

# Police Aviation News

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# HAPPY NEW YEAR 2021

If it is not too presumptuous I will open this edition by simply welcoming us all to a New Year that can only be better than last year.

Unfortunately we cannot be sure, but we can strive to ensure that the whole world, and the airborne emergency services sector pulls together to face better times.

For PAN this will be both the 25th year of publication and the appearance of the 300th monthly issue if you disregard the Special Editions. Both milestones are way beyond my expectations when I shed my police uniform and ventured into publishing in 1996.

Bryn Elliott

## LAW ENFORCEMENT AUSTRALIA

**VICTORIA:** The police in Melbourne are now able to use one of the highest official landing pads in Australia, if not the southern hemisphere. The cover image of this issue illustrates it all.

Last month a new helipad on top of the new city headquarters on Spencer Street, Melbourne. One of three Leonardo AW139s operated by Victoria since this summer touched down in a history-making moment for the force.

Standing 39 stories above street level the helipad may be the tallest in the Southern Hemisphere.

Chief Pilot of the Victoria Police Air Wing Rob Rogel said given the position of the building, helicopters will be able to take teams anywhere in the state without the need to stop for fuel.



Inspector Craig Shepherd said the new helipad would also be time-effective, potentially saving half an hour for the delivery of police personnel from central Melbourne to operations. The helipad had been part of construction plans for the new headquarters from the beginning and taking in the rest of the city was critical.

"Part of the process for identifying appropriate pathways and approach and landings and departures was the buildings around it," Inspector Shepherd said.

"The advantage is that Spencer Street is on the edge of the city, which means the flight path is over railways and open space, so we don't have to fly within the buildings or within the city grid itself."

The helipad will be operational 24 hours a day, seven days a week but only for situations requiring a rapid response. [VPAW]

*Ed: Until this year Victoria were operating Dauphin helicopters. The trio of Leonardo helicopters now operated have increased the capability of the air support service. The contrast exhibited by both Victoria and [last month] New South Wales in Australia in gaining significant funding for new infrastructure projects and aircraft contrasts immensely with that achieved by British police aviation in recent times.*

*Since June this year Victoria Police has brought into service VH-PVE a Beechcraft King Air 350ER and VH-PVO/PVQ & PVR the Leonardo AW139 helicopters.*

*The 2009 Eurocopter EC135T2+ 0834 formerly operated by Victoria Police as VH-PVE is now N834UW and used by Metro Aviation to service customer UW Health Med Flight in Wisconsin.*

## BELGIUM

**POLICE:** After many years of operating the main aircraft in their fleet in a white scheme the MD900 Explorer G-12 has been repainted in a low-vis grey. Sources state that this divergence in a long-standing practice is for work with special forces but there is no confirmation of that.



A decade ago, one other MD900 G-16 was purchased, delivered, and remained in a black scheme but all other airframes have been primarily white. [Parapex]

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## BRAZIL

**FEDERAL:** The Polícia Rodoviária Federal had ordered six AW119Kx helicopters from Leonardo for transport, rescue, emergency medical service, firefighting, surveillance, and law enforcement missions.

The operator currently flies examples of the Bell 407, EC120 and Bell 412 helicopters operating in similar roles

The AW119Kx helicopters are expected to progressively arrive in Brazil in the first half of 2021 to carry out a range of roles by the Air Operations Division (DOA) from its bases in the five Regions of Brazil. The helicopters will feature an advanced customized configuration including, among others, a Garmin G1000NXi glass cockpit, an infrared capable electro-optics system, rescue hoist, cargo hook, Bam-bi bucket to counter fires, rappelling kit on both sides for special forces operations, advanced communication systems.



[© Leonardo]

The selection of the AW119Kx by the PRF was made following a rigorous assessment of technical capabilities to best meet the law enforcement agency's needs.

As the success of Leonardo's product in the region has been growing, the Company is committed to further strengthening its existing level of localised services with the establishment of a new regional support centre, run by Leonardo do Brasil, in Itapevi, 30 km from São Paulo whose groundbreaking was celebrated in February. The new support centre will expand the services already provided by the existing facility headquartered in São Paulo. [Leonardo]

## CHINA

**HONG KONG:** In view of recent reports on human rights violations from the former British colony it perhaps no surprise that Hong Kong's Government Flying Service [GFS] has been added to a US Government Blacklist after its aircraft have been involved in the arrests of fleeing protesters.

The United States has included GFS on a blacklist of "military end-users" after evidence emerged showing its aircraft were in the vicinity when 12 protesters fleeing Hong Kong for democratic Taiwan were intercepted and detained by the China Coast Guard.

"The U.S. Government has determined that these companies are 'military end users' for purposes of the

'military end user' control [of] specified items for exports, reexports, or transfers," the U.S. Department of Commerce said in an announcement on its official website.

The list is intended "to combat efforts by China and Russia to divert U.S. technology for their destabilising military programs, including by highlighting red flag indicators such as those related to Communist Chinese military companies identified by the Department of Defense," it said. Anyone wishing to export certain items to these entities will need to acquire a special license.

Export restrictions apply to a wide range of goods, including computer software, scientific instruments, and aircraft parts.

Although the politicians in China maintain that Hong Kong is independent of mainland China it was the latter that complained angrily at the action the US had taken.

The United States uses its powers to protect its own national security and can seek to protect specific enterprises in other countries, including under the ITAR system. Until recently GFS has been allowed an easier passage through ITAR restrictions but since the democracy demonstrations and the effective political takeover of Hong Kong by the Mainland the situation is deemed to have changed. When returned to China in 1997, the people of the former British colony were promised many years as a Special Administrative Region controlled by The People's Republic of China and its own limited *autonomy* from the Mainland for 50 years. Within a handful of years, it was clear that simply was failing to happen and interference with the independent political system grew.

The GFS fleet includes European-made Airbus H175 helicopters, Eurocopter EC155 multi-purpose transport helicopters, and Canadian-made Bombardier Challenger 600 fixed-wing aircraft, as well as equipment imported from Australia. They enjoy equipment levels that would never be acceptable for a straight export to Mainland China.

The blacklisting was likely more symbolic than practical, however, and came after damning flight data was made public showing that government aircraft had tracked a speedboat used by the 12 Hong Kong protesters in their bid to flee to the democratic island of Taiwan and were in the vicinity despite official denials of involvement in the arrests of the would-be escapees.

Flight data showed GFS aircraft in the area during their detention, contradicting the Hong Kong authorities' claim to have not been involved in the operation, prompting protests by pro-democracy activists and relatives of the 12 detainees. Data obtained from the flight tracking website FlightAware showed that two Hong Kong government aircraft, the fixed-wing plane B-LVB and the H175 Cheetah helicopter B-LVH, flew around, and to and from the area where the activists were arrested on the morning of Aug. 23. [Radio Free Asia/PAR]

## FRANCE

**POLICE:** France's top administrative court has backed privacy campaigners by imposing a ban on police use of drones for covering public protests in Paris.

The Council of State said Paris police prefect Didier Lallement should halt "without delay" drone surveil-



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lance of gatherings on public roads. The move comes as parliament discusses a contentious security bill that includes police use of drones. Its main aim is to regulate how people share film or photos of police.

Privacy rights group La Quadrature du Net (LQDN) has argued that the bill's main measures violate freedom of expression and that drones equipped with cameras cannot keep the peace but track individuals instead.

The decision is the second setback in months for Parisian authorities' drone plans. In May, the same court ruled that drones could not be used in the capital to track people in breach of France's strict lockdown rules.

## GERMANY

BERLIN: In late November German politician Burkard Dreher was invited to STATION-Berlin, an exhibition venue a short distance from the headquarters of the Bundespolizei [German Federal Police] to inspect the mock-up of a Bell helicopter's newest generation 525 helicopter. His host was Jonathan Castorena, responsible for Bell Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Dreher is Chairman of the CDU Parliamentary Group in the Berlin Chamber of Deputies and Member of Parliament for the Reinickendorf-Ost constituency.



The mock-up was in stylised colours based on the German national flag.

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The Bell marketing to the politician stressed its suitability for search and rescue or police operations and the new technology features. Castorena promoted the impressive flight characteristics of the 525, the politician in turn posted his opinions of Facebook in that he thought that the type would be something suited for the Berlin police, who are currently obliged to share a small reconnaissance helicopter with the federal police but can neither fly special forces in terrorism nor help firefighting from the air.

The post was carried by in turn manufacturer Bell on their Facebook pages.

*Editor: The suggestion is that this was intended to be an exhibit at the subsequently cancelled European Rotors show in Cologne in November. Until the show was pulled due to the ongoing Covid 19 it is known that one of the major target attendees was the Bundespolizei. They have a major helicopter re-equipment project ongoing that includes types likely to be in the same class as the Bell. These days the Berlin police are Brandenburg, they operate two EC135 helicopters that are co-located with the Federal police at a base near Blumberg north of Berlin.*



## KENYA

**AIR SUPPORT:** As reported late last year the long-established Kenya Police Air Wing was dissolved and effectively merged with the Air Force along with several other local air units.

In mid-December the President Uhuru Kenyatta inaugurated the National Air Support Department (NASD), a multi-agency unit within the Ministry of Defence charged with the responsibility of coordinating Kenya's national air response services.

Speaking to NASD staff at its Wilson Airport headquarters Thursday, the President said the entity which brings together all government air assets will enhance efficiency in the delivery of aviation services.

NASD has created a fleet of 36 aircraft manned by 273 personnel by merging the National Police Air Wing, the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), the Kenya Electricity Transmission Company (KETRACO) and the Kenya Forest Service (KFS) among others.

The primary aims of the new organisation are to promote proficiencies from both the military and Government civilian aviators and that it would help in generating revenue to supplement public funding but also promote aviation safety and reliability across Kenya and the region.



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## UNITED KINGDOM

NPAS: It is now three years since Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire Rescue Services published "Planes, drones and helicopters – an independent study of police air support." The hard hitting 2017 report by HMI Matt Parr CB has never been the subject of a report, or even a public dialogue, on what NPAS intended to do about addressing the many critical elements within the report.

Eight months ago, the Cambridgeshire Police based National Police Chiefs Council [NPCC] Review Team were talking to industry about the options available to turn around NPAS. Nothing significant has happened since.

In August of 2020 after a specific request NPAS told *Police Aviation News* that the latest Annual Reports covering two years 2018/19 and 2019/20 would be published to the website in early Autumn. That was reported in the September 2020 issue. More than three months later it/they are still awaited, autumn has long since passed. Even the NPAS website does not carry reports.

*Ed: From time to time, I hear incredible tales of activities within the World police aviation community. In most instances I set them aside as unproven fables from single sources, and they are never heard of again. Occasionally they persist and are confirmed from different sources, but we all know how Chinese whispers distort the truth (whatever that is). In among the rumours the truth gets lost, but each fragment may eventually make some sort of sense.*

*One long standing 'truth' is that the Metropolitan Police are unhappy with the service that NPAS provide to London. That information has been aired in the Houses of Parliament and the London Assembly. The rumour says that they want to leave their new squeaky clean multi-million-pound hangar at North Weald and return to the rustic but cosy comfort of Lippitts Hill where clear views of London can be observed from a now abandoned control room. There is little doubt that the performance of the helicopters at 'India Lima' has been allowed to decline, hours down, a lack of local operational control and a complete lack of flexibility in maintenance. That one keeps coming back, now has multiple sources and must surely have more than a grain of truth.*

*Although the difference in straight line flight time from London to either Lippitts Hill or North Weald is not great it is more the total lack of connectivity. The Lippitts Hill control room can see a large swath of London – on a clear day you can see the aircraft flying on task - and another element removed was direct verbal contact between the base, the aircraft and command and control at New Scotland Yard. In the capital such things took many years to perfect into an efficient operation. Inter force jealousies quickly dismantled that and many other first class, world renowned, operations in favour of an unproven and arguably inefficient West Yorkshire model.*



*In among the rumours relating to Lippitts Hill were suggestions that alternative inner London sites had been investigated – London City Airport was one of them. The airport was always held up as a no-go area for a police forward base, but since Covid and the downturn in air traffic things may have altered. Where then the strange, almost unbelievable, happenings in Wakefield that have been circulating in recent months.*

*I am assured there is a new plan out there that includes Lippitts Hill. I am therefore commenting on the*

many fairy tales that are said to emanate from within the NPAS management team – it is after all a New Year and time to clear the closet.

Things they are said to be a changing in NPAS land. Hard on the heels of the rumour that their leader has been the recipient of a recent and costly promotion to Assistant Chief Constable (there is no paper confirmation simply because the minutes of the Strategic Board are again wildly out of date—11 months now) it is now said that after spending many millions on new hangars and an ever-growing promotional wage bill, they are out to save yet more money. The axe looks set to fall on operational policing not management. Is it true that the management team has fallen out with fixed wing? It is not yet a year since the P68R aircraft entered operational service. From the information crossing my desk, the plan to discard the P68 was not exactly the choice of NPAS, but the result was the same. For some unfathomable reason the decision was facilitated by asking the customers, the police forces of the UK, whether they wanted fixed wing and most of them said no thanks. It seems that only one area, the North East, were happy to carry on with the new and expensive compact twin. That may be strange, but they were historically always an area with a liking for plank wings, having successfully and efficiently operated an BN-2B Islander for many years.



Why would NPAS ask people with little or no knowledge of aviation to decide what sort of aircraft they wanted to deliver EO/IR sensors to their crime scene? Surely it is supposed to be the prime purpose of a highly trained and efficient management to do that. Clearly the ploy means that the management team can stand back from cancelling this troubled project, it is a decision made by other managements, the police customers!



Wakefield © PAN

As I have mentioned many times, NPAS and its Strategic Board are a secretive bunch of people. They do everything in their control to ensure that their activities are kept from public view. The only 'growth' seen in NPAS since it was launched in 2012 has been in salaries, expenses and the size of the management and control team. In the period they have set up two different Control Rooms in Wakefield and yet closed others close to the business end.

In the last eight years the Strategic Board has maintained a nominal attendee list in the range 30-35 but recently they have been controlling only half the infrastructure [bases and aircraft] they started with. Minutes in the public domain are of course rarely seen – in line with an apparent policy of restricting public access to information only nine sets of minutes of 35 official

meetings are posted on-line.

There is consistency in the NPAS management team. They are self-serving, secretive and ill-mannered. Few can forget their shocking treatment of their guests at the Mount Pleasant Hotel, Doncaster in 2017? Time and again there have been persistent rumours that the fixed wing would never enter service. They proved wrong – except for the detail that NPAS never publicly ordered the full complement of six airframes and do not appear to have ever had more than two of the P68R aircraft in service. Insufficient pilots for a start. Another detail is that a key figure in the development team chose to leave the team and move sideways within the organisation. That was over three years ago, very early in introduction of the aircraft. It is only a detail, but it adds credence to the questions still surrounding this programme.

We know the P68R aircraft were in Doncaster in late 2019 but it was March 2020 before NPAS announced that four new aircraft were being added to the fleet and based out of the NPAS base at Doncaster Sheffield Airport. The aircraft "will operate across the UK tasked in a similar way to the helicopter fleet." That was a rare moment when NPAS issued a press release about anything. Most news is sneaked out via Social Media.

So, it is now alleged, that 'soon' whenever that is, the giant expensive hangar at Doncaster designed for six aircraft will be home for just one. One suggestion is next April.

Just who has been financing this programme? The cost of developing the P68R into a unique surveillance tool with FIKI capability that no other customer seems to want can only be eye wateringly expensive. Who paid for that? It can only be Airborne Technologies [ABT] or NPAS and ABT are no charity. At some point NPAS paid, where are the accounts for that purchase?

And there are other tales that we may choose to accept as fact of fiction.

It is a fact that the 2016/17 Annual Report announced that each base would receive a new Ford Ranger and 2000 litre bowser. It was never announced by the three strong press and media department, but the fleet hit Twitter as being delivered in the summer of 2018. The rumour is that these ground assets are al-



Doncaster © NPAS



ready surplus to requirements. They should be a bargain offering low hours and mileage if they appear on the open market.

Rumours on base closures and revisions abound. More recently it is said that the base at Hawarden in North Wales will close and that the long given up Merseyside Police base at RAF Woodvale will magically return – albeit in a different building. That bit of information should be set against numerous other closures that have mentioned Hawarden several times as well as Birmingham, Carr Gates, Husbands Bosworth, Redhill and a move of the St. Athan operation to Cardiff Airport. From time to time a wish to build a new base at East Midlands Airport resurfaces. That was originally squashed as part of the Plan A that set up NPAS a lifetime ago.

There is a consistency in these rumours in that they all relate to spending money on new infrastructure. Someone must have shares in Rubb buildings. Most people appreciate NPAS is about putting reliable aircraft in the air in good order to provide a service that meets the needs of police officers in danger on the streets. Such a strategy only requires NPAS to lease a corner of an existing hangar, not to build a new structure. That is what many units used to do, simply because it made financial sense when money was short, and I accept that money is short in the organisation.

There is no evidence that the primary object of officer safety is being addressed – other than via the fore-shortened fixed wing project. In six years NPAS have acquired no new helicopters.



This is not rocket science. The now lost inter-connectivity of resources dates back 50 years as this 1981 child's comic illustration shows. The aircraft is meant to connect with a range of resources not some remote controller in a Yorkshire bunker. [PAN]

Another question we may need to ask ourselves is whether it is true that aircraft fleet availability hours are scheduled to be significantly reduced at certain bases? Is this because the elderly aircraft are no longer able to keep up the punishing schedule or are, they simply running out of crews.

Has sense finally arrived in the equally expensive Control Room at Wakefield with the realisation that the grip of a central controller is too fierce and time consuming? Is there to be regionalisation at last, can the aircraft crews once again taste the freedom of self-determination by reacting quickly and efficiently to a local emergency call?

I do not know the answer to all these questions of course, they may simply be fables in their own time. But there, I said it.

## UNITED STATES

**NATIONAL:** The Airborne Public Safety Association (APSA) has announced the location and dates for the first two safety seminars of 2021. Hosted by the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office, the first is scheduled for February 23-25 in St. Augustine, Florida. This event will take place at the World Golf Village Renaissance St. Augustine Resort, and a group rate \$133 per night with discount code APSA is available until February 8, 2021.

The second 2021 safety seminar is scheduled for May 11-13 in Hunt Valley, Maryland at the Delta Baltimore Hunt Valley. A group rate of \$129 per night is available until April 27, 2021 and can be accessed via the APSA website.

APSA safety seminars cover a wide range of topics through classes, roundtable discussions and a mini tradeshow. Registration for both events is included in the APSA annual Individual Membership dues as a member benefit; a nominal fee for non-members applies.

Survival Systems USA, Inc. will conduct Water Egress & Survival Training in conjunction with both events pending sufficient registration. Classroom instruction will be followed by practical application in the hotel pool. Registration for this training is handled directly by SSUSA. Full information is on the website.

[www.publicsafetyaviation.org](http://www.publicsafetyaviation.org)

On the wider front the next Rescue Summit is scheduled to take place alongside the HAI Heli-Expo in New Orleans on March 22, 1921. Although the vaccine is out there now it will take a long time to kick in and the whole Heli-Expo event must be debatable in March. Many events are cancelling well beyond then.



Hopefully the situation will ease by the summer and allow events to run near normally in July. The organisers of the Paris Air Show have already cancelled the 2021 event and will next gather in 2023 on the assumption that June is still too early for it to plan an event.

APSA have announced the date of their next APSCON as being July 26-31 in New Orleans. In 2022 the dates are July 25-30 in Reno, Nevada but 2023 has yet to be arranged. It is back to Houston, Texas for the 2024 event, the dates being July 29 to August 3.

**CALIFORNIA:** Last month PAN highlighted the privacy issues faced by US law enforcement operating both fixed and rotary wing aircraft fitted with cameras.

The story last month related to the difficulties faced by Los Angeles Police Department [LAPD] in getting permission to download images of an event to its control room. This is not an isolated difficulty, and it is not confined to manned aircraft. In many ways the difficulty affects drones to a far greater extent – they are obliged to downlink their images to serve any use at all – at least those in manned aircraft can describe what they are observing.

Last month the US correspondent for the UK broadsheet *Daily Telegraph* took up the story in a report on Chula Vista PD in the far south of California. The area has a population of 270,000 and a strength of 270 sworn officers, 108 civilian employees, and more than a hundred volunteers policing areas bordering the US Mexico border. They are one of many law enforcement agencies operating drones as cheap first responder eyes in the sky following suspects and undertaking rescues. They have had several successes.

The cost saving operation was designed to launch a drone as a first responder and report back from police headquarters – that programme has over 4,100 missions logged. With the arrival of the pandemic, they are a means whereby the police can observe and assess a situation without placing staff in immediate danger. The civil right organisations do not like that activity and they claim there is a danger that the aerial tools of policing might be used to identify suspects [what a good idea!].

As suggested last month, there are groups actively working to restrict police operations and funding, the interference with recording activity across the board – it has clearly had an impact on helicopter and drone operations and might yet affect officers body cams, what they record and how it is stored. As mentioned last month, the USA has among the highest number of CCTV cameras in the world and it is therefore amongst the most 'spied on' populations on the globe. The current target though is the police rather than the cameras themselves.

**MONTANA:** Yellowstone County Sheriff in, Billings, Montana has acquired three military surplus helicopters through the Federal 1033 Surplus Programme. The area covered by the Sheriff's Office, is 2,649 square miles (6,860 km<sup>2</sup>), and has a population of 116,000 served by 48 sworn officers.

The three Bell OH-58C may be based Billings Logan International Airport. Available images suggest that the three Kiowa's are N311YC 70-15086, N342YC 71-20667 and a so far unidentified airframe 70-173??



© Facebook



*Ed: For the UK reader Yellowstone County is around the size of Devon or Lincolnshire (County), the difference is that each of these has a population of around one million and each has a police force of around 1,400 officers. They have a limited access to the NPAS fleet. There is no real comparison, it is doubtful those three elderly surplus Bell's will ever give anything like a 24/7 response capability to Yellowstone and yet, in theory at least, if the matter is serious enough there are a handful of somewhat younger aircraft available to respond to the English counties.*



© Facebook

**NEBRASKA:** Omaha Police Department have had a traumatic couple of years. They were thrust into the aviation limelight when they hosted the 2019 APSA members convention, only to have a couple of unfortunate mishaps that effectively grounded them for long periods.

Plans were announced to acquire a newer airframe earlier this year, but that project became bogged down in Covid so that when in July 2020 their sole functioning helicopter went out of service their plight was again local headlines.

In late summer they have finally took delivery of a used 2012 Bell 407 GX, that had been in a maintenance facility since the first week of April.

The airframe c/n 54322 has been N402PD from 14 August 2020 and came from Nevada-based Battle Born Munitions Inc., based in Reno.



The latest delivery ©Metro/CNC

**TEXAS:** On December 9 Metro Aviation delivered a new H125 N844TX for the Texas Department of Public Safety, and it is the most advanced law enforcement helicopter completed by the Shreveport, Louisiana-based company. Metro collaborated with aviation technology and wireless communications leader, CNC Technologies, to customise the aircraft to meet the Texas DPS's specific mission needs.

The CNC team embedded with Metro to customise the aircraft, managing the installation of advanced technology systems and mission-specific equipment including the latest Wescam 4 MX10 with multiple payloads and options, including the newest audio/video tracker (AVT); advanced video switching, controlling multiple separate cameras to include cabin, tail, and hoist; advanced IP integration and multiple signal downlink, allowing the distribution of not just video, but any and all metadata from the aircraft; and multiple DVRs to capture audio and video from the aircraft's numerous sources. The system can feed multiple video and data signals to all monitors and the existing Texas DPS ground-receive infrastructure.

In addition, the aircraft features advanced mapping integrated with multiple mission system functions such

as Garmin navigation and the Axnes wireless intercom system, which makes communication from air to ground efficient and effective. Metro worked with Texas DPS to install multiple audio stations, which include a special water-resistant panel specific to hoist operations, as well as a belly-mounted hoist flood light.

Expanding upon their long-time partnership, Metro was also awarded the Texas DPS contract to perform scheduled and non-scheduled maintenance of all aircraft systems in accordance with the respective aircraft maintenance manuals and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). Maintenance will include airframe, engine, mission equipment, and all other aircraft components of all series of A-Star AS350, H125, and EC145 helicopters for the Aircraft Operations Division.

**VIRGINIA:** Early in December PAC International completed and delivered a new Bell 407GX helicopter to the Virginia State Police. The State Police Aviation Unit's primary mission is to provide search, rescue, law enforcement and medical evacuation.

Pilots are gaining an extra set of eyes with the installation of a Garmin GTS 800 Traffic Advisory System (TAS), which combines active surveillance with passive (ADS-B) surveillance and simultaneously tracks up to 45 targets. The aircraft is also equipped with the Garmin GRA55 radar altimeter, GDL69 XM weather receiver, Artex emergency locator transmitter, Devore Tel-Tail lights, Precise Flight Pulselite system, and custom exterior paint.

Mission-specific equipment including an AeroComputers U6000 mapping system, FLIR 8500 camera, and Trakka A800 searchlight system with Meeker mounts was also installed. Due to the department's dual mission profile, the aircraft is also equipped with a Lifeport MedDeck pivoting litter, O2 system, True Blue medical inverter, PAC scene lights, and more.

Editor: The State police initiated an aviation programme in 1946 with four trooper-pilots who voluntarily worked on as an-needed basis and the acquisition of three Aeronca Chief 11AC airplanes. Fairchild=Hiller

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FH1100 helicopters were added to the fleet in 1970. The Department established an official Aviation Unit in 1984, which was the same year the Virginia General Assembly authorised funding for the creation of the Med-Flight programme.



Late last year the Los Angeles Police Department finally retired its Bell 206B N3202Q after 34 years service in which it accrued 30,978 flying hours.

Greg Doyle - 2018

# AIR AMBULANCE

## AFRICA

MERCY AIR: Air Methods, a leading air medical service in the U.S., has donated an Airbus AS350B2 helicopter to southern Africa-based humanitarian relief organisation, Mercy Air Africa. The non-profit was founded in 1991 to provide private flight support for nongovernmental organisations serving in the southern region of Africa.



Mercy Air supports healthcare, education, agriculture, and disaster response. These efforts provide indigenous populations the skills and resources needed to lead more independent, productive lives rather than perpetuate dependence on international aid.

The principal region of operation includes the African nations of: Eswatini, Mozambique, Botswana, Namibia, Lesotho, Zambia, Angola, Malawi, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. Service into Kenya, Tanzania, and even Madagascar can be coordinated on an ad hoc basis. Volunteer teams across the region include pilots, mechanics, flight-assistants, physicians, nurses, dentists, agronomists, educators, tradesmen, business executives, and administrators, who use their skills to help those in need.

The Airbus AS350B2 helicopter donated by Air Methods will undergo extensive upgrades, including avionics and airframe modifications to enhance performance, passenger capacity, sling load, and safety. The work will be performed over several months by Mercy Air associates at MMS Aviation, located at Coshoc-ton Richard Downing Airport (I40) in Coshoc-ton, Ohio.

Marking the third such collaboration, MMS Aviation provides hangar space, equipment, and technical assistance to Mercy Air free of charge. After reconfiguration, the helicopter will be transported to southern Africa for service. [www.airmethods.com](http://www.airmethods.com)



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## AUSTRIA

ÖAMTC: Airbus has signed a firm contract for the purchase of five H135s with the Austrian rescue and air ambulance provider. The delivery of the first helicopter of this contract is scheduled for early 2022.



"Our demanding missions require the most modern helicopters available for enhancing our capability for critical missions, e.g., during the night. We have been operating the H135 for more than 20 years, and we look forward to benefiting from the advantages that the Helionix version brings," said Reinhard Kraxner, CEO at ÖAMTC Air Rescue. "The reduced pilot workload combined with the 4-axis autopilot will be a valuable asset onboard for our crews that rescue patients often in challenging environments."

ÖAMTC Air Rescue operates 28 H135 helicopters from 17 permanent bases and 4 additional bases during the wintertime in Austria. Last year, the operator performed more than 20,000 missions, with on average 52 missions per day.

On top of the 4-axis autopilot, Helionix offers an innovative cockpit layout which helps to increase situational awareness. Designed with three large electronic displays on the H135, the cockpit is Night Vision Goggle compatible and includes a First Limit Indicator which highlights the appropriate engine instrument data for the pilot in one indicator.

## CANADA

BRITISH COLUMBIA: The Emergency Health Services [BCEHS] air ambulance programme is made up of a dedicated fleet of six helicopters and 10 planes that respond to critical patient hospital transfers and to emergency 911 medical calls. About 90% of air ambulance responses are transfers between hospitals.

Helicopters, based in Parksville, Vancouver, Kamloops, Prince George and Prince Rupert, are generally more efficient for short distances of less than 250 kilometres and responding to accident scenes, or to transport patient's rooftop to rooftop between two hospitals, says BCEHS.

Transports longer than 250 kilometres are better handle by planes, based in Vancouver, Nanaimo, Kelowna, Prince George and Fort St. John. BCEHS can also call upon more than 30 pre-qualified air carriers around the province to provide service as needed. BCEHS responds to more than 7,000 patients requiring air ambulance transport annually.



© Facebook

In late November Prince George became the home for a permanent ambulance helicopter. The Bell 412EP C-FVEP helicopter and crew operated by Summit Helicopters Ltd were brought into service one day earlier than scheduled simply because it was available. The service will provide quick access to some of the smaller communities that surround Prince George. Fixed wing services are provided by North Cariboo Air and Northern Thunderbird Air.

Patients will now be able to get there quicker in the helicopter while being cared for by paramedics. On a single tank of fuel, the 2007 Bell 412 can reach all points in north-central BC.

The new contract award has its critics. A Prince George helicopter company is challenging a decision to award the \$9M contract to an out-of-town company to provide air ambulance service without going through a competitive bid process. Vendors who wished to challenge the decision were invited to submit a written objection and Prince George-based Yellowhead Helicopters Ltd. [YHL] did so and, shortly afterwards, sent out its letter to local media.

Kamloops-based Summit Helicopters Ltd. was awarded the contract on November 27 to provide the service for 28 months, according to a notice of intent issued by the Provincial Health Services Authority.



In part, YHL CEO Jacob Forman questioned the contract's value, noting that YHL has been chartered to provide the service on an as-needed basis for less than \$100,000 in flights in each of the last five years. They also questioned the selection of the Bell 412EP deployed by Summit, pointing out that it is ill-prepared for flying in winter in that it does not have heated rotor blades, and so cannot fly at altitudes where the temperature is at freezing.

YHL also suggest that Summit was chosen because they can fly at night or with instruments only. Historically only a small percentage of flights are at night. YHL claim they could have provided an Airbus 332L Super Puma helicopters that offer a 25% higher speed, greater range, increased internal space for patients and passengers as well as having heated blades and an autopilot.

Two Island-based air ambulances have been added to the fleet serving rural, remote and Indigenous communities on Vancouver Island, the Gulf Islands and the Sunshine Coast. The two, a fixed-wing plane based in Nanaimo and a helicopter in Parksville, entered service in mid-November. Prior to that, BCEHS relied on its Vancouver-based aircraft or ones flown by Island-based contractors.

Alkan Air has been contracted to supply a turbo-prop plane. Ascent Helicopters will operate a specialized MD Helicopters MD 902, C-GWXP complete with night vision technology for poor light responses. In addition to the aircraft, five critical-care paramedics are being added, doubling the number in the region.

*Editor: The Bell 412EP Serial 36433 now registered C-FVEP has had several previous identities across the world including 5N-BML, G-OIBU and N6587U when used by Summit Helicopters and Bristow Helicopters.*

*The MD902 has an even more interesting past in that it first appeared at the 2003 Heli-Expo as N7006X intending to be PH-PXA the first aircraft for the Netherlands Police contract. After a period in UK as N902JW from 2006-12 [it was at Helitech 2011] it recrossed the Atlantic where it has remained.*



© Facebook

**ONTARIO:** An on-site helipad has opened at Groves Memorial Community Hospital in Fergus, Ontario. It will allow the most critically ill and severely injured patients fast access to specialised emergency care at other care centres.

The new hospital opened in August and replaces the old hospital that began treating patients in 1955. Previously, patients had to be driven across town before being airlifted. The old helipad has been used eight times this year.

## CROATIA

**HHMS:** The establishment of a new 24/7/365 air ambulance service for the country, the HHMS, is set for July this year. The service will have four bases: in Zagreb, Rijeka, Split and Osijek.

The project is estimated to cost 18M euros, and the contract for that purpose will be signed with the provider of medical helicopters for next three years to provide 4,500 hours of flights.

No details have been released on the bidders or the winners. They will be expected to provide the ministry with the appropriate medical helicopters and pilots, to which the ministry will assign the medical staff.

## INDIA

**NATIONAL:** Accretion Aviation is offering an air ambulance service to cover all over India. This service is available for both, Covid and non-Covid patients.

The air ambulances are equipped with 2 doctors, a stretcher for the patient and all ICU equipment. Two attendants can accompany the patient on the plane as well. Air ambulance services give the patient the fastest means of medical help. They are also capable of reaching inaccessible airports which makes them particularly important during emergencies.

Accretion's air ambulance services are operational 24/7/365 days a year. They can carry patients from remote areas to health care facilities in the most metropolitan areas such as Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai, Bengaluru, Varanasi, Raipur, Ranchi, Bagdogra, Dibrugarh, Allhabad, Silchar and Indore.

[www.accretion.in](http://www.accretion.in)

The range of air ambulances is diverse and adaptable so that the aircraft can land on even compact airstrips. The range of air ambulance jets include Lear Jet, Gulf Stream, King Air C90, King Air B200 and Cessna aircraft. They can be useful in multiple situations including a trauma scenario, mass disaster or any other medical emergencies.

*Ed: All you need is a lot of money before you call for the service. Accretion Aviation, part of the Accretion Group has been in the business for over 25 years. It is not a charitable group, they say they are a premium rental portal offering a wide range luxury services to suit every need – helicopter rides, private jets, luxury yachts and hot air balloon rentals across India. All of which underlines the value to the common man of the UK charity air ambulance service.*

## LIBYA

LAA: In mid-December Libya's Air Ambulance service received its new Cessna Citation 680 Latitude aircraft to add to its fleet of air ambulances. The plane was purchased from Textron, the parent company of the Cessna aircraft and helicopters. The handover ceremony was attended by members of the U.S. Embassy for Libya. The service said this aircraft is the third of its kind in its fleet and will contribute to providing air ambulance services to all Libyans.

The Air Ambulance service also announced that it will also be purchasing three helicopters from the company at the beginning of 2021. It will also be establishing a maintenance centre for these aircraft at Tripoli's Mitiga airport which the service said will be the first of its kind in Africa and will be ready by the end of April 2021.

## PUERTO RICO

AEROMED: Emergency rescue service company Aeromed has invested \$3.2M on a new EC-135 helicopter and state-of-the-art specialized medical equipment, as it celebrates its 25th anniversary in Puerto Rico. This third helicopter in the fleet arrived on the island early in December last year.

Before landing on the island, the new helicopter completed 1,965 nautical miles at 5,500 feet from Dallas County Executive Airport, Texas and spanned Louisiana, Mississippi, Florida, Bahamas, Turk & Caicos and the Dominican Republic. After a 17-hour flight route with a crew of two pilots, it reached Puerto Rico where it will fulfil the mission of transporting thousands of patients.

## UNITED KINGDOM

GREAT NORTH: The charity air ambulance servicing North Yorkshire, Northumberland, Cumbria and north Lancashire have bought a newer 2007 Eurocopter AS-365N-3 Dauphin 2 C/N 6779 which was formerly owned by electronics entrepreneur James Dyson and re-registered it from G-DOLF to G-NHAE. In early December it was registered to Multiflight, but with those marks it can only be for GNAA.

It is believed that an earlier AS365, G-NHAB has already been withdrawn from use, and NHAA is expected to follow soon. [Helihub]

SCOTLAND: A man from Neilston, a dormitory village near Glasgow is celebrating after securing funds to build a new helipad at the remote Campbeltown Hospital in Argyll.

Stuart McLellan has led a campaign to secure £270,000 in funding from the Helicopter Emergency Landing Pads (HELP) appeal to build a "fit for purpose" helipad at the hospital which is on a peninsula in the extreme west of Scotland. It serves a local population of under 5,000.

Stuart, who is a Student Ambulance Technician has a longstanding connection to Campbeltown. He started the campaign to build a helipad when he noticed air ambulances often had to divert to Campbeltown Airport to land due to challenges with ground conditions and waterlogged fields.

The new helipad will mean that patients can be transferred to and from the hospital and all times of day and in all weather conditions.

*Editor: Asked for a comment The HELP Appeal explained they were waiting for planning permission to be granted before announcing the details. They will be covering the entire £268,000 cost for a new helipad at Campbeltown Hospital in the Scottish Highlands, which will hopefully be operational in the first few months*



of 2021 if the planning application is successful.

*This helipad project is one of eleven projects including at Glasgow's Queen Elizabeth University Hospital; Raigmore Hospital and Edinburgh Royal Infirmary – that the HELP Appeal has funded across Scotland. Since the charity's creation, over 15,575 landings have taken place on HELP Appeal funded helipads, showing the major need for this essential element of emergency care across the country.*

WALES: The Wales Air Ambulance has achieved its ambition to become a 24/7 service thanks to the donations from the people of Wales.

The Charity, which will celebrate its 20th anniversary in 2021, started operating an overnight helicopter from December.

The cost of running the helicopters during the day currently stands at £6.5M every year. To maintain the overnight helicopter, Wales Air Ambulance must raise an additional £1.5M bringing the annual fundraising total required for a 24/7 operation to £8M.

While the helicopter operation is supported by the people of Wales through charitable donations to the Wales Air Ambulance, the medical capability on board the aircraft is delivered thanks to a unique Third Sector-Public Sector partnership between the Charity, Welsh Government and NHS Wales. In place since 2015, this collaboration resulted in the creation of the Emergency Medical Retrieval and Transfer Service (EMRTS Cymru), more commonly known as the 'Welsh Flying Medics', which provides pioneering pre-hospital critical and emergency medical care across Wales. The aviation part of the service is run by Babcock Mission Critical Services Onshore on behalf of the Wales Air Ambulance. [www.walesairambulance.com/247](http://www.walesairambulance.com/247)

## UNITED STATES

NATIONAL: European nations may generally revel in their free at the point of contact HEMS operations but in between massive arguments and court cases over sky-high bills the US industry still believes

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their system is far superior and are often aggressive with it.

The largest U.S. helicopter air ambulance company, Air Methods, has launched an assault on competitors who sell annual “memberships” when giving evidence to the National Council of Insurance Legislators (NCOIL) last month. Air Methods executive v-p Chris Myers attacked these membership operations, accusing them of preying on the fears of senior citizens, for whom transports are already almost totally covered by federal Medicare or Medicaid reimbursements.

Myers specifically criticised the AirMed Care Network made up of Air Evac Lifeteam, Guardian Flight, Med-Trans Corp., and REACH Air Medical Services, flying from 320 bases in 38 states. The membership product they sell are a means to ‘Peace of Mind’ offered at prices ranging from \$65 to \$395, with older members being offered discounts. Another offering is from Helimedic who are based in the southern states of the USA, they recently started offering memberships in the range of \$500 for singles and \$1,500 for families to a national membership that they do not have direct aircraft coverage for. They are based in Los Angeles and Houston.

Myers sees that thinking in a contrary manner, he thinks consumers are being scared into worrying about a substantial transport bill and need to buy a membership to avoid this imminent peril, from the same company that is transporting them. Medicare patients are targeted with special cut prices and that he feels is grounds to seek regulation. If only 25% of the three million AirMed Care Network memberships are sold to seniors, this would make it the second-largest Medicare supplemental [insurance] product sold in the United States.

There are approximately 360,000 air medical transports a year, which represents just 0.11% of the U.S. population. In contrast to this low utilisation of all air medical services there are millions of annual memberships sold each year.

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*Editor: This argument reflects the problem faced by US citizens. Medical costs can be astronomical and good insurance – or death – are the only sure ways out. Covering air medical transport costs with insurance is just another layer of bringing peace of mind.*

*Although it seems not, there should be plenty of politicians out there who might support alterations in the system. While campaigning this spring in the Democratic primary for Missouri's first congressional district, candidate Cori Bush found herself struggling to breathe. Bush's case proved severe enough to require hospitalisation, she was too terrified to call an ambulance, in the end her Doctor friend insisted on calling one after hearing Bush's strained efforts to describe what was happening to her over the phone.*

*An untold number of patients in the United States are in that same frightening position, and their anxieties are well founded: The cost of ambulance rides make up more than half of surprise medical bills.*

*Anecdotal testimony from US citizens that have moved to Europe, even for a short time, illustrates the great reduction in personal worry and stress in simply moving to a country that offers good and near free health services.*

IOWA: In Sioux City MercyOne Air Med has taken delivery of a new helicopter, a Bell 429 N7125L.

The new dual-engine aircraft replaces a single-engine helicopter and will allow officials to fly faster. Officials said it also has more space inside for patient care. A religious blessing for the aircraft took place on December 10.



NEW MEXICO: AirCARE1 has acquired its second LearJet 60. The LearJet 60 is one of the fastest, quietest, and most luxurious aircraft on the market and provides a comfortable transport for patients.

This addition brings the fleet of AirCARE1 company owned aircraft to two LearJet 60's, two LearJet 35's and one LearJet 36. Each executive quality LearJet aircraft is equipped as an airborne intensive care unit enabling the medical team to perform live saving interventions.

AirCARE1 is an air ambulance and medical transportation service headquartered in Albuquerque, N.M. The operator also has an additional base in Phoenix, Arizona.

## FIRE CANADA

Canadian airframer Viking Air confirms it has delayed the launch of its CL-515 First Responder firefighting aircraft, citing the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Sidney, British Columbia company had previously intended to launch the programme in 2020. Earlier this year, it pushed back the launch to the fourth quarter. No new date has been put forward.

The CL-515 will be the new-build variant of Viking's line of water bombers and special mission aircraft. Previous versions include the original Canadair CL-215, the CL-415 and the CL-415EAF, which are upgraded CL-415s. Originally built as a Canadair the product line was traded under the Bombardier name until Viking parent Longview Aviation Capital acquired the programme from Bombardier in 2016.



In 2019, Indonesia became the CL-515's launch customer when it ordered six of the type, with deliveries, at that point, set for 2024.

## UNITED STATES

CALIFORNIA: The state has received more than \$1.3 billion in federal aid to rebuild after the 2017 wine country wildfires, the 2018 Camp fire in Butte County and other disasters from those years. But disaster-affected homeowners and renters have yet to receive a single penny. The cause: years-long federal and state bureaucratic delays.

As a result, many of those that lost their homes all those years ago have been unable to settle back where they were. Most are trapped for an undetermined length of time in temporary rental accommodation.

More than 4,500 homes were wiped out and 22 people died in the Tubbs fire, which began in Napa County and spread through Santa Rosa in 2017. A year later, the Camp fire killed 85 people and destroyed nearly 14,000 homes, with much of the damage centred on Paradise.

To get access to the funding, California housing officials have needed to develop spending plans approved by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development. But it took nearly two years after the disasters for HUD to sign off on any of the state's proposals to respond to the 2017 wildfires. More than two years after the 2018 wildfires, federal officials finally authorised the state's plans for that year's relief efforts. Now this year's fires and funding are backed up in the queue.

It is not just California, massive delays have beset disaster relief measures across the country, including dollars earmarked for hurricane-ravaged communities in Texas, Florida and Georgia in 2017. The vast majority remains unspent.

## SEARCH & RESCUE

**MEDITERRANEAN:** After a lengthy absence the humanitarian organisation MOAS is to return to life saving in the Mediterranean.

MOAS was founded in 2013 and dedicated to providing humanitarian aid and services to the most vulnerable communities around the world. Since its inception, MOAS has reached hundreds of thousands of people through its activities. After several Search and Rescue missions in the Mediterranean and Aegean seas, MOAS moved its operations to Bangladesh, to assist Rohingya refugees fleeing violence in Myanmar and the local host community. Today MOAS is currently involved in several projects (Yemen, Bangladesh, Somalia) assisting the most vulnerable communities in the poorest areas of the world and in Malta.

MOAS are teaming up with Sea-Eye to operate a joint SAR operation on board of the new vessel Sea-Eye 4. The vessel is a former offshore supply-vessel (built in 1972, 55 m long, 11 m wide) which is currently being converted into a SAR ship and will be able to accommodate and supply significantly more people than the previous Sea-Eye ships. The joint mission is planned to launch in February 2021.

In 2020, over 700 people have lost their lives at sea (according to IOM data), for this reason, MOAS and Sea-Eye have decided to join forces and save as many lives as possible.

## NEW ZEALAND

**WHITE ISLAND:** New Zealand helicopter operator Volcanic Air say they are one of the thirteen parties that has been charged by WorkSafe – the country's Health & Safety watchdog – but they have yet to learn of the specific details.

WorkSafe filed charges against parties in relation to the Whakaari/White Island eruption in December 2019. 22 people lost their lives in the tragic event and WorkSafe are investigating workplace incidents to determine whether those with health and safety responsibilities met them. They have investigated whether those with any involvement in taking tourists to the island were meeting their obligations under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 and consider that thirteen did not meet the standards.

There were 47 people on the island at the time of the eruption, all of whom suffered serious injuries and trauma, and 22 of those have lost their lives. Those who went to the island, did so with the reasonable expectation that there were appropriate systems in place to ensure they made it home healthy and safe.

WorkSafe did not investigate the rescue and recovery of victims following the eruption. On those matters, no enforcement action has been taken.





## UNITED KINGDOM

**BREXIT:** This may be the last time that Brexit is mentioned in PAN, but I doubt it. Over 8,000 people are known to have made their way in small boats to the United Kingdom during 2020. Nothing much has changed in relation to the dangers the trip involves and the resources the UK needs to put in place to deter these crossings. So far, the numbers of people known to have died on the sea route has been relatively low. On current information more people have died trying to cross locked in the back of trucks on conventional ferries than have succumbed on the high seas.

A significant number of resources have been directed at air and sea measures designed to stop the crossings, including significant sums of money paid to the French government in “foreign aid” to persuade them to patrol their own beaches to stop the people leaving France and making a dangerous crossing.

A new aspect faced by the United Kingdom is the added pressures of Brexit – leaving the European Union – due to come into place as this issue is published. Already the UK government is expecting to step up sea patrols by the Royal Navy to monitor illegal fishing in the same waters that the migrants are making their own kind of escape from the EU. Throughout December large factory ships from various EU nations were reportedly ‘stripping’ the waters around Britain of fish.

As the UK was paying France a great deal of money before Brexit (when they were nominally part of the EU) it can be expected that these sums will rise. The attitude across in France can best be guided by a report that the Pas-de-Calais member of the legislature, Jean-Pierre Pont, has said France should stop all controls on migrants, in retaliation to the UK’s plans to deploy Royal Navy ships to patrol French fishing boats.

Apparently forgetting that the UK is paying up front for most of the migrant halting activity in France he wants the UK to “deal with it” themselves.

Meanwhile the UK has confirmed that at least four - if not eight - Royal Navy ships were on standby and ready to patrol the UK’s fishing waters from January 1 in the event of a no-deal Brexit. Thankfully that outcome was averted and, on the face of it, Britain has left the EU on friendly terms.

*Ed: I am unsure that the fish stocks will be given the opportunity to recover from that last-minute onslaught. The UK fishing fleet is relatively small, since joining the EU most fishing was undertaken by other nations and will continue to be for some time to come.*

*The government machine has found an answer to what to do with uninvited migrants. They announced last month that they had somehow lost track of 37,000 other migrants who they already had on their books. Apparently, no-one had explained to government officials how a lock and key worked. No wonder that migrants flock to Britain!*

## INDUSTRY

**Thales and StandardAero** have announced the successful first flight test of a revolutionary compact autopilot system that will bring Airbus AS350 and H125 helicopters into a new era of performance and safety. The achievement of this key milestone lays the groundwork for this important phase of the Supplemental Type Certification (STC) process and the launch of an unparalleled autopilot solution to the light helicopter market by mid-2021.

Flight testing, which will continue throughout this winter at StandardAero’s Langley, British Columbia, Canada facility, demonstrates Thales’ and StandardAero’s commitment to develop and certify a compact, advanced 4-axis helicopter Autopilot System. Earlier this year, StandardAero/Thales previously announced that WeatherTech, the well-known automotive accessories company, has agreed to be its launch customer. The Autopilot will initially be certified for installation on both the Airbus AS350 and H125 helicopter platforms.

The Thales/StandardAero compact autopilot is an intuitive automatic flight control system on the AS350/H125 that increases safety through reduced pilot workload. It provides stability augmentation, attitude retention and flight director modes such as altitude or heading hold and reduces the risk of aircraft incidents.

The new five-bladed H145 helicopter has received its certification from the U.S. **Federal Aviation Administration** (FAA). This type certification covers the full range of capabilities, including single-pilot instrument flight rules (IFR) and single engine operations (Cat.A/VTOL), along with night vision goggle capability. This newest version of the H145 family received EASA certification this past summer and was delivered to launch customer Norwegian Air Ambulance Foundation in September. The first five-bladed H145 delivery in the U.S. is set to take place in early 2021.

Airbus Helicopters, Inc. has begun updates to the current H145 final assembly line (FAL) in Columbus,

Mississippi, with new wiring testing capabilities for the five-blade variant. Technicians are also undergoing training in preparation for receipt of the first kits of the new version later this year.

This latest upgrade of the H145 family adds a new, innovative five-bladed rotor system to the multi-mission H145, increasing the useful load of the helicopter by 330 lbs (150 kg). The simplicity of the new bearingless main rotor design will also simplify maintenance operations, further improving the benchmark serviceability and reliability of the H145, while improving ride comfort for both passengers and crew. Powered by two Safran Arriel 2E engines, the H145 is equipped with full authority digital engine control (FADEC) and Airbus's own Helionix digital avionics suite. It includes a high performance 4-axis autopilot, increasing safety and reducing pilot workload. This helicopter's particularly low acoustic footprint makes the H145 the quietest helicopter in its class.

One of the **Leonardo** AW189 development aircraft was noted last month with a new feature at the rear of its fuselage. Leonardo have confirmed to *HeliHub.com* that they are test flying a "rear pod", to provide additional storage/baggage capabilities of up to 7-10 bags.

The kit is aimed at offshore operators for the AW189 super medium, primarily for offshore transport operations. This solution is expected to achieve certification by Spring 2021.

**Bell Textron Inc.** has opened the Bell Commercial Business Center (CBC). The new facility will be located at 4151 Amon Carter Boulevard, a former American Airlines building approximately seven miles away from both Bell's Headquarters and the Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport. Beginning in November 2020, Bell's CBC will house approximately 600 Bell employees including all Commercial Programs, Global Sales, Customer Support and Services as well as supporting business functions, Supply Chain, Information Technology, Human Resources and Finance personnel.



**Popular Science** recognized Bell's Electrically Distributed Anti-Torque (EDAT) innovation as the winner of its "Best of What's New Award" in the Aerospace category for 2020. This marks the third consecutive year Bell has won Popular Science's "Best of What's New Award" in the Aerospace category. Bell's Autonomous Pod Transport (APT) 70 was awarded in 2019 and the Bell V-280 Valor Joint Multi Role technology demonstrator won in 2018. This continued recognition demonstrates Bell's determined effort to pursue innovative solutions to push the boundaries of vertical lift.

**Turkish Aerospace** has won a Green World Environment Award in the global campaign to find the world's greenest countries, companies and communities with its project "Zero Waste Management & Green Flag League".

Turkish Aerospace competed against more than 500 other nominations in the Green World Awards for Environmental Best Practice, won the gold award on Science / Waste Management with an announcement on November 23rd, 2020.

As a result of this Green World Award success, we have been invited to become Green World Ambassadors and won the paper published in The Green Book (the leading international work of reference on environmental best practice) so that others around the world can follow their example and learn from their achievement.

The awards are organised by The Green Organisation, an international, independent, non-political, non-profit environment group that began in 1994, dedicated to recognising, rewarding and promoting environmental best practice around the world.

The 50,000th PT6 turboprop engine has rolled off the production line, **Pratt & Whitney** announced last month. Announced in 1958, the first iteration of the PT6 began flight testing in May 1961 and entered service in 1964.

More than 25,000 PT6 engines are currently in service, and the total fleet has accumulated more than 410 million flight hours, according to Pratt & Whitney. The latest variant—the PT6 E-series—powers the Pilatus PC-12 NGX.

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**APSA** conducts regularly scheduled online meetings for safety officers, maintenance technicians, SAR personnel, and UAS operators that you can join using your computer, mobile device or phone. And new for 2021, we are adding a Natural Resources Meeting Group. To facilitate this, the UAS, Safety Officer and Maintenance Technician Meeting Groups will meet once every two months, and the SAR Personnel and Natural Resources Meeting Groups will meet quarterly.

These meetings are open to any APSA member. Contract maintenance providers to APSA members are welcome to participate in the maintenance meeting as well. To receive meeting information and be added to the mailing list, send an email to [safety@publicsafetyaviation.org](mailto:safety@publicsafetyaviation.org).

The schedule for upcoming APSA online meetings is as follows:

**UAS:** Wednesday, Jan 13, 2021 from 1:00–2:00 PM EST (1800 UTC)

**Safety Officers:** Friday, Jan. 29, 2021 from 1:00-2:00 PM EST (1800 UTC)

**SAR:** Wednesday, Feb. 10, 2021 from 1:00–2:00 PM EST (1800 UTC)

**Maintenance:** Wednesday, Feb. 24, 2021 from 1:00-2:00 PM EST (1800 UTC)

Early in December a group of 15 aviation associations sent a letter to the **Federal Communications Commission** (FCC) expressing concern over frequency spectrum relocation affecting radar altimeters, a critical flight safety tool. The group requested that the FCC suspend Auction 107, scheduled to begin December 8, which offers new flexible-use overlay licenses for spectrum in the 3.7–3.98 GHz band, to resolve likely interference issues with radar altimeters prior to the auction.

Since 2017, the aviation industry has consistently noted during the Federal Communications Commission rulemaking process that deployment of 5G networks in this frequency band may introduce harmful radio frequency interference to radar altimeters currently operating in the globally-allocated 4.2–4.4 GHz aeronautical band. Radar altimeters are deployed on tens of thousands of civil aircraft in the United States and worldwide to support several critical safety-of-life aircraft functions throughout multiple phases of flight. Radar altimeters are the only sensor onboard a civil aircraft which provides a direct measurement of the clearance height of the aircraft over the terrain or other obstacles.





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**AS9100 - EASA Part 21.G and 21.0 - EASA Part 145 - UK MOD DAOS Approved - FAA Repair Station**

The aviation associations signing onto the letter to the FCC Commissioners include: Aerospace Industries Association; Airborne Public Safety Association; Air Line Pilots Association, International; Aircraft Electronics Association; Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association; Airlines for America; Cargo Airline Association; Experimental Aircraft Association; General Aviation Manufacturers Association; Helicopter Association International; National Air Carrier Association; National Air Transportation Association; National Business Aviation Association; RTCA and Regional Airline Association.

There is a new lighter than aircraft being brought to market. The promoters state that the ATLANT 300 will be able to carry a load of 165 tonne to 2,000km. This aircraft will change the whole transportation industry, especially logistics for rural areas and the way we transport oversized cargoes. Many industrial companies and Humanitarian aid organizations are waiting for this new development to be taken into the sky.

**Atlas LTA**, a newly established Israeli company, develops a family of innovative aircrafts named ATLANT. The biggest model, ATLANT 300, would be huge: 200 meters length, 100 meters width, and 50 meters height. It will be able to carry cargo at a speed of 120 km/h in all weather conditions, including harsh ones. The other two models are ATLANT 30 and ATLANT 100, they are smaller and can carry 18 tons and 60 tons accordingly. Those airships are being promoted as game-changers in the world of air cargo delivery because they do not need any ground facilities to take off or to land. All means of transport existing today require expensive ground infrastructure such as air or water ports, railroad systems, etc. Those facilities are concentrated at large industrial and heavily populated areas, leaving many other places isolated and suffering from lack of critical supplies. ATLANTs can equally reach developed and underdeveloped areas without any harm to the nature that always follow the large transport infrastructure construction projects. That unique ability draws a lot of attention from humanitarian organizations, such as UN World Food Program, because today's logistic difficulties are significant obstacles to their important mission. Another great example of the ATLANTs role is today's industrial world is point to point transportation of the large



blades of wind turbines. Those giant structures are available for offshore installation only due to the serious logistic problems which has become a bottleneck for this fast-growing industry. ATLANT could be an effective solution for the transportation as well as installation while being used as a flying crane.

Beside carrying cargoes ATLANTs will create a new dimension in the air travel such as short haul and high comfort passenger ferry flights to numerous hard to reach destinations, or even the more futuristic and luxury sky yachting that can bring exclusive travellers to the most hidden places on earth like arctic ice or small tropical islands...

*Editor: I was in half a mind to place this news item in the category of a feature in 'Move Along There'. Another new element of lunacy. How many times do we have to learn about the magical properties of airships? Has no-one read their history books? They have been presented as the new Nirvana - a place of perfect peace and happiness - for over 100 years and have consistently failed to deliver. Most projects founder before they reach maturity even if they appear to fly in significant numbers for a while. They are presented as modern solution but, despite all this automation, no-one has yet overcome their propensity to be difficult to fly in the vicinity of the ground and their never ending difficulties in the face of anything short of calm weather.*

An ongoing row between Russian and Ukrainian manufacturers over the overhaul of each other's aircraft has deepened after Russian Helicopters warned that lives were being put at risk by allegedly illegal work carried out on **Mil Mi-17s**.

After the fracturing of political relations between Ukraine and Russia, particularly after the annexation of Crimea, the co-operative efforts on aerospace between the two sides began to disintegrate.

Russian Helicopters has criticised two Ukrainian businesses – engine maker Motor Sich and state-owned MRO provider Aviakon – for their scheduled role in repair of two Afghan air force Mi-17V-5s.

Russian Helicopters says the two organisations “have not mastered the overhaul of this type of helicopter in the prescribed manner” and it has not supplied them with design documentation, spare parts or overhaul kits.

Russian Helicopters claims the “illegal” overhaul activity “endangers the lives of the American and Afghan soldiers that are operating these helicopters”. [Flight]



**Textron Aviation** has unveiled the Beechcraft King Air 260, the latest King Air to receive a refresh with nearly all the same new features as the King Air 360, which the Wichita-based airframer announced in August.

Like the 360, the 260's cockpit will be equipped with Innovative Solutions & Support's (IS&S) ThrustSense Autothrottle, digital pressurization controller, and Collins Aerospace's Multi-Scan RTA-4112 weather radar. Newly designed seats created originally for the 360 through a pressure-mapping process complete the 260's upgrades. Production of the 260 has begun, and certification and initial deliveries are expected in early 2021. List price is \$6.7 million.

The company also announced that it has obtained STCs for the IS&S ThrustSense Autothrottle on King Air 200s equipped with Pro Line Fusion avionics. It expects similar STC approval soon for King Air 300-series turboprops equipped with Pro Line 21 avionics.

On the Cessna side of the house, Scholl noted that production line flow on the newest airplane, the SkyCourier turboprop twin, will begin in early 2021 with type certification anticipated later that year.

**Adams Aviation Supply Co Ltd.**, for many years based on the famous Biggin Hill Airfield in Kent, moved to Mercury House, New Addington a decade ago. In mid-December they moved again to new premises near Gatwick Airport.

The new address is 2 Kelvin Lane, Newton Road, Crawley RH10 9TY from where they promise to continue to offer the same excellent level of service that their many customers have enjoyed for decades.

As with so much this year, Covid-19 has been a significant factor. As a reaction to the first lockdown in March, they invested in a new Virtual Private Network and Microsoft Teams videoconferencing meaning that they now have the flexibility to operate, communicate and serve customer needs from anywhere that an internet connection is available.

The other notable event, now a reality, is Brexit. The plan is to maintain the warehouse in the UK, but service European customers' needs via a subsidiary in the EU. If you are based in the EU, then your goods will be sent using UPS's WorldEase product. The order will go direct to the customer so that there is no delay. The price will be the one quoted with no additional charges for duty, Customs clearance, etc. The German subsidiary will clear Customs and handle any paperwork in the EU. The invoice that you will receive will be from the German subsidiary rather than Adams UK. If you are based outside of Germany, intra-Community VAT treatment will be used. If you are within Germany, German VAT will be charged.

University of Otago student Lydia Maclean's business idea is taking flight.

In Dunedin in August, she began developing her business idea **MT Legs** - an online platform to combat the high number of empty flight charters across New Zealand.

The idea was born from frequent comments from her family members, who worked in the air ambulance charter flight sector in Whanganui.

Her family members would talk about charter planes flying patients to a destination and then returning with no cargo, "which is a total waste of fuel and a lost opportunity for more revenue".

Charter flight operators did not attempt to secure bookings for the return flight because "no-one had the time to do anything about it, so I came up with the idea for the platform".

MT Legs would allow private customers, freight, emergency services or other interested parties access to these empty flights.

The technology could solve an issue experienced by most flight charter operators in New Zealand, she said.

She said she would continue to develop the idea when she returned to Dunedin next year to start her second year of study in marketing and communication. [Otago Daily]

**EASA** has certified a new Alternate Gross Weight (AGW) for the latest version of the H135 family of helicopters. The new AGW enables operators to benefit from an increased maximum take-off weight of up to 120kg (265 lb) and useful load. This increase can also be used to extend the range by up to 75 nm or the endurance by up to 40 minutes under standard conditions. The new AGW is available as an option and can be applied retroactively to all H135s equipped with Helionix.

Additionally, Airbus has recently certified a new single pilot IFR Helionix cockpit for its H135 helicopters. The modified cockpit enables customers to choose between removing the co-pilot side of the instrument panel to increase the field of view or to keep it to install specific equipment. The single pilot IFR cockpit of the H135 will further boost the capabilities of the H135 in several missions, including aerial work, utility and law enforcement.

To date, more than 1,400 helicopters of the H135 family have been delivered around the globe, they have accrued more than 5.6 million flight hours.



Airbus Helicopters and **Héli-Union** have signed a contract for the purchase of two multi-mission H160s to address a wide range of operations.

Héli-Union currently operates a fleet of approximately 20 Airbus helicopters from the Dauphin, the H225, and the H145 families and maintains a wide range of Airbus Helicopters products for third parties such as civil or defence operators.



Over the last twenty years the Pilatus PC-12 has proven to be one of the world's most versatile and popular single turbine powered aircraft with a reputation for versatility, performance, reliability and operational flexibility. Those attributes have attracted emergency services operators worldwide.

Since entering production in 1991 as the PC-12/45, the type has gone through a continuous evolution with upgrades to airframe, power plant, avionics and systems culminating in the current PC-12-47E (NG).

The creation of the **Pilatus PC-12 Super Legacy XP** brings added power, capability and luxury upgrades to PC-12-45/47 Legacy aircraft as a turn-key solution. These enhancements to power plant, propeller, cabin soundproofing and interior detail combine to provide outstanding levels of performance. Coupled with familiar (Garmin) avionics and extended power plant warranty the Super Legacy XP provides outstanding value to both private and commercial operators.

The Pilatus PC-12 Super Legacy XP features multiple performance upgrades – all of which are certified by both FAA and EASA Supplemental Type Certificates. Installed on the PC-12/47 Legacy airframe these combine to provide superior levels of power, performance and safety, in a luxurious and quieter cabin environment.

In the Super Legacy XP PC-12/47 the regular PT6A-67B engine is removed and replaced with the PT6A-67P engine. This provides an additional 200HP and is flat rated to 1200 SHP limit in climb, enabling a faster climb rate. Cruise speed is also increased.

The upgrade features the German manufactured 5-Blade reversing and full feathering constant speed propeller MTV-27-1-N-C-F-R(P)/CFR260-65a.

The benefits of this upgrade include improved vibration damping, ground roll distance reduction by approximately 15%, improved climb performance, a 5knt increase in cruise performance, unlimited blade life. more ground clearance and less risk of foreign object damage a reduction of external aircraft noise level by approximately 4 dB(A) – with cabin noise is reduced by 6dB(A).

Super Legacy XP Ltd are at 85 Great Portland Street, London W1W 7LT UK. Email: [fly@pc12slxp.com](mailto:fly@pc12slxp.com)



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# ACCIDENTS AND INCIDENTS

**5 December 2020 Eurocopter AS365N3 Dauphin2 N625CF.** Air ambulance of CareFlight Air and Mobile Service, Miami Valley Hospital, Ohio. Operated by Air Methods, Dayton, Ohio. An interfacility transport was accepted. Team conducted a full walk around of the aircraft. Once inside the aircraft crew completed the mandatory safety check and communicated to the pilot that all doors were secured. At approximately 140 Kt, the right rear passenger door came open. The PIC had also heard and felt a change in the aircraft. PIC immediately slowed down the aircraft and the flight nurse in the back of the aircraft while still belted was able to close the door. Upon safe landing and exiting of the aircraft no damage was found. [Concern]

**6 December 2020 Kawasaki Heavy Industries BK117B-1 ZK-HLF** The Life Flight Westpac helicopter experienced an "inflight technical issue" and made a precautionary landing in Kelburn Park, Wellington, New Zealand. The pilot, a paramedic, and a third crew members were on board at the time. [Stuff]

**8 December 2020 Eurocopter EC135T1 F-HJAF.** Rescue helicopter of Aervice Aerien Francais (SAF Helicopteres), a private company, crashed killing five emergency responders during a search and rescue operation in the French Alps. The sole survivor, the pilot, was severely injured. Three of the victims were members of the French Air Rescue and two were from the CRS Alps, a mountain police unit that provides medical and rescue services. The aircraft was reported down in mountainous terrain in the Bonvillard sector, Savoie Department of the French Alps. Helicopter destroyed. Reports state that the crash was in conditions of thick fog and that this was a training flight. The crew were two pilots - one in training - along with two winch operators and two mountain rescue workers. Police union Synergie-Officiers has named Amaury Lagroy de Crouette as one of the victims. Since 2018, Mr de Crouette had led a local mountain unit of the CRS, France's riot police.

**22 December 2020 Bell 429 G-WLTS.** Air ambulance of Wiltshire Air Ambulance. Aircraft spent night at the Royal United Hospital, Bath, after the weather became unsuitable for a return flight to its base. Low-level clouds over the city meant the helicopter could not be flown safely. The charity's medics continue to respond to life-threatening emergencies in rapid response cars. [Wiltshire999]

## SAFETY

The wasps of the Pachodynerus species have a problematic habit: they slip into human-made equipment to build their nests. Already a hassle when they decide to settle in someone's home, they become even more dangerous when they get near an aircraft. The thousands of parked up airliners are at risk.

Aeronautical data providers have warned Russian airlines that updated navigational databases lack information on 49 airports.

As a result, pilots will have to use paper maps or directions provided by air traffic controllers while landing at those airports, Russian media reports.

On December 4, 2020, a new air traffic management structure will be rolled out by the Russian Federal Transport Agency (Rosaviatsiya) and the State Air Traffic Management Corporation of the Russian Federation. The layout of all routes and corridors, as well as their designations will be overhauled with the aim to make air navigation above Russia more efficient.

The transition to the new system was announced in 2019. According to government officials, there are no safety risks involved.

But an internal presentation distributed by the Russian flag carrier Aeroflot and acquired by TV station RBK, warns that providers of navigational data are unable to keep up with the coding of flight procedures due to frequent changes and delays.

Jeppesen and Lido Navigation, the two main providers of aeronautical data to Russian airlines have been late receiving the information updates. Its inclusion into new databases is impossible.

As a result, databases due to go online on December 3, 2020, lacked navigational data on 49 airports in Moscow and adjacent regions. Pilots were advised to use paper maps and rely on vectors provided by air traffic controllers upon landing.



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## UNMANNED

APSA's live Webinar Training Series was created to bring many of the classes scheduled for APSCON 2020 and Public Safety Drone Expo directly to the members. APSA has announced the addition of more webinars, extending the series into mid-January 2021. These 90-minute webinars are offered at no charge as a benefit of membership; however, registration is required. To register for any or all the webinars, visit the APSA website. The upcoming webinar schedule is as follows, each starting at 1300 EST:

**Battery Care for Your Drone**—January. 8, 2021.

**Law Enforcement Response to Aircraft Accidents**—January. 22, 2021

Remote Pilot-in-Command (RPIC) Course both online via live webinars and in person. If online works best for you, we will be conducting this course for four hours a day over two consecutive weeks on Tuesdays and Thursdays on the following dates: February 9, 11, 16, 18.

APSA also have an in-person RPIC Courses scheduled for Richmond Heights, Missouri on March 16-17: APSA's RPIC course is designed to provide students with a review of the Federal Aviation Regulations Part 107 Remote Pilot Certification Process and prepare students to pass the FAA Pilot's Exam. Successful completion requires attendance of all online sessions. In addition, three briefings specific to law enforcement use of UAS are conducted. The course is intended for public safety personnel, both sworn and non-sworn, interested in obtaining their FAA Remote Pilot Certificate.



S-100 Camcopter

Naval Group, on behalf of the French Navy, has accepted two further CAMCOPTER® S-100 Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) for operational use. The now four craft will be deployed on the Mistral-class amphibious helicopter carriers (Porte-Hélicoptères Amphibie – PHA) Tonnerre and Mistral. The acquisition comes after the successful integration of the CAMCOPTER® S-100 on the French Navy Mistral-class vessel Dixmude, which was finalised in 2019. This was the first time in Europe, that a rotary wing UAS had been connected to the combat system of an amphibious helicopter carrier.

The acceptance tests of the two systems took place in the last week of October with representatives of Naval Group and the French Navy in attendance.

Over the next few months, the newly acquired S-100 will be integrated on the French Navy's vessels.

The creation of a reliable and safe 'sense and avoid' system for aviation has long been the holy grail for the unmanned aircraft industry.

Last month Sagetech Avionics and Hover Inc claimed to have produced a system that offers OEMs with the key components of an onboard detect and avoid (DAA) solution for UAVs.

UAVs need to replace a pilot's line of sight with technology to avoid collisions, that technology needs to be compliant with DO-254 and DO-178C design assurance levels. Hover's embedded computer with real-time operating system (RTOS) and Sagetech's MX-series situational awareness components provide leading edge technology with appropriate design assurance levels and FAA certifications.

Sagetech's MXR micro interrogator and MXS micro transponder, along with Hover's embedded computing solution, will enable a UAV to interrogate a nearby aircraft, validate the ADS-B in tracks, resolve the threat with a course of action using its flight computer, and communicate its change in position to nearby aircraft to avoid a mid-air collision. This DAA solution will be compliant with ACAS-Xu and ACAS-Xr specifications and is intended for installation on UAVs flying above 400 feet, beyond visual line of site (BVLOS), in the National Airspace System (NAS). Anticipated aircraft requiring this capability include those flying civil BVLOS and urban air mobility missions, which typically weigh more than 55 pounds.

Interested customers can learn more about the solutions at [www.sagetech.com](http://www.sagetech.com).

[www.policeaviationnews.com](http://www.policeaviationnews.com)







## A View from the Hangar

Having sat on the side-lines for the last 18 months listening to and watching the sad demise of the National Police Air Service I could make this a rather long rant outlining the reasons behind the slow and painful slide, of a once proud and passionate group of people, into becoming a policing sideshow.

What I don't want to do is fall into that familiar trap of finger pointing and apportioning blame or calling for 'heads to roll'. It helps nobody, especially those dedicated colleagues who strive to serve those deserving communities who ultimately benefit from the attendance of a police aircraft.

What I would like to do is forensically analyse the root causes of the problem and to then offer a solution to prevent further damage, whilst building a sustainable and forward-thinking establishment that makes a very real and positive difference.

Before I begin, I must tell you that I am a big fan of a certain Albert Einstein and two of his quotes immediately sprung to mind whilst writing this article as they directly reflect on the current situation that NPAS finds itself in:

The definition of insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.

Einstein also reputedly stated that if he were to have only 60 minutes to solve a problem and his life depended on it, he would spend 55 minutes thinking of the right question to ask and then 5 minutes to solve it. We need to be asking the right questions in order to solve the problems.

Let's look at the decision to move the London aircraft from its new multimillion pound base at North Weald back to the crumbling and decaying Lippitts Hill base after just one year. Why weren't the staff at Lippitts Hill listened too over two years ago when they said that the new base was simply too far away from London to be effective and would fail to adequately provide the service that The Met and its communities deserved and required? To answer that particular question, we need to join the dots and to then follow the trail backwards. I will do that with this question, but you can pose other NPAS questions yourself and retrace the dots. They will all come back to the same place.

The decision to move the Lippitts Hill base was made several years ago, but why was it made? It was made by a Chief Operating Officer who was intent solely on removing any organisational influence from The Met and was based on personal biases created over many years, some of which were actually spent working within the Met itself. What had initially caused that bias to fester for so long and had now come to the surface? Was there a bias also from West Yorkshire Police to show The Met that they now had the reigns, and this was a statement to say to them 'we are now in charge here!?' Taking the Met air unit out of London was therefore not a geographical or strategic decision, it was a political decision based on bias. If you dig deep enough you will find that there was never even a business case written for the proposed move and it was written retrospectively once the new base at North Weald had been built.

There was also an unhealthy desire for the then Chief Operating Officer of NPAS to succeed, having failed the Senior Police National Assessment Centre (PNAC). This particular selection process identifies individuals who are capable of being an effective chief officer (or equivalent) and can contribute to and benefit from the Strategic Command Course. Having failed this assessment twice he was not eligible





Seasonal, but some time ago! © Central Counties

for further promotion to ranks which included Commander, Assistant Chief Constable or even Chief Constable. Failure to pass the PNAC course prevented him from aspiring to those ranks. Was being promoted to lead a national organisation, such as NPAS, the opportunity for him to show the 'powers to be' that he did have the ability and potential to have risen higher and exhibited an 'I'll show them what they've missed' attitude? A key question for me to ask would be:

What was unveiled during those detailed PNAC assessments and profiles that prevented further promotion and why was he then promoted to lead a fledgling and complex national organisation?

Having been given the responsibility by the then Chief Constable, Dee Collins he sat over the fall of NPAS and the development of a toxic culture that sought to divide and conquer, paralysed any creativity, disengaged staff and shut down any constructive challenge from passionate and experienced staff who simply wanted to provide the quality service that they knew they could. Those very same people would have been only too willing to have become involved and to have offered their support and ideas to a concept that could have undoubtedly worked. They were never provided with that opportunity.

### **A 'them and us' culture is fostered**

One of the most important and vital strengths that any organisation can develop, and display is that of psychological safety. For me, psychological safety is the actual 'holy grail' of crew resource management and what every team or organisation is striving to achieve? If a balance of different thinking (linear and non-linear) and specialisms are not present in a non-judgmental setting, then you will simply not get to the right answer. You will undoubtedly get 'an answer' but if that answer or solution is dictated to you by a leader who is simply not interested in other people's views and opinions then you stand a high chance of heading down the wrong track. Many NPAS decisions were unfortunately made in this context with so many people purely intent on survival and protection of their own fragile position. They became bystanders to the destruction, happy to survive, bide their time and continue to be paid a salary. If you did show any kind of respectful dissent then you became an immediate target and managed from your position or manipulated, threatened or coerced into submission in order to toe the party line.

Some people did attempt to stand up to those toxic behaviours and a subsequent disciplinary report eventually lead to a disciplinary hearing and a sideways move for the Chief Operating Officer. Unfortunately, the damage had already been done. Good people had already left the organisation and opportunities to remove the destructive tumour were both ignored and missed. Several people were courageous enough to become whistle-blowers, with others having warned Dee Collins of the toxic culture well in advance of the final disciplinary investigation.

I for one went through several sessions of counselling to get over a 2 hour 'non-disciplinary and welfare' meeting after I dared to question and suggest an alternative plan to his non-sensical restructuring of base managers' duties. The initial plan proposed would have led to the loss of many experienced base managers and a huge cost in terms of time and money to replace them. I also suggested that the blanket media ban on informing our neighbours at Lippitts Hill that the Boreham air base had moved to Lippitts Hill may



not actually be in the organisation's interests and may well have contradicted the Policing Codes of Ethics. We had spent years developing a fantastic open working relationship with our immediate residential neighbours and this would have caused immense damage. This caused me to be well and truly in the sights of our leader.

But do I blame him for the harm caused to me or NPAS? Surprisingly no. In fact, rather than seeking revenge I have managed to put it all into context, heal and forgive. There is also a degree of pity for the circumstances that he was allowed to find himself in.

### **An ability to lead**

So, what is the root cause of all these issues?

People's innate talents are not correctly aligned to the role that they hold.

What do I mean by that? Well, we need to look at two principles which I would like to relate to both the then Chief Operating Officer and the then Chief Constable.

The first principle is called the Peter Principle. This observation of organisational hierarchies' states that there is a tendency for every employee to rise within the hierarchy through promotion until they reach a level of respective incompetence. In other words, they become compromised, their innate talent simply not aligning to the role that they have now achieved and aspired too.

The second principle is Dunning-Kruger Syndrome. This states that that people with low ability at a task will overestimate their ability. This particular principle is related to the cognitive bias of illusory superiority and comes from people's inability to recognize their own lack of ability

If you then merge both principles, you have a very dangerous concoction. Now, let us take a deeper look at both the Chief Operating Officer and the Chief Constable in relation to these two principles. Both very senior officers were in fact themselves victims of an organisation and a system which allowed them to be promoted above their level of respective competence and without suitable self-awareness and support compromising them in the process. Without adequate and suitable support, they were pushed into the detrimental area of burn out, unable to cope. Not wishing to show weakness or to disappoint those who had sponsored their promotion, keen also to prove to themselves that they were more than capable to fulfil their new roles they battled on. Rather than showing a degree of humility and vulnerability they played the Dunning Kruger card which ultimately led to poor decision making and the disengagement of staff, along with a disintegration of trust. Battling on regardless the Chief Operating Officer reverted to a default behaviour setting (bullying, manipulation and coercion) in order to maintain the authority that they perceived came with their respected rank but had unfortunately lost, having been promoted to level higher than their talent allowed.

We mustn't forget that we live in a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous world (2020 certainly underlines that fact) and not everyone has the ability to lead in this world of constant change. Certainly not without support and psychological safety being present.

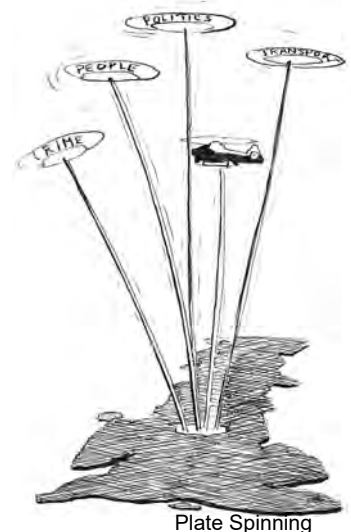
Why wasn't he actually sacked for his behaviour? Surely that was the obvious thing for the organisation to have done. I knew of three other people within NPAS who spoke directly to Dee Collins about the situation, one of whom said that the toxic situation, outlined to her, nearly brought her to tears. My own confidential email to her, outlining my concerns, was either intercepted or flagrantly ignored. Either way my email was then forwarded directly to the Chief Operating Officer to 'deal with'. Far from being an obvious solution, NPAS simply could not remove him because it was the organisation itself that had trumpeted his arrival and had sponsored his promotion. What was the actual remit that he had been given by the Chief Constable when he joined? She also knew that he had failed his PNAC course but still chose him over other candidates. An ongoing issue that NPAS suffered from was West Yorkshire continually pushing some of its 'less able' staff into the organisation. When you consider that particular question it is actually quite obvious and understandable; why a Chief Constable would send its most capable leaders to an organisation that did not bring about any direct benefits to West Yorkshire. If more able staff had been allowed to manage NPAS we may not have been having this conversation. A Chief Constable is measured on their performance within their own territorial area. NPAS became a side show and an unnecessary distraction. It was simply not a priority. She would also have been severely compromised if she had sacked her Chief Operating Officer as he could have alleged that he was simply carrying out her direct orders and that he had not been supported in those aims. How would it look if they were to now sack him and to draw attention to their poor decision making and recruitment processes, especially after being recently awarded a CBE, how embarrassing? You may have seen a very similar pattern enacted recently during the Home Secretary, Priti Patel, bullying allegations. Very much like Boris Johnson and his government, West Yorkshire were simply powerless to act, happy to brush over the issue and retain a modicum of organisational

reputation, hoping for it to eventually 'blow over'. In doing so they missed a fantastic opportunity to seek a long-term and lasting solution not only for NPAS but West Yorkshire Police themselves.

### Maintaining the spin

In early 2020 I was fortunate to sit in a lecture at Derby University, given by Dee Collins. She was speaking in relation to leadership and the subject of NPAS came up. I didn't get a direct answer, but it was dressed up in an analogy of spinning plates. Chief Constables have numerous plates to spin on top of those long slender and very wobbly poles and the ones at the end sometimes receive the least attention and fall, crashing to the ground in pieces and with no conceivable chance of repair. For me it highlighted that unfortunately this person had been severely compromised, having been promoted beyond their respective level of competence. Unfortunately, that smashed plate of NPAS cost good people their livelihoods, their health and prevented communities from receiving the service that they so deserved.

If we therefore follow the dots further back, beyond the Chief Constable, how were they themselves selected and were they the right person to take up that high profile and stressful post? Of course, people will always strive to better themselves, seek higher remuneration and hefty pensions but are they always the best person with the right talent to hold such a position?



So, how do we stop this reoccurring and all too familiar cycle of incompetence and break the organisational status quo, what will it take to turn this ship around? Well, and this may be a surprise to you, it's quite simple. You align the right person to the role which is based on their innate talent and then provide the right opportunities and support, whilst monitoring their health and well-being, ensuring they do not enter burn out. This does not necessarily have to relate solely to a senior leader but could be a Tactical Flight Officer, engineer or pilot, everybody. It all starts with self-awareness and the ability to assess whether people have the cognitive and psychomotor skills to deal with the level of complexity that they currently face or aspire too. A holistic profiling approach involves putting into context environmental factors and the individuals own set of specific circumstances and life experiences, holding a mirror in front of the individual and removing the smoke. The feedback loop to home is also vital and needs to be taken into account as home and work are intrinsically linked and will have a bearing on an individual's performance and associated behaviours. If you are happy and content at work and not forced into burn out, your home life will benefit immensely and vice versa. How many people have you we seen promoted only to suffer from long working hours, stress, physical and mental health issues all in their quest to succeed, seeing promotion as a route to happiness and fulfilment? How many people do you know who have been promoted only to then realise that they are in the wrong post and need to move back to a position of safety? Very, very few, if any and that generally involves some form of health scare. That is because they become trapped, deceived into thinking that promotion would bring happiness and fulfilment. Having now gained that extra pip or crown for their uniform, the kudos, the extra pay and increased pension along with a reserved car parking space and detached house they have no other option but to battle on, against all odds of success. They may even seek further promotion, deluded to think that may be where happiness ultimately lies. Colleagues may even support their efforts and attempts, coaching them through periods of reduced performance but unwittingly further compounding the issue.

Take the time to take a step back, take a deep breath and observe if this cycle of promotion and decision making occurs within your own organisation. How many in your own organisation require support simply because they have been promoted beyond their respective level of competence. Just because you are an excellent sergeant doesn't necessarily mean that you will be an excellent inspector and being pushed into a role that is not achievable because of your own lack of talent will eventually cause you, your family and your colleague's harm. This is exactly what has happened to NPAS.

There is a very real connection here to crew resource management and flight safety as the people we ultimately put in harm's way deserve the best support that we can provide. For people to be making the best possible decisions, which can be a matter of life and death, we need to break this status quo and to prevent this cycle from continuing. The links in the chain can be very easily traced back to senior leaders, if they like it or not, and that is where change needs to begin. Of course, this idea will take a lot of courage, humility and vulnerability, along with that rare ability to listen.

This idea of assessing a person's innate talent and ability to deal with complexity also has huge ramifications within selection and recruitment, as well as CRM. Consider the costly and lengthy processes of training and recruiting pilots and tactical flight officers. An initial assessment of their psychomotor, concentration and cognitive abilities would save hundreds of thousands of pounds as well as protecting the organi-



sation and the individual from needless action plans, management intervention and for the person to ultimately leave a job that they had set their heart on.

I do not have the answers or solutions to all of the current problems being faced by NPAS, but I do know how to release and realise the potential innate talent that has for far too long sat dormant, unable to assist its leaders find the solutions to the problems they face. If properly managed that untapped pool of talent holds all the answers. Learning who within NPAS has the ability to cope with complexity may just help them move forward together as one organisation, in synergy.

I have only taken you through one specific set of circumstances and that was the decision to move the air base from Lippitts Hill to North Weald, but you can easily apply this thinking to all other decisions. The decision to sell off the ill-fated purchase of four Fixed wing and the base closures that have hamstrung the organisation.

For those who have dared to read this article some will undoubtedly become angry, deny the findings and attempt to justify all of those previous decisions. However, some may stop, take a deep breath, listen and take the time to reflect and seek ways of thinking differently, breaking the perpetual cycle of failure and replace it with success, benefiting everyone.

Yes, we can all shout from the rooftops that people need to be sacked and to be held accountable, but it will ultimately not solve a single issue now faced by NPAS. Follow the dots and you will find the root causes to the problem, as well as the long-term answers.

## MOVE ALONG THERE

If many of the revelations about NPAS in this New Year edition prove to be true, there may be some guidance this publication can offer regarding the excess hangar space they now find themselves with. Fortunately, PAN is aware that there are deserving people out there that might use the space to good account.

Up in Doncaster for instance there are the people from an Avro Vulcan preservation group who were asked to leave their hangar home just as the NPAS facility was being built [2017] and they have a Avro Vulcan and an English Electric Canberra out in the cold and damp that would welcome the warm space in the coming winter months. There may well be criticism for such charity but it matters not, the organisation is mired in that already.

Down in North Weald they have several preservation groups too with old helicopters looking for somewhere warm and even a little museum that is now reported to be looking for a new home.

It all sounds like a perfect opportunity for NPAS to improve their public persona by sharing their expensively acquired but soon to be underused space with some deserving groups.

In New York they seem to have a very puritan view on life. Probably not too far removed from their positive national love of churchgoing. Apparently three years ago they were embarrassed by one of their crews.

Last month, in mid-December, they were hounding one of their former cop fliers who was flying a NYP Department Cessna in a flight pattern that resembled a penis way back in 2017. Such things are not new thanks to the evidence provided by such mobile device flight apps as Flight radar 24. Still, they managed to divest him of five vacation days as punishment.

Officer Derin D Devuono struck a deal with his employers after their case appeared to flounder. He appears to have saved himself from losing 30 days of lost vacation time but at the same time it looks as if he saved their evidential bacon. It surely must have been tempting to save the five he traded away by giving

## The Author

David Howell retired from the police service in July 2019, having served 30 years. 17 of those years were spent within police aviation initially at the Central Counties Air Operations Unit at Halfpenny Green before being seconded to NPAS in 2013. Following the closure of Halfpenny Green in 2015 he spent three years as one of the Base Managers at Lippitts Hill.

Passionate about the huge benefits of CRM and 2009 David was one of the first 'blue light' CRM trainers authorised by the CAA to conduct such training within police aviation. David is still committed to promoting this invaluable branch of learning.

Since retiring David is now a change management and organisational development consultant, leadership and teamwork trainer, coach, speaker and an Advisory Board Member for Conduct Change, an anti-bullying foundation. Recent research, conducted by David, has focused on the use of psychometrics to provide a holistic perspective of an individual's innate talent, aligning those talents with the right role within the correct environmental setting.



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them a run for their money. The fact that they had already apparently decided his guilt by transferring him back on the streets of New York with the 60th Precinct years ago probably depressed his wish to fight. It was all about a disciplinary trial rather than a criminal court undertaken following criminal justice and the scene of the action was One Police Plaza, the headquarters of the NYPD in Manhattan.

In mid-November the hearing opened with testimony that Devuono's lawyer thought showed that the case was weak. He thought that the NYPD prosecutors realised that it was struggling to provide evidence. They outlined the manner of the flight of which he was pilot in command but could not prove key details including the height at which the offence took place, and in addition they had no witness testimony from now retired supervisors. To further damage the case, a second officer on the witness list declined to testify. The hearing was adjourned to December.

At the core of the allegation was that he had misused a federally funded \$4M Cessna, making improper entries in a logbook and not conducting flight surveys. It was alleged that in anger at a supervisor he flew a route that appeared on radar tracks as a penis.

Prior behaviour apparently held no sway. Devuono was previously commended for a series of missions, including one where he and a colleague flew life-saving anti-venom and another involving the rescue of a woman.

*Editor: The case did blow a few apparent secrets on undercover NYPD air operations that might have been better served by remaining in the closet. The surveillance plane was used in 2017 for secret operations to check container ships off New York City's coast for hazardous substances or radiation that could be used in a terror attack. Paranoia?*

*He was part of an aviation detail whose members were given false IDs and required to dress in civilian clothing when operating the plane. All very mysterious activity straight out of a Hollywood terror script, even if a B movie.*

*The performance of NYPD discipline seems strange to outside eyes. The giving up of statutory holidays rather than simple fines is one element. The 'penis' flight pattern has emerged several times in the recent past in the UK. I am not aware of any proceedings being aimed at the pilots who could quite easily perform such a manoeuvre in error as part of a surveillance orbit (prove it?). Some things are simply humorous, except when they are in New York perhaps.*

*So, after it may have been long forgotten by the media it was back in the news again. Some questions to ask of course, how many of the public have a radar set? Come to that how many people are there in New York that would be following the repeat radar track of a secret Cessna on Flight Radar 24 and therefore might notice a familiar shape? Vanishingly small. One might presume that in this Puritanical world anyone that might have realised what the shape was would long since have fainted away!*

*So, who is the real victim in all this? Looks like a fit up of Officer Devuono just to save face of officialdom. Clearly someone realised what the flight profile was but clearly they were watching and seeking revenge. Some things are simply best forgotten, certainly not resurrected three years later to further embarrass some thin skinned official.*

We all seem to get stuck in front of television these days, like it or not. I was barely paying attention when Yorkshire born singer Jane McDonald, spoke fondly of her birthplace Wakefield and let it be known that it is known as the Merry City and that the people of Wakefield think only positive thoughts for the future.

I suspect that such positive thoughts must only relate to those born there rather than those that work in police HQ.....



## EVENTS ON THE MOVE

In mid-December, the people who operate the GA air show at Friedrichshafen and the European Rotors helicopter show in Cologne announced revised dates for the 2021 AERO Friedrichshafen event. After a one-year hiatus due to the coronavirus pandemic, the leading show for general aviation will take place next year from April 21 to 24, 2021, at the Friedrichshafen Exhibition Center, at Lake Constance.

As of mid-December 2020, the AERO team is reporting very good international registration numbers, with some 60% of registered exhibitors coming from abroad. The e-flight-expo is expected to garner special attention in the coming year.



The new date of AERO South Africa has now also been fixed, after the event was also cancelled last year due to the coronavirus pandemic: the aviation show will take place from July 8 to 10, 2021, at Wonderboom Airport in Pretoria.

Further information is available at: [www.aero-expo.com](http://www.aero-expo.com) , <https://www.linkedin.com/showcase/35559891/> , <https://www.facebook.com/AERO.FN/> and <https://www.instagram.com/aerofriedrichshafen/>.





On delivery flight © BNA

In early December 2020 Britten-Norman delivered the first of two brand new BN2B-26 Islander aircraft to the Falkland Islands Government Aviation Service (FIGAS). The Islander's ability to operate with ease as a high-frequency, short-sector, passenger and freight aircraft has made it ideal for hopping around the Falkland Islands' dramatic landscape. The second Islander is scheduled for delivery in 2021.

FIGAS is Britten-Norman's Southern-most operator and has employed Islanders since the 1970s. The current fleet of four Islanders serve in a variety of roles and are essential in keeping the Falklands and some of its more remote communities connected. In addition to commuting flights, regular missions include air ambulance, postal carrier, freight, environmental monitoring and scenic flights.

The new Islander's registration honours Sir Miles Clifford, whose name has been inscribed above the pilot's door. As Governor of the Falkland Islands he was responsible for the launch of the air service in 1948. The service, which became FIGAS, was originally aimed at providing medical evacuation capabilities but it soon broadened to include mail delivery and passenger flight services. These changes were key to connectivity between the communities of the Falklands and are vital roles Britten-Norman Islanders continue today.



© B-N

FIGAS' latest Islander is fitted with Garmin's world-renowned, high-end avionics suite, aiding safety, navigation and situational awareness. This includes the next generation G600TXi primary display, GTN 750Xi & GTN 650Xi Nav/Comm/GPS and EIS TXi advanced electronic engine instrumentation system. The Garmin suite also provides terrain alerts and integration with a radar altimeter, both of which are of particular benefit to pilots navigating the Falkland's rugged landscape and harsh weather systems. A Spidertracks installation provides additional safety features by allowing the operations team to track aircraft in real-time and by enabling satellite based two-way communication.





Post construction images of the interiors of the new large hangars operated by NPAS are rare. I believe that this is the North Weald hangar. If it is true that the Metropolitan Police EC145s are to be withdrawn to Lippitts Hill the crew of the remaining EC135T2 will need to dream up a lot of energetic ball games to fill all this space! (DH)

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The UK based Heli UK-Expo and Elite styled events of the past have had yet another makeover during the Covid downtime and have come out the other end slightly changed. Like all other events the changes are at best tentative. No-one really knows the future with some sources suggesting that the Covid threat will last until the end of 2021. That line of thought is perhaps reflected in the cancellation of the Paris Air Show in late June 2021.

The new face of Heli UK-Expo will include *Private Flyer* branding. Set for 14-15 May 2021 **Private Flyer London** will be found at the familiar venue of Wycombe Air Park, Buckinghamshire. The next in the series was the 4-5 June 2021 Private Flyer Leeds at Leeds East Airport (the former RAF Church Fenton). That date has been moved later in the calendar from an optimistic March. The third edition of Private Flyer will hopefully take place on 2-3 July 2021 as Private Flyer Dublin at Weston Airport, Dublin. Private Flyer UK/Elite Events are located at Palmers Barn, Station Road, Tring. The organisers team line up has changed with Alex Ayling now backed up by Roxana Ayling and Andrew Rainbird. Contact Roxana the Event Manager on +44 (0)203 740 6086 [roxana@theeliteevents.com](mailto:roxana@theeliteevents.com)

Alex Ayling, Show Director explained; "In what has been a tough year for all events, we are trying to still navigate through and offer our customers and visitors some level of assurances for dates next year. What is clear from updates from the UK Government is that our original show dates for Leeds in March looked increasingly less likely.



15-17 Jun '21. Rotortech 2021. Venue is the Royal International Convention Centre at the Showgrounds in Brisbane, Australia. Tel: +61 3 5282 0500 [www.rotortech.com.au](http://www.rotortech.com.au)

The 54th edition of the Paris Air Show scheduled for June 21-27 has been cancelled but, in an attempt, to fill a very real gap in the annual calendar the niche Toulouse based event, **Aerospace Tech Week**, is still planning to go ahead on 23rd-24th June 2021 to provide industry with an event in France and fill a void where it is likely to be one of the first major aerospace events to take place in over 18 months.

Aerospace Tech Week & Aerospace Tech Review the sponsors of the event are offering various packages of promotion of exhibiting around the event.

Aerospace Tech Week might not have the flying displays that the Paris Air Show has but it does deliver on vital B2B networking opportunities for the civil aviation, aerospace and defence sectors, via its six main themes under one roof covering: Avionics, Connectivity, Flight Ops IT, MRO IT, Testing and FACE.

For more details on the Halls, conferences, training, workshops and networking receptions visit: [www.AerospaceTechWeek.com](http://www.AerospaceTechWeek.com) The man to speak to is Adrian Broadbent, call him on +44 (0) 203 892 3051 or e-mail [abroadbent@aerospace-media.com](mailto:abroadbent@aerospace-media.com)

London-based event **Helitech Expo** has changed its dates from March to 26/27 May 2021, remaining at the ExCeL centre in London.

Organisers Prysm Group have advised that the move is "due to ongoing restrictions on large scale business events and changing government guidelines".

However, as industry observers Helihub believe that a further significant reason is the March dates were very badly thought out, less than two weeks ahead of HAI Heli-Expo in New Orleans. Both exhibitors and visitors alike would only likely visit one of two closely set events, and the potential upside of the significantly larger Heli-Expo would much more likely lure anyone with the pandemic in mind.

Added to the move is that Prysm have also lowered their aspirations of the event and quietly renamed it from "Helitech World Expo" to a less aspirational "Helitech Expo." (Helihub)

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