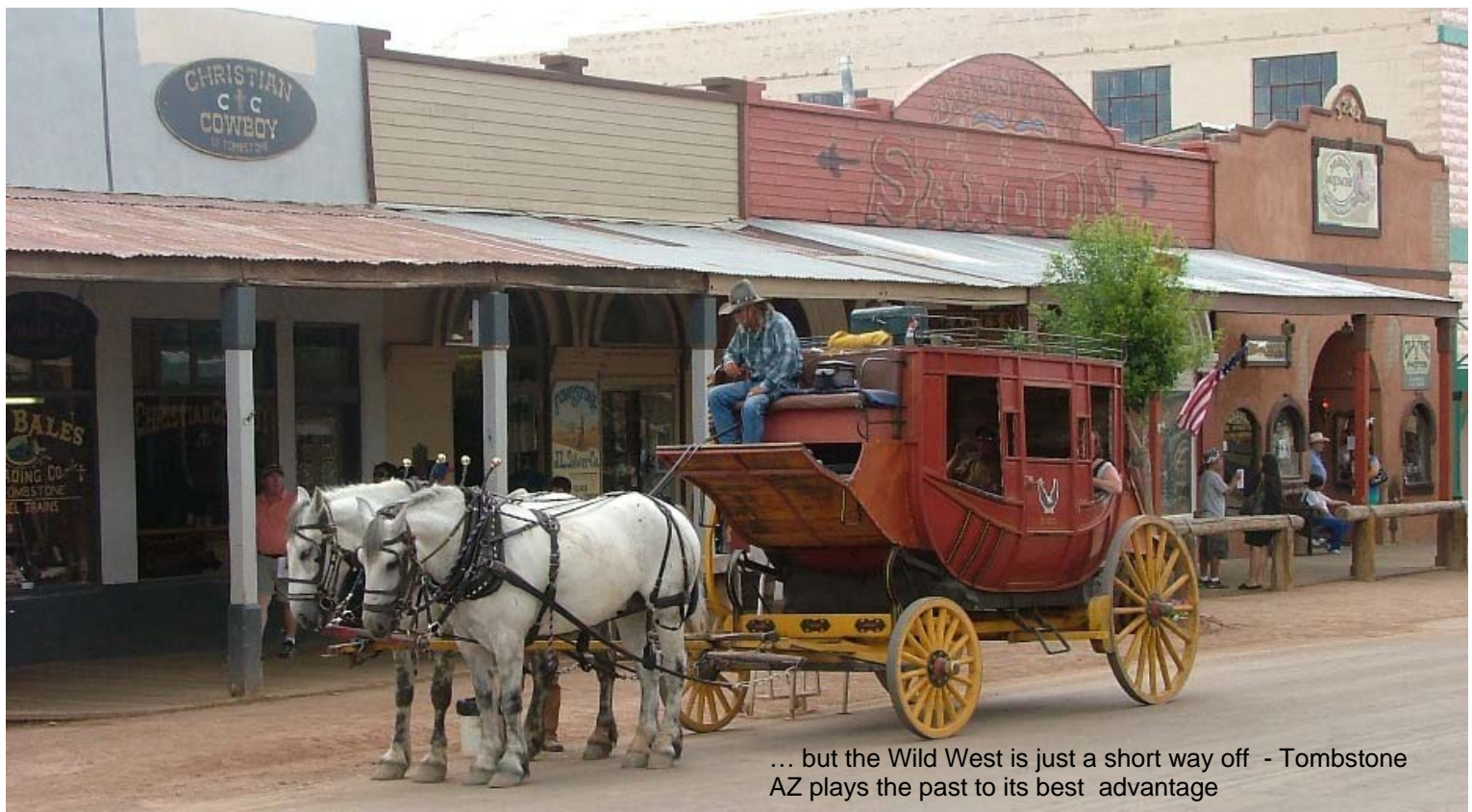
The lush scene fronting the event hotel just outside Tucson

The fallout from a controversial piece of legislation penned by Arizona lawmakers was expected to effectively stop some members attending.

In April, Arizona Governor Jan Brewer signed into law what has been described as the toughest illegal immigration legislation in the US to date. The law allows peace officers to ask people who have been stopped for any sort of criminal or suspicious activity, to provide proof of US citizenship or legal alien status. As a result, several major cities and counties have decided to officially boycott Arizona businesses, and that was predicted to lead to regulations prohibiting some employees travelling into Arizona on official business. The affected areas included Los Angeles, the District of Columbia and Columbus, Ohio.

ALEA books its venues years in advance to guarantee space and the discounts and was committed to Tucson long before the law had been proposed, let alone passed.

In the event, although some delegates were indeed 'prohibited' from travel to Tucson in practical terms it simply meant that the delegate journeys could not draw on funding from their employers. Not an unusual situation for some ALEA members already. This is a popular member organisation and delegates often pay their own way. Weeks after the ALEA meetings a judge blocked the most controversial sections of Arizona's new immigration law from taking effect just hours before they were enacted into law. Heady stuff to surround a member orientated conference.



... but the Wild West is just a short way off - Tombstone AZ plays the past to its best advantage

Where the exhibition lasts for three days there are conferences, meetings and classes throughout the week, some are paid for by the attendee or their employer but others, primarily those during the exhibition, are free to all. As mentioned in previous commentary on this subject presentations are considerably, 3 or more times, longer than those typical in the European Shephard and PAvCon series. Conferences.

Attendee members at the meeting on day one this year reflected last years mid-70 figure recorded at Savannah, GA, so member numbers held up. There were International ALEA member visitors at the event but distance and cost play their part and the most high profile long distance attendees were two officers attending from Botswana.

The opening ceremony was a clone of many that have gone before, a mixture of pomp, national pride and religion provided by the very smart Tucson PD detail, the ALEA President Martin L Jackson and the most rugged preacher I have ever seen! Regardless of your views on each of those subjects you cannot fail to be moved by the ceremony and the expressed dedication to the flag. I very much doubt it would get a welcome in most of Europe but this is home territory and definitely lapped up. In the UK it would take a week to find a flag, let alone a police person able to hold it properly, so more power to the ALEA.



Martin L Jackson current ALEA President [centre in red] is joined by members of the ALEA board and representatives of the hosting units [the US Border Patrol and Tucson PD] in cutting the ribbon to open day 1 of the exhibition event.

Times are hard but ALEA were able to claim that the main exhibit hall was full to overflowing and as a result a neighbouring arena took some of the strain by hosting the few airframes and a couple of curtained classrooms. The ALEA booth was itself set up in something of a backwater in the main hall. Although things could have been tightened up here and there to accept more exhibitors the event was pretty full. A number of long term exhibitors were running thin booths, others were absent but still there were new attendees, most notably from Australia and the UK.

For those attending to see 'real' airframes they were to be disappointed; perhaps reflecting hard times at the pointed end, the number of operational aircraft on site was unusually low. The local Tucson PD had a Bell present at the Convention Center throughout but the other attendees were basically vendor sponsored. AgustaWestland showed an A119 Koala from Phoenix PD, American Eurocopter a pre-delivery AS350 for Texas DPS, Bell a two years old King County 407, N407KS brought down from Washington State so by no means a local bird, or new. MD Helicopters continue to have a thin time and current



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deliveries are playing catch up on past orders. This year it is claimed new orders have been scarce, three has been quoted and that is far from comforting for this once great company. They brought along the MD500E delivered this year to the Pasadena PD, N501RM. The City of Pasadena might well have missed the completeness of its air cover during the show, Enstrom brought the LA Impact Model 480 which is operated in cooperation with the City. Sikorsky and Robinson displayed standard examples of the S300C and R44 respectively.

At another level there were examples of UAV's and the recently promoted powered parachute and a non-rigid wing type termed the trike. Only the powered parachute displayed was an in service example, although this will change in the short term under the series of Department of Justice promotions that have brought air support to the parts of law enforcement other aerial devices could not reach. The police in the UK and other places may sneer at the efforts of the volunteer forces in their region [mainly the Skywatch CAP] but needs must and these are real gun toting cops doing all they can to acquire eyes in the sky *at all costs*. The parachute and trike are low cost experiments that work for the smaller 'city' or town that cannot expect to get air support to themselves from the State Resources in a reasonable time. Even states with large resources can take ages to get airborne assistance to requesting agencies across what are vast tracts of land. There have been issues with the personnel assigned to these lighter than light air operations being totally untrained [as is allowed by US law for Public Use] but I now understand that all of the pilots are trained up.

The UAV situation in the US law enforcement regime has mellowed somewhat, enough for the Insitu and one of the quad rotors to be displayed, but there is still a distance to go. It is now possible to fly the light quad rotor in the open more easily but there are still silly issues surrounding police officers in uniform even playing with what most would consider toys. As I say it is getting better but there is a fair way to go yet.

North American Surveillance Systems Inc., (NASS), a global leader in surveillance system integration, has introduced its new mission conversion system Fast Eagle.

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“NASS designed Fast Eagle to be the industry’s premier ‘roll on...roll off’ airborne surveillance system,” said Richard McCourt, NASS President. “Aviation teams can change their rotary or fixed-wing aircraft from a full ISR system back to passenger or cargo configuration in less than half an hour.”

NASS recognised the need for a fast mission conversion system to enable aircraft to be quickly reconfigured between multiple operational roles without degrading availability. Fast Eagle is designed to provide aviation professionals with the ability to complete a mission change from surveillance to logistics or passenger carrying in 30 minutes or less.

In the current difficult financial situation having a multiple mission specific fleet is even less affordable and cost-effective than it was, Fast Eagle is an answer that allows a single aircraft to undertake multiple missions with greater ease.


The installation and integration of a typical Fast Eagle system takes about three to four weeks at the NASS Deland Operations Center (NDOC) in northern Florida.

NASS specialises in the installation and integration of ISR, communications and weapons systems for airborne, maritime and ground-based applications. The company has more than 15 years of experience in the integration of a range of surveillance, night vision and weapon systems into customer aircraft and helicopters Call David W Ayotte VP Marketing and Sales on + 1 760-807-4491 e-mail dayotte@nassusa.net www.nassusa.net

Dart Helicopter Services of Oceanside, California a leading provider of STC’d aftermarket helicopter upgrades and accessories and prolific authors of press releases to let the world know they exist – usually by a litany of new certifications- were at the show displaying a number of popular police helicopter items.

Included were a kit to convert standard cabin doors to sliding doors, Bear Paw skid shoe attachments for the Eurocopter AS350 line, and seatbelt upgrades.

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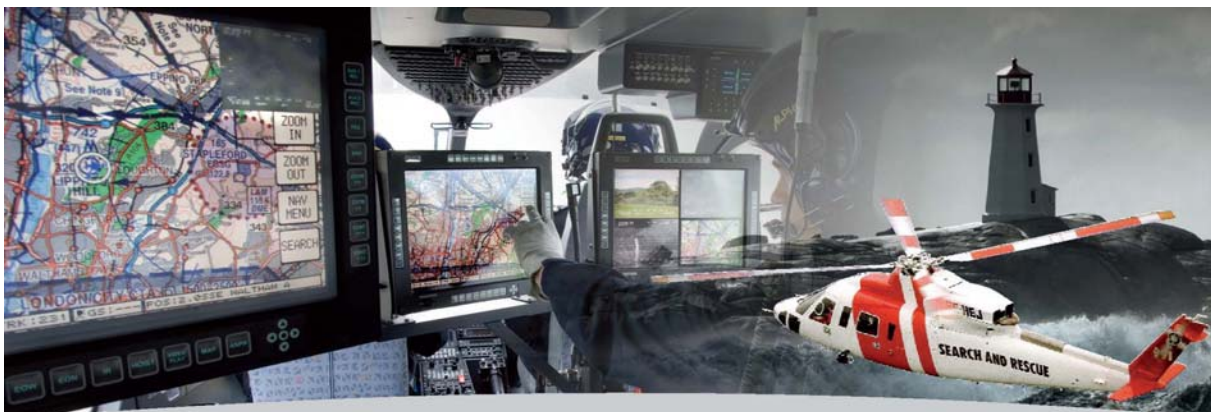
AeroComputers, based in Oxnard, California were showing a number of airborne moving map systems and components. Jon Marshal, marketing executive, brought along the companies full line of tactical mission management equipment for airborne law enforcement, with the UC-5100 digital mapping system and a new series of high definition displays being the prime elements.

The presence of the ALEA show on US soil tends to reduce the number of foreign exhibitors but the effects of ongoing take-overs quickly blur national boundaries. UK company Skyquest Ltd, the major integrator and supplier of nearly all of the very high tech police aircraft in UK police operations is now part of Curtiss Wright Controls. Both of the long standing brand names may be unfamiliar to many of the US visitors to Tucson but their products will be increasingly familiar every time they view images of the interior of modern UK police aircraft observer [TFO] displays. Examples of their work have been around so long that they are now being superseded by a new generation. The most familiar may be the Devon & Cornwall Eurocopter BK117C-1 G-DCPA, leading edge technology when it was introduced, now replaced in service by the latest Skyquest role fit in the Eurocopter EC145.



The brand now benefits from increased exposure and growth potential within the aerospace and defence embedded computing markets, while at the same time making use of the multi-million dollar investments and infrastructure of Curtiss-Wright in sales, marketing, engineering and manufacturing. That said ALE is a brand new market for Curtiss-Wright, the addition of Skyquest's airborne solutions to its products enhances the overall Curtiss-Wright Controls Embedded Computing market position. Skyquest is not a stranger to the US market – it has appeared at Heli-Expo in the past and has appeared in its own right within PAN in the past – but it will be undertaking additional exposure in the future.

Night vision equipment and technology leader, REBTECH is expanding its capability and capacity as a result of a growing demand for night vision capable equipment and services



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both for the military and civil aircraft markets. The most active segments continue to be law enforcement and air medical aircraft. To meet the increasing demand, the company is adding technical and support staff as well as investing in additional equipment at their main location in Bedford, Texas. The military and Para-military market also continue to be a large part of the efforts at the plant. The company recently completed military NVG cockpit and cabin modifications in Canada, South America and the Middle East. Additionally, the company has performed NVG modifications on over 130 aircraft in the past 12 months for air medical customers around the US.

An example of their NVG conversion was on the AEC stand in the Texas DPS AS350B2. the company received an order from the Broward County Sheriff Department to perform an NVG configuration of their new EC135, following on from earlier work for the operator.

Night Flight Concepts was showing new training, product and services options for night vision operations that promise to deliver greater safety, enhanced performance and reduce operation costs to customers. Representatives from the Night Flight Concepts were delivering several sessions at ALEA to share best practices and help others learn how to implement night vision goggles (NVGs) successfully.

The company launched its new NVIOTM Night Vision Computer-Based Training at the show. The new 3D Night Vision Goggle (NVG) Computer Based Training (CBT) solution is designed to merge cutting-edge technologies with exceptional night vision programme expertise, the new CBT is set to optimise NVG training and maintenance programs, helping organizations increase operational readiness, enhance performance and safety, and decrease costs.



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Times continue to be hard for the industry but even more so for MD Helicopters. The company is making deliveries but most are legacy—the current year has seen few sales.

Organisations face a variety of challenges training and maintaining competence in night vision operations. Challenges, such as demanding operational tempos, fiscal restraints and limited access to equipment, training and operational support and experience, greatly reduce the viability of traditional training methods.

The new NVG CBT provides users with self-paced 3D interactive instruction on NVG training and maintenance. The modules allow personnel to train at their convenience without impact on operational tempos. Use of 3D media and Synthetic Environments allow personnel to reinforce knowledge and gain experience on a broad range of procedures and scenarios in context, increasing training efficiency and effectiveness to train individuals to competency faster than using traditional learning methods.

Additional information is available from the company direct or can be viewed on their websites. www.nviosystems.com www.nightflightconcepts.com

Becker Avionics were exhibiting a range of Audio Control Units and Digital Audio and Intercom Systems (including DVCS6100) delivered as Night Vision Goggle (NVG) NVIS green B compatible, or upon request as NVG certified.

In the wake of recent FAA rule making for NVG operation Becker Avionics is endeavoring to offer a better and safer solution for its customers as the industry moves towards expanding NVG operations.

The DVCS6100 has been designed for both rotary and fixed-wing applications. The product fully reflects Becker Avionics' know-how of more than four decades in audio system development. Since the market introduction of the 1st DVCS generation in 2005, 700 systems have been delivered, with all achieving outstanding field reliability. A continuous product improvement programme has made the DVCS6100 another Becker Avionics success story. www.beckerusa.com or www.becker-avionics.com.

FLIR Systems, Inc. announced a \$5.4M order from US Customs and Border Protection (CBP). The contract award is for Star SAFIRE(R) HD stabilized multi-sensors. The units delivered under this order will be used to assist the CBP air assets in their performance on missions guarding the borders of the United States.

As is common with such contracts the number of units involved was in this purchase not disclosed.

FlightSafety were promoting their locally based high tech AS350 Flight Training Device that provides the full range of weather conditions, day/night ambient lighting, NVG (they have the only FTD certified for non-military NVG training), a full range of systems malfunctions and failures, event scenes, brown-out/white-out and even a wide range of 'awkward landing scenarios - roof-top and ground-level landing pads, industrial, urban, piers on the river and off-shore oil platforms.

Because this is an FTD, not an aircraft the pilot and TFO are both in the cockpit functioning as a crew when you have an engine failure at night; you can train with your crew the same way you fly.

After the show FlightSafety were setting up demonstrations of their Tucson FTD so attendees could experience the training opportunities for themselves.

PAN has carried stories about Persistent Surveillance Systems before and they were again at the ALEA show promoting their own brand of surveillance based upon a circling fixed wing aircraft and multiple cameras, both airborne and on the ground.

Persistent Surveillance Systems president and founder Ross McNutt, a retired U.S. Air Force officer continues to promote a system that gives air observation a degree of 3D reality that can be wound and rewound to enable planners and investigators an unique view on crime and public disturbance.

Using the combination of camera systems the company is able to monitor 16 square miles at any given time and would seem to fit into a 2012 Olympics site scenario observing and recording of any incident that happened within the monitored area.



In one instance they were able to return to a recording and observe a crime taking place and then track the criminal back to his own home – where he was subsequently arrested. Very much a ‘Big Brother’ scenario but of course only in the observed areas.

The last time PAN looked at the product it was in development but now it has been on the open market since late last year and earning its keep.

The system costs around \$2,000 an hour for a comprehensive service of aircraft, cameras, pilotage and ground support interlinked by data links. The price though is cheaper per hour than many police helicopters and the company believes they are more efficient and more competitive.

Bell Helicopter announced the expansion of performance capabilities to its line of 206L single-engine helicopters with performance upgrade offerings to customers at a reduced price.



Bell has spent the past year listening to customer feedback and evaluating the performance of this product line and as a result reduced the price for its 206L1+ and 206L3+ Performance Plus Upgrade Kits.

Introduced late last year, the performance plus upgrade kit provides extended life for continuous operation on Bell 206L1 and 206L3 helicopters. Long-time customer Air-Evac Lifeteam partnered with Bell Helicopter in kit development and was the first to install the performance upgrade on their aircraft. This provides the customer with enhanced aircraft performance and reliability and increase operational efficiencies by reducing direct operating costs, increasing payload capacity and the transmission takeoff power rating, standardising fleet configurations, and streamlining spare parts procurement.





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The Bell Training Academy has been added to the Government Service Administration's (GSA) Acquisition schedule, thereby reducing the cost of training for law enforcement officers and simplifying the contracting process.

Airborne law enforcement and other government customers can access the entire Bell Training Academy course catalogue on the GSA Acquisition schedule, providing them with a fast, flexible and cost-effective resource to meet all their training needs.

Earlier this year, the Bell Training Academy was awarded a five (5) year contract with the GSA. By allowing state and local agencies to take advantage of the purchasing power of the federal government, the GSA program streamlines the procurement process providing them with a reliable and proven resource for discounted "best-value" prices for services at the Bell Training Academy.

Meanwhile the Training Academy has placed into service its new Bell 429 training helicopter. This 429 training helicopter was the first to be delivered to Bell Training Academy in support of its customers.

The Academy offers a Bell 429 Pilot Transition Course that consists of more than 20 classroom hours, four hours of training time in the 429 Flight Training Device (FTD) and up to five hours of flight time in the new Bell 429 training helicopter with an additional two hours of FTD training and up to three hours of additional flight time in the Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) transition.

A pilot refresh course will be available next year and includes the entire 429 pilot training suite of classroom hours, FTD and flight time.

Located at Alliance Airport in Fort Worth, Texas, the Bell Training Academy delivers the finest helicopter training with highly skilled professional pilot and technical instructors. Training at the BTA incorporates the latest technological advancements into its aviation training programs and continues to invest in the development of new, industry-leading initiatives to promote helicopter safety.

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American Eurocopter are also enhancing their training facilities and at the show announced the coming of an AS350 simulator that will be used for ALEA's Advanced Tactical Flight Officer training course. The simulator is scheduled to be operational towards the end of this year and it will be one of the most technologically advanced, single-engine helicopter simulators in the world.

Pictured in the photo are (l-r): Ed Van Winkle, AE Law Enforcement Market Manager; Martin Jackson, ALEA President; Patrick McNamara, San Antonio Police Department Sergeant and Chairman of the ALEA Training and Education Committee; Andy Literall, AE Sales Manager - Simulation and Training Services.

In another area of expertise the Europeans and Australians are piling the pressure on the traditional US searchlight manufacturers Spectrolab. Both Thommen [Austria] and Trakka [Victoria, Australia] were in the exhibit hall promoting equipment that will be fully certified when the customer takes delivery.

In the USA Trakka have already made the sales and are getting positive feedback from their largely shy customer base. The story is that the Customs and Border Patrol and other Federal customers have them but will not release images that might tend to promote or endorse the product. So far nothing else has come out in the market place that confirms these customers.

Looking something like an article of stage lighting and running particularly cool Trakka is a somewhat different 'alternative' product to the Austrian Thommen HSL 1600 IR which looks pretty conventional and has yet to go to market.

Derived from an original Russian searchlight which continues to sell into the CIS Region market the Thommen version is being reengineered to take on board all the knowledge that Thommen has built up over the years selling and certifying its renowned aircraft instruments.

Launched last year the certification process will end up with customers being offered something that looks to be little more than a more streamlined SX-16 but will offer a more robust and streamlined 'intelligent' light offering functionality not available in helicopter searchlights currently in the market.

As highlighted in the recent adverts carried in PAN the HSL 1600 IR design features integrated circuitry for all power management and control including direct integration for active slaving with onboard infrared, daylight camera, and moving map systems. All the assemblies, mechanisms and connecting wires of the searchlight are within the streamlined casing of the searchlight. The integration of these components into the unit itself eliminates aerodynamic issues and the need for any additional remote junction boxes and intermediate cabling. An automatic aerodynamic parking position when switched off, placing the lens facing aft avoiding potential damage from bird strikes and other FOD. An optional, bolt-on low power IR illuminator mounted on bottom of the searchlight casing which allows the unit operating in the IR mode to leave the main lamp off reducing the power consumption and the heat signature of the aircraft. An optional Laser Target Designator is available.



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The show is not just about the hall and the exhibitors booths. The major manufacturers – or those that still aspire to that classification – have their own special events, usually evenings set aside where they entertain the gathered members and even rival manufacturers and their wives with a variety of well thought out themes.

As the traditional home industry [although that is getting increasingly fuzzy distinction] and the ‘Nations favourite helicopter supplier’ Bell usually does well in the kudos stakes and this year was no different. With the delegates having had the run of the exhibition for a now pretty established ‘sneak preview’ they corralled the Pima Air Museum just outside Tucson and bussed everyone there for a clearly branded night out.

For those unaware about Pima [including me before I got there] Pima is the mostest in air museums. It is just across the road from Davies Monthan Air Base where the US military stores its old airframes prior to scrapping. Over the years the rarest of all breeds have been simply pushed across the road into Pima so it has some of the rarest of the rare within its copious portals. When you have a few million acres of Nevada desert to play with and pleasant ambient atmospherics you do not have to think too much about whether it will fit. There seems to be a lot of repeats airframes sitting outside in the very hot sun but I guess that each is a different model, perhaps the biggest problem is convincing the Russian’s that this air force is actually never going to fly again. Bell invited all of us the take a beer and eat heartily in one of its hangars. Oh well if I have to....





AgustaWestland bucked the 'evening' trend by looking after breakfast on the first official day [Thursday] getting time to welcome and speak and also getting everyone's attention right before the General Membership Meeting. Overall a pretty good spot for them.

A long standing tradition of the ALEA conferences is the feast termed as the "Pig Pickin'." Sponsored by Avalex, Cobham and FLIR—three technology companies that specialise in airborne law enforcement equipment—a small army of professional grill masters spend two days slow-roasting hundreds of pounds of pork and beef barbecue for a big family feed on the last evening of the conference. After the Pig Pickin', FLIR host its annual awards ceremony, where first, second and third place honours are presented to airborne law enforcement crews who used thermal imaging equipment to make significant apprehensions or contributions to public safety during the past 12 months, while capturing it on video. First place went to the Texas Department of Public Safety, second to Westchester County PD in New York and third to Long Beach, California. An Honorable Mention was gained by Washington State Patrol.

The other main camera suppliers, Wescam and Zeiss offer similar competitions but it is still FLIR and its associates that cornered the high profile PR at the ALEA event. Each company nominally accepts any rival footage but it is a very difficult shot to call. As a matter of interest Zeiss will be announcing the winners of their competition during the AAD Show in September.

American Eurocopter sponsored the Friday night 'Happy Hour' [which naturally lasts two hours] and this was very much the finale of the exhibition event, with most of the exhibitors having packed away their stands and set off for the next showground – for many this was a transatlantic flight and Farnborough International in the UK.



The Saturday morning bright and early [well 8-30am is quite early after the night before] continued with classes held at the hotel and these culminated in a Awards Luncheon that finally set the seal on proceedings.

The next ALEA Annual Conference & Exposition will take place 20-23 July 2011 in New Orleans, Louisiana, USA www.alea.org



BMS from Cessna booth

Not in service yet but Palm Bay Police aspire to trade up to this Trike from their current powered parachute



Pasadena's recently delivered MD500E



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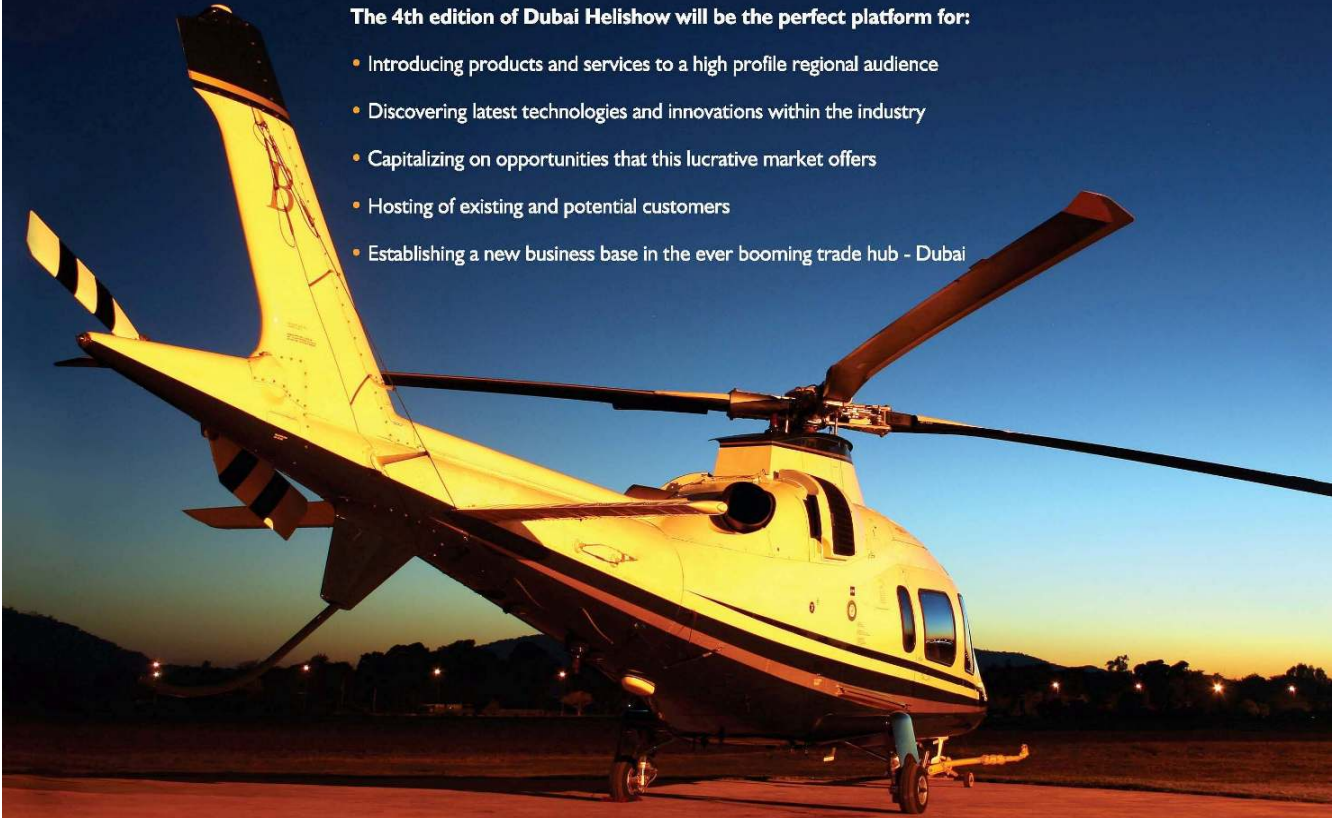
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