

# Police Aviation News

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Issue 332

December 2023



**DRF UPGRADE THEIR ICAR GAME**

**POLISH 407s LATEST**

**TUNISIA 429 ACTION**



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## EDITORIAL

This last month we have seen some movement in England & Wales. The political masters of policing in those two countries are calling out for smart drones that can give them police air support at the drop of a hat.

Typically no one is telling these numpty politicians that they cannot have a smart do it all drone simply because no-one has designed one let alone built one that works in the way they dream it ought to. The promises are out there for the gullible to swallow, trials of a sub-standard system start next year. The industry simply cannot wait ten years for the systems to be updated.

Meanwhile the plan to purchase new helicopters for NPAS London and in the rest of the country remains mired in the slow planning processes of West Yorkshire Police and their industry partners (Blue Light). The aircraft they seek to replace are old and unreliable and the equipment they use even older. The London EC145 helicopters date from 2007 but the Wescam 15 turrets flown on the helicopters are even older and spares are difficult to obtain. It is a wonder they manage to fly at all.

Bryn Elliott

## LAW ENFORCEMENT

### CYPRUS

**POLICE:** The Cyprus Police Aviation Unit (C.P.A.U) was established on June 10, 2008, having previously operated as the 'Cyprus Police Air Wing' (from 1990 to 9.6.2008).

Two New Agusta Westland 139 helicopters were delivered to the C.P.A.U. at the end of 2010. These have increased the operational capability of the Unit to meet the continuously increasing demands for missions, as well as to fulfil the Republic's obligations to International Organizations with regards to missions such as Search and Rescue, Illegal Immigration, etc.



Earlier assets included Bell 412 helicopters which remain in service. This image of Bell 412EP CP-4 (c/n.36155) of the Cyprus Police Aviation Unit, overflying Fig Tree Bay, Protaras, Cyprus on October 23, 2023 confirms that the type remains in service 26 years after its delivery. The photographer commented that it really required a long lens to get a sharper image but there was no way that lenses would get changed in time on a sandy beach! [AB/Mike Cain]

### POLAND

**POLICE:** In May of this year Weiner Neustadt, Austria based Airborne Technologies (ABT) announced that they had been awarded a police helicopter role fit completion contract as a subcontractor of JB Investments Limited, Warsaw, Poland.

The contract was for the upgrade of four new Bell 407Gxi helicopters of the Polish Police. The helicopters were purchased as part of the project "Safer on the roads – aerial supervision over the road traffic" implemented with the use of the EU funds.

The four Bell helicopters will each be missionized with an Airborne LINX Surveillance System including: Airborne LINX Operator Workstation; Airborne Technologies Mission Management Unit; Trakka TC-300 SDIR gimbal; Trakka A-800 Search Light; Trakka TM-100 Augmented Reality System and ECS Downlink.

**COVER IMAGE:** DRF Luftrettung has joined the ICAR (International Commission for Alpine Rescue), the leading international professional organisation for alpine rescue as a permanent member. This was recently decided unanimously at the ICAR conference in Toblach, Italy, which brought together around 200 delegates from 41 countries.

In future, DRF Luftrettung will be represented as a permanent member of ICAR (International Commission for Alpine Rescue), the leading international professional organisation for alpine rescue. [story later page 10]

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They will join three other 407GXs, which are already in operation with the Polish Police with a delivery slated as before the end of this year.

No doubt contractual restrictions have meant that a new eye-catching image of four Bell 407GXs being completed by ABT at the recent Dubai Air Show were required to avoid mentioning the ultimate customer by name.

*Editor: But ABT have only one end-user customer for four police role equipped Bell 407s, and they are doing the work for JB Investments Ltd. Located near Warsaw and the supplier of all recent Bell helicopters in that country. JB Investments hosted PAVCon Europe 2018, Airborne Technologies in 2022.*

## TUNISIA

**NATIONAL GUARD:** In September a Tik Tok video taken in August was uploaded showing a Tunisian National Guard Bell 429 helicopter making several very low passes over a group of migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa. The event was not widely reported.

The police in Tunisia do not have their own helicopters but do have a share in the operation of three Bell 429s acquired five years ago. When they arrived they were said to be the first air assets of the National Guard although there was a former German Police Alouette in the country back in 1982.

*Air Forces Monthly* reported on an induction ceremony of the three in September 2018 but later reports suggest that they were not immediately available and may not have been considered operational for another year. The 2018 event took place at El Aouina Barracks, in the southeast corner of Tunis- Carthage International Airport, where the then recently formed air support unit was based.



The helicopters are TS-QGA (c/n 57293, ex N643EC), TS-QGB (c/n 57294, ex N643BB) and TS-QGC (c/n 57295, ex N746BH), their duties include a mix of civil and military roles. They monitor the country's coastline, road traffic management, emergency response and disaster management including evacuation. They are fitted with a wire-strike protection system, a rescue hoist above the starboard cabin door, a searchlight under the tail boom, and have provision for an under-nose Talon 9inch EO/IR turret. [AFM/DefenceWeb]

## UNITED KINGDOM

**NPAS:** It was just an image but it captured the imagination of the media across the world. The crew of the NPAS EC135 based at St Athan in South Wales caught this image of a full circular rainbow and it flashed around the globe to feature in daily newspapers in the USA and Australia.

The St Athan-based National Police Air Service (NPAS) South West & Wales Region unit managed to capture the rare phenomenon over the Vale of Glamorgan, a county borough in the southeast of Wales.



**NATIONAL POLICING CONFERENCE:** This year the annual National Policing Conference held in London focused on how best to 'reform policing to deliver safer communities'. The event prides itself as being the only conference each year that brings every UK Chief Constable and every Police Commissioner, Deputy Mayor & police Chairs and leaders together across the policing and criminal justice sectors under one roof to share ideas, best practice and to facilitate change. It also marked a full eleven years since the British public went to the polls to elect the first ever police and crime commissioners. This was one of the most significant changes in the history of policing, nominally giving the public a direct say for the first time on local policing priorities. Some of those original Police Commissioners who were elected in 2012 were at the conference.

They are the national police leaders, tasked with a duty to lead and hold to account, but to also promote trust and confidence to aide feelings of safety in communities. The foregoing words were extracted from the welcoming address by the Chair of Police Commissioners, and PCC for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, Donna Jones, an additional political strata of policing invented all those years ago. They effectively place the organisation where they see themselves in terms of leadership.

Ms Jones stated at the event that police helicopters could be replaced by military-grade drones in parts of England and Wales under plans being pushed for by police and crime commissioners. Currently, all forces pay to fund the National Police Air Service at a cost of more than £40M per year. Ms Jones stated that around a third of forces want to use drones instead. To that end, she said laws would need to be changed to allow the use of military-style drones that are allowed to fly higher with the pilot a greater distance away. She is quoted as pointing out that the general NPCC view was that "helicopters are incredibly expensive," and "the time to get from their base to the location they're needed at often means that there is limited use of them."

Further quotes are that “Drones are much quicker.... much more agile.” The police and crime commissioners have been pushing strongly to the Home Office that drones should be a very viable alternative. Currently, quadcopter-style drones used by British police require the pilot to be within 300 to 500 metres of the device. Ms Jones is also quoted as saying “... the military ones are superb. They are much more capable, can go much higher... useful for covert policing, as well.”

The APCC has approached the home office and there are ongoing discussions that could potentially save tens of millions of pounds. There is an expectation it could take more than two years for progress to be made on the plans.

*Editor: Sections of Ms Jones were reported widely in the UK press. On such public utterances are the expectations of the tax payers based. And the politicians who utter such drivel then complain when their predictions prove to be way off the mark. The APCC has formed a significant part of NPAS Strategic Board from the start so what disinformation are they being fed at their now sparsely reported meetings, these meetings have long had their content redacted so who knows what the members are being led to believe? It may be public money but the process is apparently secret. How many members have read and understood the reports of SD Scicon, His Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary and Fire Services and others on police aviation? Very few I would suggest.*

*Sections of the statement do not accord with the truth. A statement that NPAS cost £40M a year lags way behind the recent annual report of nearly £44M and that is just the running costs. There is a Capital Budget to add to that – the money that was supposed to support the buying of helicopters over the last decade – that is running at over £11M pa, a significant growth on the £5M pa the Home Office allotted to individual forces before NPAS came along and asked for more, much more. Remember they said it would be a ‘cheaper service’? Not sure where that went.*

*As to the agility of the current quad copter drones, far from it, they have to be taken to the scene of the need by car and only then can be launched to provide a very local airborne view. Such transport by road may be a matter of minutes, it will regularly amount to half an hour or more. Without a more capable BVLOS craft they certainly do not have the reach of a manned aircraft and no-one has even decided what the specification of a suitable BVLOS may be, let alone whether they need to be MilSpec or meet more stringent civil requirements.*

*Over in the USA the major Federal Border agencies use military grade drones at eye watering expense just to cover the border areas in clear sky, the slightly cheaper option may be to buy some time in such craft but that again is costly. Such craft may yet form a part of the yet to be launched UK Coast-guard programme based on the General Atomics Sea Guardian but no-one has yet decided whether they can afford to operate it in that role. It has been estimated that a single General Atomics Reaper cost around \$30M a couple of years ago. If NPAS cannot trawl up enough money to start to replace its helicopter fleet at a few million pounds a time what chance is there for getting a whole fleet of these craft in the air over Britain for police duty this decade? How many would they need? What is the hourly cost of keeping this type of drone in the air 24/7, as a sophisticated machine it is unlikely to be significantly less than a helicopter – even the satcom costs are not to be sneered at. Do not even mention the ever present cloud cover.*

*At the recent Dubai Air Show the manufacturer of the Reaper/ Sea Guardian stated “There are companies out there that want you to believe you can replace the capability of a Reaper or Sea Guardian with (a cheaper alternative). The only catch is they would need a billion dollars to invent some magical artificial intelligence to make them relevant.”*



You could understand a degree of naivety about air policing a century ago but today's leaders have no excuse for failing to understand the challenges of the technology. This image was published in 1915.

**NORFOLK:** It is not really news, as the matter has been aired before, in the same vein of “drones are good, helicopters bad” there has been renewed mention of the planned bigger better future proof drone trial known as Project Eagle X, centred on Norfolk Constabulary but also taking in other forces including Thames Valley and Hampshire. The line of attack is that NPAS does not provide a sensible manned aircraft service to Norfolk so they can be the lead on the project. The prime reason that the service to Norfolk is rubbish is that the nearest helicopters are at Husbands Bosworth and North Weald, both around 100 miles distant. Based on pre-NPAS activity, the need for air support is relatively low. Before NPAS the

availability of a local helicopter was restricted to a few days training each month. Drones First Responders (DFR) is being presented to the public and media is a BVLOS drone, complete with weather resistant container, a mini hangar, potentially on a roof. The craft is designed to leave its lair on demand, fly as the first responder to the scene of the incident (crime, vehicle accident, fire etc) and report back to the control room with immediate information before response teams are fully committed. Based on the information the control room is supposed to assess whether the incident needs more or less responders.

The element not being stressed too greatly is that the available craft is not a smart BVLOS drone and that it is really pretty dumb. So dumb in fact that they intend to provide it with closed airspace to allow the trial to happen, this is not a craft with an ability to 'sense OR avoid,' and is furthermore unlikely to be people friendly either. Such a craft is not going to be trusted to whizz across a busy high street to a genuine emergency, its every move is going to be controlled and the incident is going to be a strictly controlled man made trial scenario for the foreseeable future. You can see its like in the many reports of the NHS drone trials where a packet of pills no-one really needs is delivered from a hospital on the mainland to a near deserted island off Scotland via closed airspace. They are doing just that near Newcastle now. It is all a low grade confidence trick.

The 'real' BVLOS, when they get around to producing a specification for it, is still ten years away (potentially more) and meanwhile the manned aircraft that NPAS relies upon need changing and updating. Everyone is fanning around doing precisely nothing to that end because some numpty politician thinks that clever drones are just around the corner. In terms of finance it is assessed that over the last decade NPAS has consumed around £100M in capital funding and yet all it has to show for it is four new fixed wing that appear to have limited capability, three Rubb hangars (one abandoned) and a fleet half the size it used to be.



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## UNITED STATES

**NATIONAL:** Changes are expected to be made in the equipment acquisition plans for the helicopter fleet of the Customs and Border Patrol [CBP] Air and Marine Operations division. Until recently there were plans to convert the fuel tanks of the existing fleet of AS350/H125 helicopter to a fully crashworthy design. The new plan is that the existing fleet will be retained and the change to a crashworthy fuel tank will only come about as part of the fleet re-equipment.

Eighty one of the 97 strong fleet of light helicopters do not have crash-resistant fuel tanks. There is no legal requirement to have them or undertake a retrofit as the AS350/H125 was designed before 1994. Until September the retrofit solution was planned but the Acting Commissioner Troy Miller rescinded the plan and decided that fleet renewal would be used instead.

The decision comes to light as part of a separate enquiry following claims by a whistleblower that the CBP talked down the detail of a near-fatal helicopter crash during a training exercise in 2021 and attempted to conceal infringements at a flight school that led to the incident.

The whistleblower, Joseph Adams, claimed that the CBP allowed its AS350 light Helicopter fleet to operate without crash-resistant fuel tanks and allowed inexperienced pilots to fly with minimal certifications.

On May 12, 2021 Eurocopter AS350B3 AStar N183AE of the CBP operating a training sortie experienced an inflight fire. The subsequent forced landing was onto open grass at 1700 block of North Cimarron Road, located just south of Interstate 40, part of the Clarence E Page Municipal Airport, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The main part of the helicopter was consumed by fire, the two pilots onboard received minor injuries.

The trainee who crashed the helicopter was the school's first student in a scheme designed to enable CBP pilots with low hours and minimal qualifications a chance to increase the hours in their log books. It is claimed that minimally skilled aviators are being streamed into what are challenging flight assignments. Other mishaps have occurred due, it is alleged, to poor safety precautions.

According to an internal investigation report into the mishap by the whistleblower, Adams, the pilot in training was a prime factor behind incident and was using an invalid waiver to hide the lack of accumulated flight hours. Adams stated that Robert Blanchard tried get him to alter the text in order to cover up the details in the report. The current agency boss allowed Blanchard to retire early. [New York Post/Tickle.the.wire/PAN302 June 2021/DM]

**ARIZONA:** Last year, the taxpayers in Arizona paid \$11M to acquire a new Bell 429 helicopter for the Department of Public Safety (DPS). This year the Joint Legislative Budget Committee have added another \$300,000 because the helicopter would not fit through the hangar door.

DPS officials bought a bigger door to be installed at the agency's Flagstaff heliport before the new Bell arrives. This is the third Bell 429 the AZDPS has acquired.

Bell 429s are nearly 37 feet long and 13 feet tall, with a rotor span of 36 feet. [Arizona Republic]

*Editor: There was a time when few believed that there was a law enforcement market for the Bell 429 at home in the USA. Everyone was apparently married to the principle of near free single engine craft that were cheap to run. The arrival of hundreds of the DoD surplus airframes (OH-6 and OH-58) as a free asset seemed to seal the fate of any high cost investment in new airframes. The predictions have proved too pessimistic, as the number of Bell 429s (and other light twins) in service have proved. This is the third Bell 429 for the AZDPS, they supplement or replace earlier Bell singles. The first was N911AZ/57301 delivered in 2017, that was followed last year by N822AZ/57439 with the latest expected to be N783AZ/57462.*

*The AZDPS covers a region that includes snow-capped peaks of Flagstaff to the north, down through the Valley of the Sun and the capital city of Phoenix, and into the vast Sonoran Desert to the southwest along the border of Mexico. The sixth largest state by area, there are nearly 114,000 square miles (295,000 square km) to patrol.*

**CALIFORNIA:** Two new helicopter units are forming in California. Using a pre-owned law enforcement configured AS350B3/H125 previously operated by the Sanford, Florida, based Seminole County Sheriff's Office, the El Dorado County Sheriff is to upgrade its service. In 2011 they operated a volunteer owned Bell 206 among other volunteer owned types but that may have been moribund for some time. Contrast that with activity elsewhere in the state with the Tehama County Sherriff where, as recently reported, they have acquired a Bell UH-1 Huey from Jefferson Parish Sheriff in Louisiana.



Located in Red Bluff in Northern California approximately 120 miles north of Sacramento, Tehama County encompasses 3,300 square miles. The Tehama County Sheriff's Office protects the lives and property of 65,000 permanent residents, as well as the countless thousands of tourists and visitors who enjoy hunting and fishing in the vast wilderness areas throughout the county.

In their case they now have a 1971 vintage Huey N911NN, but they have no established unit, no pilot, no TFOs and potentially only basic ideas about what to do next. The aircraft was free under the Government 1033 programme but the \$600,000 Teledyne/FLIR EO/IR to be fitted to it was donated by the Netherlands Police in the wake of their fleet refurbishment through the manufacturer. Although the donation was free the Sheriff's Office needed to raise an additional amount to effect delivery of the sensor (just over \$2,000). [Jon Goldin/PAR]

*Editor: They are not unique it must be said, dotted around the USA there are numerous "phantom units" based on a free helicopter or fixed wing that can be used in an emergency, the setting up of a viable operation effectively follows the delivery of the aircraft.*

Further south in the state, the San Diego Sheriff's Department has taken delivery of its latest new helicopters for its ASTREA (Aerial Support to Regional Enforcement Agencies) fleet at the department's aviation unit, Aerial Support to Regional Enforcement Agencies, based at Gillespie Field in El Cajon. One is further Bell 407GX patrol helicopter, N319MW and the other is a Bell 412EPX mainly assigned to the fire fighting role and the first of a three strong Bell 205 fleet renewal. The 205s date from the 1960s and have become increasingly difficult to maintain. The 412 cost \$15.7M, which came from the department's budget and Proposition 162 funds, which puts tax revenue towards public safety. The patrol 407 cost \$5.5M funded from the Sheriff's Department general fund.



**DELAWARE:** The Delaware State Police (DSP), which celebrates its 100th anniversary this year, has placed an order with Bell for two 429s. In addition to law enforcement work, the two aircraft will also be capable of carrying out EMS and SAR missions. The order will bring the DSP 429 fleet to three aircraft, the original 429 was delivered in 2014.

**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA:** The US Park Police Aviation Section are celebrating 50 years of service this year. They began in 1973 with a Bell 206, three pilots and three rescue technicians. They moved up to a Bell 206L ten years later and acquired a Bell 412 in 1990. A second 412 was added in 1999. The second 412 was replaced a few years ago. They still have the L3 although it is now mainly used for training now. Forty years ago, the iconic 'greatest police helicopter rescue' took place over the waters of the Potomac River. A US Park Police Bell 206 crewed by Don Usher and Gene Windsor responded to the Air Florida plane crash into the river and saved five people who made it out of the airliner's cabin using a basic helicopter equipped with no rescue equipment. The Bell now resides in the National Police Memorial. [Jon Goldin]





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# AIR AMBULANCE

## CANADA

**ONTARIO:** The fixed wing fleet of Ornge is to be replaced by a new fleet of single-engine Pilatus PC-12 aircraft commencing in 2026.

Ornge, the provider of air ambulance and critical care transport services for the Canadian province of Ontario, will take delivery of twelve PC-12 single-engine turboprop aircraft between 2026 and 2030 to modernize its fleet and provide essential air medical services to its citizens. The announcement was made by Hon. Sylvia Jones, Ontario's Minister of Health, on 7 November at a news conference at Ornge's base in Sudbury.

Ornge currently owns and operates a fleet of fixed and rotor wing aircraft, including eight Pilatus PC-12 NGs, which will be rotated out of service with the acquisition of new PC-12s. Ornge has been operating its current fleet of PC-12s since 2009.

Ornge's Operations Control Centre, located in Mississauga, coordinates all logistics related to Ornge medical transports operating out of 14 bases across Ontario. Ornge serves more than 13 million people in an area spanning over one million square kilometres. Operating the largest air ambulance and critical care land ambulance fleet in Canada, Ornge performs approximately 20,000 patient-related transports per year.

**EUROPE:** DRF Luftrettung has joined the ICAR (International Commission for Alpine Rescue), the leading international professional organisation for alpine rescue as a permanent member. This was recently decided unanimously at the ICAR conference in Toblach, Italy, which brought together around 200 delegates from 41 countries.

In future, DRF Luftrettung will be represented as a permanent member of ICAR (International Commission for Alpine Rescue), the leading international professional organisation for alpine rescue.

The aim of ICAR and its 72 international member organisations is to further develop alpine rescue, set new standards and increase safety. In future, DRF Luftrettung will be involved in ICAR's operational areas "AirCom" / Air Rescue and "MedCom" / Medicine. "As an air rescue organisation that has been rescuing people from inaccessible areas for over 20 years, we fully identify with the objectives of ICAR. We are therefore very pleased to be able to contribute our experience and know-how to the Commission and at the same time benefit from such a large network," explains Sebastian Schneider, Head of Hoist Operation at DRF Luftrettung.



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## UNITED KINGDOM

**CORNWALL:** Cornwall Air Ambulance has announced the launch of the Heli 2 Appeal, aiming to purchase a second Leonardo AW169 helicopter.

The charity supports over 1,000 patients who are seriously ill or injured each year, but there is scope to reach even more people by air with the purchase of a second aircraft. The appeal, running over the next 12 months until the end of December 2024, is aiming to raise £2.85M to help the lifesaving charity buy this second high-specification helicopter.

Due to the extreme demands on the current helicopter, owning a second will significantly boost the charity's resilience and availability. It will provide the team with the versatility to operate two aircraft simultaneously during peak high demand periods in the future. It will enable the aircrew to fly hundreds of extra missions, helping to save more lives across Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

Currently, when the AW169 is away having its annual maintenance, the charity leases a smaller AW109 as a backup aircraft from air operations partner Castle Air, so they can continue to respond to critical care missions by air. However, the AW169 is far more advanced and capable and the preferred airframe.

**ESSEX & HERTS:** The air ambulance charity covering the areas to the north and east of London will be parting company with the MD902 based at their Earls Colne airbase in a matter of weeks.

The charity will be introducing its second AW169 helicopter for its Emergency Medical Services (EMS) operations at the start of 2024, delivery being imminent. The agreement between Specialist Aviation Services and EHAAT, was signed at the Farnborough International Airshow in July 2022.

The Essex & Herts Air Ambulance Trust signed for its first AW169 in 2016. The helicopter, normally based at North Weald on the border of the two counties, then took to the skies in the summer of 2017. Six years on

and the air ambulance charity will be expanding its fleet with another of the light intermediate-sized twin-engine 4.8 tonne type. Although the MD902 is being withdrawn there may be circumstances when the maintenance spare airframe will resort to the type, normally a spare AW169 will stand in.

In a further step in its commitment to make the very best choices for the environment and reduce its carbon impact, EHAAT has completed its move to a totally hybrid fleet of rapid response vehicles (RRV), by purchasing a further two Volvo XC90 Recharge plug-in hybrid SUVs.

The new additions join the two existing hybrid SUVs which were purchased by the charity in February 2022, when it became the first air ambulance in the UK to use Volvo plug-in hybrids as part of an emergency response fleet.

Again, purchased by EHAAT from Volvo UK, the new vehicles have been adapted by conversion and maintenance specialist, Halls Electrical Ltd, ready for life as an RRV. As well as being wrapped with EHAAT's distinctive and highly reflective branding, the vehicles encompass the latest blue light system to enhance visibility and safety. A Woodway Legacy lightbar has been added along with additional forward-facing ION lamps and a Swedish Police specification low level front lightbar, making the lighting output and traffic clearing performance of these vehicles second to none. [EHAAT]



©EHAAT



**MIDLANDS:** The construction of Midlands Air Ambulance Charity's new combined airbase and headquarters facility was recently completed following a four-year project period, that included feasibility research, ground works and overall development of the new building.

The new facility, constructed by Morris Property, and based in Shropshire near the borders of Staffordshire and the West Midlands, will help future-proof the advanced pre-hospital emergency service operated by Midlands Air Ambulance Charity. It houses the charity's head office function, airbase and clinical operations and community education zone. The building is equivalent to the size of two football pitches, with the whole site sitting on 22 acres.

The combined headquarters and airbase also house a state-of-the-art training simulation suite which is part of its centre for clinical excellence. The suite, kindly supported by The Kildare Trust, enables the charity's critical care clinicians to practice their specialist skills in an immersive environment. The fully interactive room uses virtual reality and real-world content to create a diverse range of situations that can be used to simulate accidents or incidents specific to the pre-hospital environment.

As part of the charity's commitment to sustainability, the new facility will see the organisation offset part of its carbon footprint, as the construction has energy efficient features including solar panels across parts of the roof and air source heat pumps. The charity has also committed to planting 10,000 trees in the local area to further offset its footprint.

Hanna Sebright, chief executive officer for Midlands Air Ambulance Charity, said: "Our new airbase and headquarters is a significant milestone in our charity's 32-year history and is critical to us achieving our mission to continue to provide patients of the Midlands with outstanding pre-hospital care and lifesaving intervention. As well as making our organisation more resilient to the changing economic landscape, our new facility will also allow us to realise our ambition to become a pre-hospital centre of clinical excellence.

"We are delighted that our clinicians and non-clinical staff are now able to work out of the same building, as one team, in this wonderful new facility."

Glyn O'Hara, senior contracts manager for Morris Property, which oversaw the build added: "It's been a privilege to work on this pioneering new airbase and headquarters. Projects like this are incredibly rare and our team is very proud of the part it has played in its construction."

Initial funding for the new development was secured through major grants from organisations like the County Air Ambulance Trust HELP Appeal, the Denise Coates Foundation and The Kildare Trust. In addition, the charity undertook specific fundraising campaigns to secure funding for specific areas of the new airbase, with support from Aico, Baylis & Harding, Ibstock Brick, and M6toll.



The building has been constructed from 90,000 bricks, one third of which were donated by local firm, Ibstock Brick. It has taken 2,000 litres of paint to decorate the internal areas of the new building. More than 1,000 people have been directly involved in the construction of this new facility.

For more information on the build project, and the facility's founding partners, visit [midlandsairambulance.com/airbaseheadquarters](https://midlandsairambulance.com/airbaseheadquarters).

**WILTSHIRE:** The Bell 429 helicopter operated by the air ambulance continues to be offline at the maintenance facility Thruxton Airport in Hampshire. It was originally expected to be back online last month. The charity is the sole user of the Bell 429 in UK HEMS operations and has no like replacement available during downtime.

It arrived there for its standard annual service on September 27 and, as usual, was replaced by the rapid response road vehicles. While it was offline the charity decided to bring forward additional work planned for 2024, the intention being to reduce the amount of time the aircraft was unavailable.

A part ordered for the work was damaged in transit and the completion of the work is now delayed while a replacement part is sourced and delivered. In the meantime, its service continues to rely upon the road vehicles. Meanwhile the latest rapid response vehicle arrived at the base in November. The BMW G5X X5 xDrive30d (call sign CC23) has arrived at the Semington airbase to take the charity's critical care paramedics and doctors to emergencies across Wiltshire, Bath and surrounding areas.

The new car replaces an older Volvo model, which had previously been funded by the ambulance service. Once that agreement ended it would have cost the charity substantial sums to take it on themselves – until the HELP Appeal stepped in.



The HELP Appeal is the only charity in the country dedicated to funding lifesaving helipads at Major Trauma Centres and key A&E Hospitals across the country including at Southmead Hospital and the Bristol Royal Infirmary. Since its creation in 2009, it has funded 45 helipads, which have seen over 26,000 landings.

Operated by the County Air Ambulance Trust, the HELP Appeal also provided the funds for the helipad installation at Wiltshire Air Ambulance's airbase when it opened in 2018, including its underfloor heating.

[Air Med/WAA]



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## CHINA

BEIJING: China has further enhanced the capabilities of its amphibious AG600M firefighting aircraft, according to the Aviation Industry Corporation of China (AVIC).

The AVIC has improved the AG600M by developing an upgraded aircraft platform and stronger capabilities, enabling it to better carry out firefighting and other emergency rescue operations. The AG600M aircraft is aiming to obtain the required type certificate by the end of 2024, and to be delivered to operators for firefighting and other rescue operations in 2025.

Crew members of an AG600M firefighting aircraft disembark from the plane after a gathering and dropping water test in Jingmen, central China's Hubei Province, Sept. 27, 2022. (Xinhua/Wu Zhizun)

China's independently developed AG600 series is an advanced large amphibious aircraft family currently in a seemingly never ending development stage, featuring a unique configuration consisting of an integrated aircraft-shaped upper body and a planing lower body.

Compared with the technology demonstrator AG600 aircraft, the firefighting-specialised AG600M has an upgraded maximum take-off weight of 60 tonnes, and a maximum water-dropping capacity of up to 12 tonnes.

Multiple improvements have been made to this aircraft, ranging from its cockpit, cabin, and wings to its unique planing bottom, giving it more comfort and better economic performance. It features a fly-by-wire flight control system and an integrated avionics system.

An AG600M firefighting aircraft gathers water during a gathering and dropping water test in Jingmen, central China's Hubei Province, Sept. 27, 2022. (Xinhua/Wu Zhizun)

## SPAIN

CANARY ISLANDS: The Tribunal Administrativo de Contratos Públicos de Canarias has awarded Eliance Helicopter Global Services S. L. of Madrid the contract to cover the chartering of two helicopters to meet the aerial firefighting needs of the islands. The contract is valued at €7.7M and was the only tender received.

## UNITED STATES

HAWAII: After operating a fleet of single-engine MD520 helicopters for some years the Honolulu Fire Department's aviation manager, Battalion Chief Robert Thurston, wants to improve the capabilities of the department to both fight fires and make rescues.

The HFD is already in the process of buying a Bell 429 light twin to replace one of the three active MD520s, a fourth airframe is currently being refurbished.

Thurston hopes to get one more Bell 429 and to retire one of the 520 Notar airframes. Their age, now around 30 years, has meant that they take up an inordinate time and money to keep airworthy. The newer Bell's promise to offer better availability as well as being more capable in terms of water lift ability than the existing fleet. The Bell offers the ability to lift nearly 300 gallons of water per trip compared to the 100 gallons the MD520s carry.



He is hoping for more pilots. Although the HFD is fully staffed, recent incidents illustrated that they were unable to fully respond to emergencies. In one instance they were only able to launch two aircraft to fight a fire when they had airframes available but having no pilots. Ideally he would like to increase the current six pilots to nine. [HPR]



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# SEARCH & RESCUE

## NORWAY

SAR: Search and rescue (SAR) are one of the most demanding tasks a helicopter and its crew can perform, and it is typically reserved for only the most skilled aviators and the highest capability helicopter platforms. Norway has a long history in aviation and certainly has many skilled aviators, and now with the introduction of the latest generation advanced AW101 all-weather Search and Rescue helicopter (NAWSARH) it has the most advanced SAR helicopter fleet in the world today.

In 2020, the first six 'SAR Queen' helicopters became operational in Norway, and the fifteenth aircraft of sixteen ordered was delivered earlier this year to complete a significant milestone in this successful programme. With the final aircraft due for delivery in 2024 and two bases remaining to commence SAR operations using the AW101, next year will see the deliveries complete.



Leonardo's relationship with the Royal Norwegian Air Force (RNoAF) dates back 50 years, with a key focus on helicopter-based SAR operations. This relationship began with the introduction of the legendary Sea King in the 1970s, manufactured by Leonardo Helicopters (formerly Westland) in Yeovil and possibly one of the best-known SAR helicopters ever built. This aircraft has been operated by the RNoAF's 330 Squadron for five decades and will finally retire at the end of 2023.

Norway is one of the largest countries in Europe and has a coastline of over 15,000 miles, with much of it reaching into the Arctic Circle and SAR responsibility for a huge expanse of water all the way to the North Pole, while at the same time it is highly mountainous and home to some of the highest peaks in Northern Europe.

What sets the Norwegian variant of the helicopter apart from other SAR helicopters is not only the AW101's performance, but a number of state-of-the-art systems installed on the platform, which have already directly contributed to saving lives and removing personnel from harm's way.

This includes a game-changing mobile phone locator system that can pinpoint a missing person from just their phone's signal. This allows crews to fly above adverse weather – rather than conduct search patterns close to the ground – with the locator system on, quickly locate a person and send them a text message that they are on their way. What used to take several hours can now take a fraction of that time, increasing the chances of survival for the missing person and freeing up the crew and helicopter for additional missions.



This is also combined with the next-generation Osprey 30 active electronically scanned array (AESA) radar – also from Leonardo – that gives crews an exceptional all-weather detection capability over both land and sea.

The AW101 has an impressive range and performance envelope, allowing crews to go much farther and higher than was previously possible with helicopters such as the Sea King.

An Active Vibration Attenuation System reduces crew fatigue when flying over longer distances and eases the transport and transfer of vulnerable and very ill patients – including heart attack patients and incubated newborn babies – that would not be possible using a ground-based ambulance or smaller HEMS aircraft.

Norway's fleet also has an icing protection capability that means it can deploy and fly even when conditions would ground other aircraft – and in Norway this can be all year round! There is ongoing engineering work that will optimise the AW101 further, not only benefiting Norway but also existing and future AW101 customers.

One example of this relationship is ongoing development updates to the Automatic Flight Control System (AFCS), which is new for the Norwegian AW101 and has been developed in-house by Leonardo, sharing commonality with other Leonardo helicopters including the AW139, AW169 and AW189. The AFCS ultimately reduces crew workload and ensures that they can concentrate on the mission at hand.

Another key area is the Performance Improvement Programme (PIP), which will see an increase in power for the main gearbox and General Electric (GE) CT7 engines. The PIP requires no physical change to the engine itself, rather the computer that controls the engine is being upgraded to allow more main gearbox torque and engine power, particularly for take-off. [text by Leonardo]

## PHILIPPINES

**COAST GUARD:** During a visit of Admiral Artemio M Abu, the Philippines Coast Guard (PCG) Chief to India in August this year, the Chief flew in an example of the Hindustan Dhruv Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH) MKIII.

Subsequently India offered Filipino President Ferdinand R Marcos Jr. seven similar helicopters for the PCG. Discussions are now taking place within PCG and Government circles about the offer. If the deal goes through, the Philippines will be the first country to buy ALH Mark III. The helicopter would help in building up the SAR capability of the Coast Guard and would also augment its maritime security capabilities.

## POLAND

**FRONTEX:** In late October the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX) based in Warsaw issued a multi-million Euro tender notice for the provision of aircraft services for land and maritime border surveillance with manned fixed wing aircraft. The contracts are for two years in the first instance with an automatic extension for a further two years if all criteria remain unchanged. The various elements of the tenders are due to be considered this month. The overall value of the various contracts is expected to be around €168.6M.

FRONTEX, representing EFCA and Satcen, is looking for EU/SAC contractors to provide a fully-fledged service with manned fixed wing aircraft for aerial surveillance over land and sea which includes aircraft, staff, maintenance, data transmission capability via BRLOS, any permissions related to deployment, authorisations and insurances to deliver aerial surveillance over the external land and maritime border of the EU or third countries. In addition, the contractor shall provide the collected data directly from the asset to the designated coordination centre (CC) via BRLOS with a minimum uplink speed of 320 kbps.

The tender covers several aircraft types and sets out criteria for the air assets ability to be able to reach the surveillance area located at a stated distance from the base airport plus a minimum number of hours on station and return back and to perform a total minimum number of hours of flight (excluding final reserve and contingency fuel), with the minimum mandatory payload stipulated in the document and a minimum average patrolling speed. These mission criteria vary from class to class.

The smaller airframes, typically crewed by a pilot and observer, are expected to reach the surveillance area located at a distance of more than 151nm from the base airport then to loiter for 2.5 hours on-station and return back and to perform a total minimum of 5 hours of flight where the larger assets are expected to reach the surveillance area located more than 401nm from the base airport plus 2.5 hours on-station



and return back and to perform a total minimum of 6 hours of flight with a larger crew including three observers. All of the missions may take place over TC waters, TC land territory, as well as to be operated from TC base airport.

To attract the broadest number of companies to put in tenders' submissions are being accepted in the full range of European languages - Bulgarian, Czech, Danish, German, Greek, English, Spanish, Estonian, Finnish, French, Irish, Croatian, Hungarian, Italian, Lithuanian, Latvian, Maltese, Dutch, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Slovenian, and Swedish. [Frontex/2023/OP/1180/JL/MS]

A new arrival over the busy shipping lanes of the English Channel undertaking the work of Frontex has been one of two Let 410 aircraft of the Polish Border Guard.

In October 2020 the Polish Border Guard took delivery of the two new Let 410UVP E20 twin engine airliner's role equipped for maritime patrol by a company in Germany.

At the end of December 2018 OPTIMARE Systems GmbH based in Germany was awarded a contract by JB Investments Sp. Z o.o. to provide modern patrol and reconnaissance equipment for integration into the two new Let aircraft for the Polish Border Guard. The integration of the mission equipment was performed by Czech based Aircraft Industries, a.s.

Each aircraft is equipped with the MEDUSA® Mission Management System, a 360° surveillance radar, and EO/IR sensor, broadband SATCOM, AIS transponder and Search & Rescue direction finder.

*Ed: JB Investments facility outside Warsaw was the host of the PAVCon Europe 2018. In recent weeks one of the Polish Let 410s has been contracted to provide the FRONTEX fixed wing over the English Channel.*

## SPAIN

SAR: A team led by Spanish Maritime Safety and Rescue Agency put a SAR project together to deliver a Schiebel S-100 Camcopter and upgrade several manned platforms, including a CASA CN-235.

The contractors on this project included Airborne Technologies GmbH, Austria and Avincis to undertake and oversee the integration. The key Search And Rescue sensor came from US based Overwatch Imaging.

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# INDUSTRY

In early November, Signia Aerospace, a portfolio company of Arcline Investment Management, acquired **Meeker Aviation and Airfilm Camera Systems**.

Meeker Aviation is an international supplier of aircraft external payload mounts for Electro-Optical and Infrared (EO/IR) sensors, Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) laser scanners, searchlights, camera systems, and speaker systems based in California, USA. Meeker also manufactures a popular line of door hinge and pin kits. With an installed base of more than 10,000 units in service, Meeker Aviation's systems are used by a wide range of customers across military, utility, law enforcement, and production markets. Cal Meeker, Meeker Aviation's president, will continue in his day-to-day role leading growth, development, and operations at the company.

For Meeker the development will provide finance and resources to enable the company to develop new products more easily.

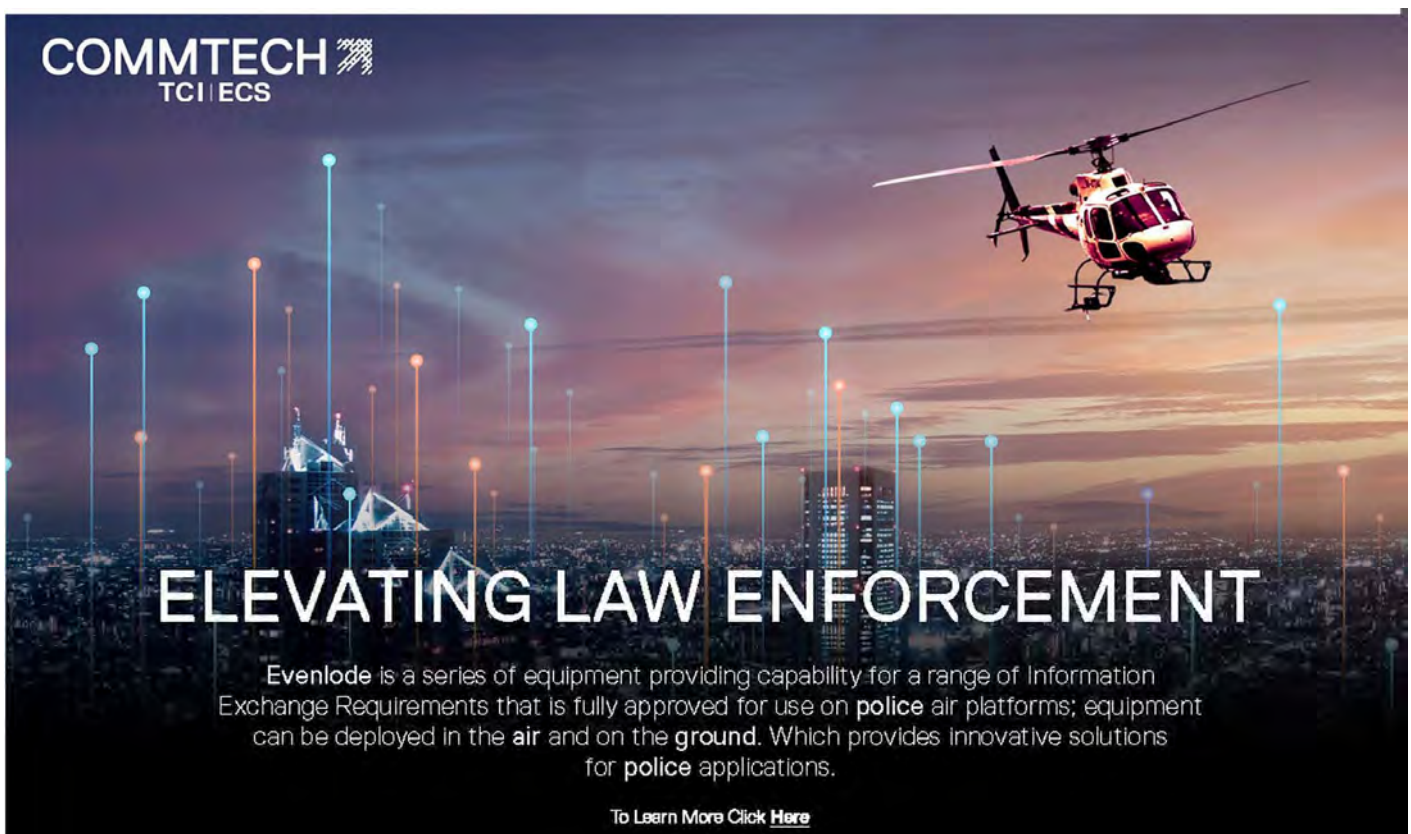
**Vislink Technologies Inc.**, a global leader in the collection, delivery, management and distribution of high-quality live video and data, joined an accomplished group of industry decision-makers at the 2023 Milipol Paris Show last month.

This comes on the heels of Vislink's acquisition of the majority assets of Broadcast Microwave Services LLC, a wireless microwave equipment provider with over 30 years of expertise in real-time microwave transmission. This acquisition solidifies Vislink's expanding global imprint in the government and military sector.

Held from 14 to 17 November 2023, the Milipol Paris Show featured 70+ speakers, 150+ official delegations, 1,000+ exhibitors and over 30,000 visitors from around the world. At the conference, Vislink showcased its suite of security solutions to major industry players, innovators and thought leaders dedicated to international homeland security issues.

The cornerstone of Vislink's solution for military, law enforcement and public safety use is the Airborne Video Downlink System (AVDS), a real-time, aerial-based video transmission solution that captures high-definition video from drones, helicopters and other aircrafts. Also displayed were solutions for government surveillance, law enforcement, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV), and unmanned ground vehicles (UGV) markets. [www.vislink.com](http://www.vislink.com).

USA-based **Skydio** recently introduced the X10 drone featuring a customized Teledyne FLIR Boson + thermal camera module at its Ascend Conference on September 20. Professional public safety and critical infrastructure inspection pilots can now access the most advanced uncooled thermal imaging technology on the market.



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The Thermal by FLIR programme is a cooperative product development and marketing strategy. It supports original equipment manufacturers (OEMs), such as Skydio, to integrate Teledyne FLIR thermal camera modules into products, along with go-to-market support for ensuing product innovations. The Skydio X10 includes a first-of-its-kind thermal imaging payload using a customised radiometric Boson+ thermal camera module, providing improvements in size, weight, and power (SWaP), critical for inspections, situational awareness, and search and rescue missions.

The USA-manufactured Boson+ not only provides four times the thermal resolution at 640 x 512 pixels versus the predecessor thermal camera on the Skydio X2, but it also doubles the thermal sensitivity of competitive payloads at 30 millikelvin (mK) or better. It is the most sensitive commercially available uncooled longwave infrared (LWIR) camera module for drones. The increased sensitivity and resolution provide sharper scene detail, improving detection, specifically in outdoor, low-contrast scenes—a critical need for thermal inspectors and first responders, including law enforcement officers, firefighters, and search and rescue personnel.

The Teledyne FLIR team also worked closely with Skydio to develop custom optics to reduce the weight of a standard Boson+ camera optics by 48%. The weight reduction helps maximize flight time while also decreasing the volume of the thermal camera module by 43% for an improved payload form factor.

Each image captured includes temperature data of every pixel in the scene for granular, quantitative insights needed for solar panel, machinery, and utility inspection.

For more information about the Skydio, visit the Skydio website.

Butler National Corporation subsidiary, **Avcon Industries** Inc., based at Newton City Airport in Kansas, USA has obtained an FAA Supplemental Type Certificate (STC) approval of the Avcon nose extension and the Avcon extra-large "Whale Pod" modifications in the King Air Model B300 aircraft.

The company undertakes the development of numerous role specific modifications to a range of aircraft including the Beechcraft, Cessna 208 and Citation.



Avcon obtained STC SA04581CH for the installation of the Avcon extended nose and the Avcon "Whale Pod" on the King Air Model B300. The two modifications, that are FAA-approved to be simultaneously installed, provide approximately 80 cubic feet of additional space in the fuselage-mounted pod, which space may accommodate sensors/cameras/radars with a swept volume of up to 57 inches in diameter. The Avcon extended nose may allow installation of up to a 20-inch camera or EO/IR sensor.

The 'Whale Pod' is designed to minimize drag and maximize available space for King Air Operators, where the nose extension creates new usable space for many different applications. The pod is also capable of incorporating a drop hatch and camera port. These options are addition to the catalogue price of \$325,000. The nose extension has a starting price of \$425,000.

**MD Helicopters** continue to court their national customers for a return of long-lost business. The North American region, once run entirely by one person has now been split into two regions with Jack Harris the original now being designated as the Director of North America for the Western region, encompassing west of the Mississippi, Alaska, and Hawaii. At the same time, Patrick Crippen is the Director of the Eastern Region which encompasses east of the Mississippi, Canada, and Puerto Rico.

This team provides expertise in the Law Enforcement & Public Safety sector as Jack and Patrick have a combined Law Enforcement & Public Safety service length of nearly 55 years.

In recent months Eastern Region MD completed a Public Safety demo of the MD530F Helicopter in Melbourne, Florida. Law Enforcement-Public Safety representatives from the region participated in a two-day demo for sixteen pilots from six different agencies, the farthest agency coming from the State of Puerto Rico

In the Western Region MD attended the 2023 International Association of Chiefs of Police Conference in San Diego, California, was set to co-sponsor and attend the Airborne Public Safety Association Safety Stand-To in Spokane, Washington in mid-November and this month will be attending HAI's Aerial Work Safety Conference 2023 in Boise, Idaho, on December 9–11.

Canadian avionics manufacturer, **Anodyne Electronics Manufacturing Corp.** (AEM), launched a new modern panel-mount radio for special-role and multi-mission platforms. Designed with the U.S. Forest Service and aerial firefighting operators in mind, the MTP136D is a Project 25 Phase 1 compliant VHF/FM solution for digital and analogue communication on all channels across the 136MHz to 174MHz frequency band.

The MTP136D boasts a robust design to ensure the highest performance in lengthy and demanding firefighting environments. It's easily integrated for tactical systems, platform upgrades, and is a plug-and-play replacement for existing legacy radios.

The MTP136D was developed in consultation with tactical aerial firefighting agencies and offers an agile P25 capable guard receiver. It supports 40 zones and 5000 channels and has a large NVIS-compatible screen displaying all critical channel and operational information.

**MTP136D Features:**

A panel-mount transceiver with intuitive menu control and front-panel programming.

Provides sub-audible signalling, (CTCSS/ CDCSS) capability, with standard and extended tone encoding and decoding.

Covers available digital and analogue channels from 136MHz to 174MHz within the VHF/FM band.

USB-C programming/cloning interface with consumer-grade USB Flash Drive.

Extended Transmit Duty Cycles for continuous operation.

The MTP136D is available for pre-order. Call the AEM sales team at 1-888-763-1088 or email [sales@aem-corp.com](mailto:sales@aem-corp.com) to put down your fully refundable deposit and complete a booking order.



©AEM

After more than 6 years in development, **Valdor Aircraft** has announced that Transport Canada has authorised the work required to modify the avionics of the DHC-2 Beaver, arguably the most versatile bush plane ever built. The project is part of a sustainability initiative designed to extend the Beaver's lifespan by several decades.

The Beaver was originally built in the late '40s, and maintaining radial engines that are nearing end-of-life has become increasingly more difficult. Valdor worked with Pratt & Whitney Canada to retrofit the standard Beaver with a PT6A-34 to increase its reliability, durability and performance.

The result has been a Supplemental Type Certificate (STC) recently granted by Transport Canada to al-

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low for the replacement of the Beaver's original piston engines with high-performance turboprop engines from Pratt & Whitney Canada, along with the installation of BX wings, built entirely at the Val-d'Or plant.

*Ed: Although this is a new project focussing on the modification of existing piston aircraft, readers will be aware that the manufacturer upgraded new production Beaver aircraft to turbine power many years ago and other conversions have been offered. This conversion also offers an avionics upgrade.*

*During the 1960s, de Havilland developed an improved model of the Beaver, the Mk.III Turbo Beaver, which was equipped with the PT6A-6 or 20 engine, sixty new aircraft were built. In 1967, when production of the type ceased, a total of 1,657 had been constructed. A 1970s conversion by Volpar utilising an AiResearch TPE331 turboprop flew in 1972 and more recently Viking have remanufactured examples using the PT6A-34 now being offered by Valdor.*

**Pratt & Whitney Canada (P&WC)** has achieved one billion flying hours since the formation of the company nearly 100 years ago, in 1928. P&WC engines power missions across a diverse portfolio – including Business Aviation, General Aviation, Regional Aviation, Helicopter Aviation and Auxiliary Power Units. Over this time, more than 110,000 engines have been produced, with over 66,000 currently in service. PWC engines power aircraft that benefit millions of people every day, every second, a P&WC-powered aircraft takes off or lands somewhere on the planet, whether they're driving commerce, reuniting families, or powering humanitarian missions, emergency medical services, or search and rescue missions. Achieving one billion flying hours is made possible by the dedicated team at Pratt & Whitney Canada along with customers, suppliers and the extended P&WC community.

This year also marks 60 years of PT6 innovation. It has been embraced by fixed-wing and helicopter airframers around the world. With more than 64,000 PT6 engines produced since its introduction in 1963, it powers over 155 different aviation applications. The PT6 is unmatched in engine performance, reliability and dispatch availability, having reached 500 million flying hours.

Today's PT6 is up to four times more powerful, has a 50 percent better power-to-weight ratio and up to 20 percent better specific fuel consumption compared to the original engine. Each new model is developed and designed with a specific mission, platform and customer in mind, while pursuing a reduced environmental footprint. The PT6 is also the only turboprop engine in the world to be approved for single-engine instrument flight rules (SEIFR) in commercial passenger flights in Europe, North America, New Zealand and Australia.

Yet more consequences of the war in Ukraine as the **Russian government** trawls its global sales network to try and buy back unused turbine engines for use in its helicopters. It is not proven but the suggestion is that they are running out of spare engines and cannot produce them in sufficient numbers under the current world restrictions on components and supplies.

Russia is said to have asked Pakistan to return at least four engines for Mi-35M helicopters. Russia also wants to buy back 12 engines for the Mi-35M helicopters from Brazil, which were decommissioned last year. A Brazilian Foreign Ministry official said that the country had allegedly rejected the deal. Other countries involved in the search for suitable engines are Egypt and Belarus.

A conflicting report on the same subject states that Russia has sold a number of helicopters to Iran for military use. It may be that the engines are needed to feed that programme.

**Unseenlabs**, a world leader in radiofrequency data and solutions for maritime domain awareness, has announced the successful launch of its two new satellites, BRO-10 and BRO-11, as part of SpaceX's Transporter-9 mission via Exolaunch. The satellites lifted off aboard SpaceX's Falcon 9 launch vehicle from Vandenberg Space Force Base in California, in November. This achievement represents a significant step forward in Unseenlabs' ongoing mission to enhance maritime surveillance through its unique technology, capable of detecting the presence of any ship, whether cooperating or not, regardless of its geographical location. With BRO-10 and BRO-11 now in orbit at an altitude of 520km, Unseenlabs' satellite constellation expands, greatly amplifying its capacity to provide RF data and solutions. Unseenlabs' constellation now comprises 11 satellites, resulting in 11 simultaneous RF data collection points thanks to its mono satellite technology. The success of this launch propels Unseenlabs even further in its mission to offer comprehensive vessel characterization and precise geolocation, meeting the increasing demands of maritime surveillance worldwide. The new capabilities introduced by these satellites underscore Unseenlabs' commitment to safeguarding marine assets and environments from threats and unlawful activities.



The expansion of the constellation thus offers an extended operational reach and increased surveillance and vessel characterization capabilities on a global scale, catering to the needs of government entities, NGOs, and private sector stakeholders such as insurers, worldwide. This advancement significantly contributes to improving the global maritime landscape, particularly at a time when maritime activities continue to thrive.

**Airborne Technologies (ABT)** of Austria has announced that they have established a wholly owned subsidiary in Dubai. With this ABT now have a permanent footprint in Asia, strategically based to allow easy access to all of their engineering know how for the Middle East, Africa and beyond. At this year's Dubai Air Show they worked with their local partner, the AAL Group.

A team of UK companies led by **Stratospheric Platforms Limited (SPL)**, a Non-Terrestrial Networks telecoms developer, has won a significant contract trialing advanced airborne 5G connectivity from a Britten-Norman Islander. Aircraft manufacturer Britten-Norman will be providing key design and trials support for the project, with Marshall Futureworx providing important cooling systems technology.

SPL is pioneering the concept of using a High-Altitude Platform (HAP) with airborne antenna to provide widescale coverage of high performance 5G from the stratosphere.

The goal of the project is to deliver an unmanned, liquid hydrogen-powered aircraft, designed with a 56-metre wingspan that will, due to its lightweight structure and significant power source, enable a flight endurance of over a week.



The first phase of the contract will see SPL's 5G airborne phased array integrated to a Britten-Norman Islander, with flight trials due to begin in July 2024. The turbine-powered BN2T-4S Islander variant has been selected for the programme due to its performance and payload capacity and the simplicity with which it can be modified to accommodate the equipment. The trial will be conducted under Britten-Norman's Civil Aviation Authority test conditions. Britten-Norman will operate the aircraft from its Solent Airport aircraft maintenance (MRO) facility, with the mission to be performed over the North Sea. The 5G phased array will be linked via a backhaul link to the Aadastral Tower in Suffolk, England,

from which the telecommunications and mission equipment will operate.

Plans for the **United Arab Emirates** to fund and promote Russian aerospace products including helicopters and drones being developed by VR Industries are being dismantled in the wake of the Ukraine war. It emerged at the Dubai Air Show that The Strategic Development Fund, the investment arm of the UAE's Tawazun Economic Council, have put together a programme to exit a partnership with Russian Helicopters that was originally launched in 2020. There are plans to promote the helicopters in the Middle East without the inclusion of the expertise of the Russians.

When war broke out and International Embargoes were set in place the plans and investments were initially paused as plans were put in place to await developments and eventually dismantle the arrangement.

The original expectation was that the funding would lead to large orders for the VRT500 co-axial rotor helicopter in Government roles. Also involved in the deal were VRT300 co-axial rotor unmanned aerial vehicles.

In 2021 a letter of intent to buy up to 100 VRT500 helicopters was announced with the intention of deliveries starting by the end of 2023. The project has been effectively on hold since the war started in February 2022.

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Thales and **StandardAero** have announced that the StableLight™ autopilot was granted a Supplemental Type Certificate (STC) from the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). This true 4-axis autopilot system is now available for retrofit on Airbus Helicopters AS350 and H125 platforms and offers a system that significantly reduces pilot workload, improves mission capability and can help reduce risk in critical flight phases.

Based on Thales' Compact Autopilot System, derived from their previously certified transport category autopilot StableLight is a robust, feature-packed autopilot in a compact, lightweight package that is perfectly suited for light rotorcraft. The system transforms the flight control experience of the helicopter with transparent stability augmentation that works precisely and without feedback to the control sticks. The addition of the stabilised climb flight attitude recovery, auto hover, and a wide range of other sophisticated features results in a system that drastically decreases pilot workload, enhances mission capability, and can help to reduce risks in critical flight phases and adverse conditions such as IIMC - (Inadvertent entry into Instrument Meteorological Conditions).

Pilots representing numerous operators and industry experts were able to test fly the pre-certified system over the last year and were extremely encouraged by the system's performance and contribution to safety. Many commented on the system's impressive capabilities and noted its potential to assist in a wide variety of missions.

Based on the high level of customer interest to date, Thales and StandardAero are spooling up to meet the demand for kit deliveries, with the first kits reserved for the VIP launch customer MacNeil Aviation LLC. Meanwhile both EASA and Transport Canada validations of the STC are being applied for.

China's independently developed **Avicopter** AC313A large civil helicopter, a civilian helicopter built by Avicopter but a development of the earlier Harbin Z-8, itself a locally produced version of the Aerospatiale Super Frelon, has successfully conducted the first round of plateau flight tests.

The AC313A conducted a series of flight tests at various plateau airports. Its first round of flight tests took place at Anshun Huangguoshu Airport in Guizhou Province, Ninglang Lugu Airport in Yunnan Province, and Daocheng Yading Airport in Sichuan Province. These plateau airports are located at altitudes of around 1,600 meters, 3,300 meters, and 4,400 meters, respectively. Among these, located 4,411 meters above sea level, Daocheng Yading Airport is the highest civil airport in China and the world. This round of flight tests verified the AC313A helicopter's flight performance.

An EMS-configured **Leonardo** AW169 undertook a month-long demonstration tour across Japan in November, confirming Leonardo's commitment to partnerships with local players. Leonardo's helicopter fleet has grown rapidly in recent years, with around 160 rotorcraft now in service. Some 80% of these helicopters are deployed for life-saving missions in roles such as SAR, law enforcement, firefighting and disaster relief as well as primary and secondary EMS missions.

The featured AW169 is operated by **Alidaunia**, a prominent Italian EMS operator, and a certified Leonardo Service Center with a broad international experience in air transport and maintenance services. Its fleet includes the AW109, AW139 and AW169.

Leonardo will be supported by Alidaunia's flight crew, composed of a pilot, technical personnel, and a hoist operator, in conducting this tour and illustrating the rotorcraft's advantages from an operator's perspective. In early October, the AW169 arrived at Yao (Osaka prefecture), one of the bases of Aero Asahi Corp., a major Japanese aviation company that will provide Leonardo with support services throughout the demo tour. At Yao, the aircraft has been ground- and flight-tested in preparation for this journey.



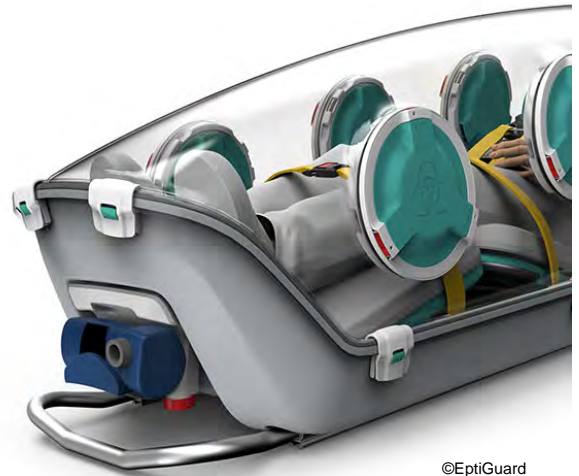
The AW169's tour stretched from the northernmost Hokkaido Island to the south of the country. During its numerous stops, the helicopter was presented to EMS, SAR, law enforcement and fire fighting aviation units.

**EpiGuard** has announced that the EpiShuttle has secured a vital place in the 100% EU-funded Strategic CBRN Reserve! The National Emergency Supply Agency in Finland plays a significant role in stockpiling supplies for this project marking a crucial step in medical preparedness.

The CBRN Strategic Reserve is a critical part of the RescEU's strategy for stockpiling medical countermeasures and ensuring readiness to respond to health emergencies, especially those involving CBRN threats.

The historic launch of the EU's first-ever CBRN Strategic Reserve in Finland. Finland's National Emergency Supply Agency was announced a few months ago and has been one of the organizations assigned to select the best equipment for this important mission. The EpiShuttle is being prepared for this critical mission, strengthening

medical countermeasures, and providing our expertise at the highest level of emergency preparedness. The Crucial Role of the EpiShuttle is that it stands out as a versatile medical device that ensures secure patient isolation transport. Its selection is based on its certification for air and ground patient transport, and seamless interoperability within the EU and NATO. The presence of the EpiShuttle in military and civilian healthcare facilities across Europe simplifies the coordination and transport of patients, making the process extremely safe and efficient.



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## ACCIDENTS AND INCIDENTS

**28 August 2023 Canadair CL-215 C-FYWP** amphibian belonging to NWT operator Buffalo Airways Ltd. was scooping water from remote Mitchell Lake, 30 miles (48 km) due north of the city of Yellowknife when it struck the bottom and started sinking. The rock punctured the underbelly, and the resulting flow of water buckled the front structure, rendering the plane unserviceable. Taken to a small island and abandoned. The aircraft was recovered by a CH-47 Chinook and carried to Yellowknife for repairs. [full story in Vertical November 2023]

**1 November 2023 Bombardier LearJet 35A XA-IRE** Air ambulance of Jet Rescue Air Ambulance crashed at Cuernavaca Airport, on the state of Morelos, Mexico killing the two pilots Gerardo Alvarez and Roberto Manzano and two passengers, Dr. Lilian Resendiz and paramedic Mario Leon.. Initial information suggests that the aircraft overran runway 20, 2,881-metre-long paved runway, after a long touchdown and subsequently went down a steep embankment into a gully before burning. [X/ASN]in

**9 November 2023 Bell OH-58 Kiowa N.** The SABLE (Southeastern NC Airborne Law Enforcement) helicopter was flying a training mission with a crew consisting of Wilmington Police Department and a partner agency when a warning light illuminated. The pilot made a precautionary landing in Ogden Park, Wilmington without damage or injury. [media]

**13 November 2023 Sikorsky MH-60J Jayhawk helicopter 6016** US Coast Guard Whilst on a Search and Rescue mission the helicopter crashed on Read Island Alaska, seriously injuring two. The airframe came down in trees and was inverted and broken in several pieces. There was no fire. Two hours after the crash the four members of crew aboard were winched to a second USCG helicopter and transported to Petersburg for medical care and thence by C-130 Hercules to Seattle for a higher level of care. Four U.S. Coast Guard helicopter crew members were injured, two seriously. They were responding to a flooding fishing vessel near Petersburg, they called in the accident and the crew of the Lydia Marie contained the flooding to a manageable level.

Several agencies, including Petersburg Search and Rescue and EMS, came to assist the downed helicopter. Air Station Sitka sent another helicopter to take all four crew members to Petersburg Medical Center. They were later flown to Seattle for additional medical care.

Coast Guard spokesperson Petty Officer First Class Shannon Kearney said Tuesday that no preliminary information was available on the cause of the crash.

## SAFETY

The AAIB has issued their report into the fatal accident caused by a Coastguard helicopter landing at a Plymouth hospital pad early last year.

The helicopter, G-MCGY, was engaged on a Search and Rescue mission to extract a casualty near Tintagel, Cornwall and fly them to hospital for emergency treatment. The helicopter flew to Derriford Hospital, Plymouth, which has a Helicopter Landing Site (HLS) located in a secured area within one of its public car parks. During the approach and landing, several members of the public in the car park were subjected to high levels of downwash from the landing helicopter. One person suffered fatal injuries, and another was seriously injured. It was found that the landing area had been laid out and completed prior to the dangers of downwash being highlighted.

Following this accident, safety action was taken by the helicopter operator, Derriford Hospital and NHS England Estates to control and mitigate the risk. Additional action by Derriford Hospital and NHS England Estates to improve safety is either planned or in progress.

Helicopters used for Search and Rescue and Helicopter Emergency Medical Services (HEMS) perform a vital role in the UK and, although the operators of these are regulated by the UK Civil Aviation Authority, the many helicopter landing sites provided by hospitals are not. It is essential that the risks associated with helicopter operations into areas accessible by members of the public are fully understood by the Hospital Landing Site Keepers and that effective communication between all the stakeholders involved is established and maintained. Therefore, nine Safety Recommendations have been made to address these issues.

The report is freely available on the AAIB web site.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/air-accidents-investigation-branch>

## PEOPLE

Ollie Dismore, late of NPAS and HeliOps was selected as the European Helicopter Association's Safety and Technical Executive in October. He will be working with EHA National Association members, industry, EASA - European Union Aviation Safety Agency and EU Commission in developing effective and proportionate regulation.

His first high profile event was in Madrid at the European Rotors event which ran November 28-30.

In October, Tim Ross-Smith joined Great Western Air Ambulance Charity (GWAAC) as the GWAAC Operations Officer. Tim is the line manager for the Advanced Practitioners and Specialist Paramedics in Critical Care; he is responsible for their welfare and making sure they stay up to date with training and appraisals.

He is also responsible, along with our Operations Manager Sean, for the day-to-day running of the airbase; making sure the crew has all the medication and kit they need, and that the cars have been serviced. Last, but not least, Tim is the primary point of contact at the airbase for the charity staff.



UK National Police Air Service pilot Capt. John Roberts has been awarded the Honourable Company of Air Pilots prestigious Johnson Memorial Trophy. The trophy recognises outstanding performance in the operation of airborne or space systems, manned or unmanned, and the list of earlier honourees reads like a who's who of aviation since the award was first presented to Sir Francis Chichester in 1931.

The citation for Capt. Roberts award reads as follows:

John Roberts is a highly experienced Police Line Pilot who has flown in support of police operations for 22 years since leaving the Royal Navy. In 2007 the Metropolitan Police Service acquired three highly capable EC145 helicopters, equipped with state-of-the-art camera and mission systems and in 2010 the Air Support Unit was requested to assist SO15 as part of UK Maritime Counter Terrorism (MCT) preparedness. John volunteered to take on the coordination and planning for this new role and for the past 12 years has been responsible for the Police Air Support provision of helicopters to SO15 in support of MCT.

The role was initially envisaged as being one of post event evidence gathering however, John's demonstration of the capabilities of crews and aircraft systems soon led to this expanding into an aerial surveillance role, working closely with UK Special Forces and military aviation assets. John was instrumental in building a close working relationship with SF as well as conducting training for the police crews involved in

what is a complex and highly dynamic aviation environment.

He also assisted with development of the communication infrastructure that allows images to be relayed in real time to operational control centres. John regularly represents the National Police Air Service at planning events as well as flying missions during frequent MCT training exercises. He is viewed as the Police Aviation expert and has more experience in this field of operations than most, if not all, of the other attendees at the planning and training events. John has achieved this in addition to carrying out his normal duties as a Police Line Pilot and Training Captain.

His ability to plan and supervise complex operations outside of normal business led to him being approached by the MPS Chief Pilot to take on the further role of coordinating aviation support during US presidential visits. John has assisted with four POTUS visits to the UK where he has established similarly effective working relationships with the US Marine Corps and Secret Service. He has been personally commended by the USMC Colonel responsible for Marine 1 (the presidential helicopter) for his expertise and assistance in ensuring the successful movement by helicopter of POTUS during four visits. John's ability to not only fly challenging missions in support of MCT and US presidential visits but to also coordinate with multiple agencies has been commented on by Downing Street aides.

John works tirelessly to provide the best possible support and has even taken the time to visit US colleagues during his leave periods. John's hard work and dedication over the last 12 years have made an invaluable contribution to UK security operations. Over and above his work as a Police Air Support pilot and for his outstanding performance in the operation of airborne systems, John Roberts is awarded the Johnson Memorial Trophy.

Sherry Hadley sadly passed away on November 3, 2023, at the age of 76. In 1991, she became the Executive Director for the Airborne Law Enforcement Association (ALEA, now known as APSA). She served in that role for 15 years and set up as an independent meeting and event coordinator in 2006 as well as working alongside her husband selling helicopter landing pads. She remained involved in the management of many of the association's meetings, events and tradeshow.

Sherry was to be found taking roles behind-the-scenes at APSCON 2023 in July so effectively was linked to ALEA/APSA for well over 32 years. She loved working and building relationships with members, vendors/exhibitors and officers involved with airborne law enforcement. She suffered cardiac arrest while lying in bed with her Kindle and cat Winston, and she never recovered. Sherry is survived by husband Howard Hadley and children, Kelly and Matt, stepson Kristopher, stepdaughter Mikala, and grandchildren.

*Ed: Although not many readers of PAN will have met her Sherry was very much the public face of ALEA/APSA at shows and well-loved by everyone who she encountered. The events she organised were enriched by her efforts.*



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## LETTER

I was asked recently to assist a hospitality business build a greater sense of teamship within their organisation. To bring people closer together.

Sitting down with the business owner I went through the rudiments of what they aimed to achieve, their expectations. It also gave me the opportunity to outline how I would manage the task using our innovative people wellbeing and insight expertise. My intention was to build them what we call a "fluid risk matrix". All businesses and organisations are in constant flux so having access to "warm" data is crucial if we are to bring context to experiences people are having due to the comings and goings of the most complex system within any business, people.

It was a relatively small business but every single person within it was a vital cog. I learned though that they had left out the cleaner.

Their seemingly throwaway comment immediately took me back to my time managing the Central Counties Air Operations Unit (CCAOU) and providing air support to Staffordshire and West Mercia Police. The picture you see above was taken in 2008 at our base at Halfpenny Green Airport. They were magical times, and the whole team was like a family. Within aviation you soon come to realise that each person in the image literally keeps you alive as the safety required on a day-to-day, hour-by-hour basis is profound.



There is one person that immediately sticks out and she is wearing the green jumper. A small in stature figure and standing front and centre of the image amongst 14 other proud people. She was our unit's cleaner. Jean Craig.



Jean was the linchpin of the unit. She worked three mornings a week. Jean didn't actually need to work as her successful husband probably earned more money than all those 14 other people put together, but she loved her job. Jean mothered all those who worked at the unit and probably spent more time making us drinks and chatting than cleaning. She even lodged nomadic pilots at her beautiful home in the countryside as the annex above the double garage was an ideal place for them to take time out and recover from busy shifts when living away from home.

Most importantly, Jean was a "safe pair of ears". We would regularly confide our problems to her as she listened, and when necessary offer us sage advice from a life lived. She was a vital "informal support network" and we all, without doubt, confided more in her than we did with our more formal peer and supervisory networks. We generally speak least about the things that matter most, but not with Jean. She knew everything as she saw every person on the unit. Jean was the conduit and glue across all the shifts. Countless times I sat down with a morning coffee in the unit kitchen with Jean and talked through personal dilemmas and you always felt a sense of relief and an unburdening once you had regaled your woes to her.

If you think about it, Jean played a pivotal role in flight safety! Allowing people to vent and share some of their most worrying concerns.

And here is the thing. Imagine a base or business without a Jean. Who actually keeps the premises "spick and span" for others to work in? How do the premises look when senior officers, clients or members of the public visit if it is not well maintained and loved? At best, the responsibility reverts to others "more senior" in the unit who may see it as an additional responsibility, a chore, which is "below them" and when added to their other seemingly "more important" duties that cleanliness soon deteriorates.

Thinking back, Jean was also a barometer, which may seem a very strange thing to say but consider this. How senior leaders at the very pinnacle of the organisation communicate and behave (including implementing policies and procedures) will inevitably be reflected in how Jean works. Her level of engagement, her resilience and her own behaviours will all be a reflection of what is happening at the very top. Conway's Law. So, if you wish to gain an insight into how successful your business and its culture is monitor Jean for a while.

And here's the crunch! If you ever ignore the person who cleans your working space, ignore them at your peril. Just remember how vitally important a cog they are and the importance of the role they play. Jean did not just keep the premises clean she provided the most consistent and dependable pair eyes and ears possible.

The CCAOU is now long gone and sadly, so is Jean Craig. A few weeks ago I received a phone call from her devoted husband to say that after a short illness she had passed away.

At the end of October, with other former CCAOU folk, who were in that old photograph; Ian Edginton, Phil Davies, Paul Packwood, Stu Doyle and Dave Johnson, we attended her funeral and closed another door on the past.

Do not forget your other staff, they can often be an important part of the whole organisation.

*David Howell*  
Able & Rush



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## MOVE ALONG THERE

Thank goodness the front line police officers [and commercial pilots] in UK air support are showing some sense and professionalism. Unfortunately it seems those at the top continue to regularly let the side down. It is not intentional of course but it is no less unfortunate. The latest incumbent at the Police Service Northern Ireland (at that stage he was the immediate if temporary replacement for the sacked Chief Constable Byrne) messed up his welcoming message to people of Northern Ireland. Not only was the welcome message a standard set of words filed away by the press office and used by most arriving chiefs, rather than something personal, but whoever sent it forgot to include the name of the new boss. Anyway the error was quickly corrected and Chief Constable Jon Boutcher is now installed.

The senior officers of several forces have had something of a bad month. Politicians (who are not supposed to interfere in operational matters) have clashed with those in command and there has been some unseemly name calling as the government of the day tries to come to terms with the apparent overruling left wing attitudes of woke (left wing in US terms of course means communism, but that is an overstatement). Regardless of their political leanings, the officers on the street seem to manage to undertake their duties without fear or favour but their 'betters' have massive pre-judgements directing their day to day activities. After 'Sue Ellen' Braverman picked one fight too many she was pushed onto her sword and replaced. As the winter wind howled outside and Channel her replacement and the Prime Minister both immediately declared that they would stop the boats! As we lesser beings know, any reduction in the numbers crossing the English Channel this year have been down to inclement weather and unseaworthy boats not the pontifications of politicians.



Which brings to mind a possible plan to thwart future crossings in the seas near Dover (that is Dover, Kent, not the place in Delaware, please keep up) perhaps the new green technology can deter crossings. Rather than use high winds to turn turbines and solar panels to produce electricity why not use the technology to reverse power the big fans and add some wave making machines to keep the English Channel forever rough and windy? That will stop them!



The Right Honourable 'Sue Ellen' Braverman MP, late Home Secretary of this parish and image above, and a barrister spoke many words of truth that the common man wished to say, but she was just too truthful and abrasive. Her match was clashing with the Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Mark Rowley, a man who fits nicely into the role of an acceptable and suitably woke holder of the post since the summer of 2022. His only fault it seems is that he seems to have picked up my hat and it really is too big for him....

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With the new aircraft programme presenting a problem for the people at NPAS, and recent performance and availability barely being something to applaud it may be that the police in London UK are expecting to hold out for a future aircraft type as depicted by this 1950s image of a Metropolitan Police (spaceship) Escort accompanying Dan Dare – pilot of the future into London. I reckon it cannot be any worse, at least it is a drawing (by Frank Hampson) which is more than the combined team of Blue Light/NPAS/NPCC have managed to publish so far! [X aka Twitter]



Dan Dare pilot of the future from *The Eagle* comic ©Frank Hampson

## STOPPING THE BOATS

Since 2018, what seems to be a never ending saga is the large numbers of migrants crossing English Channel in small boats, to enter the UK without permission. These migrants are following a route which with new legislation, *'The Illegal Migration Act 2023'*, is now illegal. However, it's the weather, not the new legislation, that's become the critical go/no go factor. With extended periods of bad weather, particularly strong winds in mid-Channel, the people smugglers new plan, a mass transport operation with a new generation of large, purpose built, but flimsy, 'one shot' inflatable boats, with each boat carrying 50 or more migrants, has proved to be impossible if the prevailing wind is much above 10 knots. Good news for law enforcement, but a serious financial setback for the people traffickers!

In November, the French reported that a large inflatable boat carrying up to 60 migrants foundered close inshore, with the loss of 2 lives, shortly after it had been launched from the beach at Neufchatel-Hardelt, near Boulogne. This occurred on Wednesday, 22 November. Coincidentally, this was just 2 just days before the second anniversary of 31 migrants perishing in the English Channel, near Calais, on the 24 November 2021. Moreover, earlier in 2023, on the 12 August, 6 migrants drowned after their inflatable boat, with 60 migrants on board sank near Sangatte, to the west of Calais.



**Mass transport in very large, but unseaworthy inflatable boats is only viable in near perfect weather with a light breeze and a calm sea.**

### NEW INITIATIVES

A second factor is the success of the French Gendarmerie and the Police Nationale on the beaches of northern France. In a recent article, the national newspaper, *'The Daily Telegraph'* reported that some of the £478million transferred to France by the British Government, to improve French border security, is now being used to improve security, not on the beaches of northern France, but on the French/Italian border. It would seem that a new French initiative, to stop the migrants from setting up their ad-hoc, squalid camps between Calais and Dunkirk, is now much further south, much further 'upstream', stopping the migrants on France's southern border. A further initiative, promoted by the UK National Crime Agency, is to train 'sniffer' dogs to detect the rubber compound used to make the large inflatable boats. These dogs have been deployed to the busy vehicle crossing point between Turkey, the source of these boats, and



Bulgaria, before the boats are transported across Europe by road, to northern France.

What may also prove to be another positive move is the change of British Home Secretary, from a lawyer to a soldier. The former Home Secretary (Minister for the Interior), Mrs Suella Braverman KC has been succeeded by member of parliament, Lt Col James Cleverly TD VR, a senior officer in the Royal Artillery (Volunteers). One can only hope that, together with retired Maj Gen Duncan Capps CBE, the Senior Director of the Border Force Small Boats Operational Command, these two soldiers will, together, 'stop the boats' in 2024.

**The former Home Secretary, Suella Braverman KC, a lawyer, (page 30) has been succeeded by a senior Army officer, Lt Col James Cleverly TD VR, Royal Artillery (Volunteers).**



Stopping the boats with proactive operational initiatives rather than with retrospective legislation, legislation that is proving very difficult to enforce, may yet prove to be the key to success. However, in addition to those initiatives to stop the migrants and the boats 'upstream', a further initiative would be to place more 'boots on the ground', together with more 'spotter planes', on and above the beaches of northern France. Better to stop the boats from being launched rather than to patrol the middle of the Channel with a menagerie of aeroplanes and drones, 10 miles from the shore, so that the vessels belonging to the UK Border Force, together with RNLI lifeboats, can be directed, by the aircraft, to 'save lives at sea' before landing the hapless migrants, those who have been 'rescued', at the Port of Dover.

**The Director of the UK Border Force Small Boats Operational Command, retired Maj Gen Duncan Capps CBE.**

RLC Foundation



## CONCLUSION

In the past, the Royal Air Force has patrolled the English Channel with its maritime patrol aircraft, the Boeing P-8 Poseidon, with an Airbus A-400 Atlas transport aircraft and with a Beechcraft Shadow R1 reconnaissance aircraft, all to no avail. Then, more recently, the Royal Navy was placed in temporary overall command of the 'Dover Patrol' and deployed a River Class offshore patrol vessel, together with a flotilla of Archer Class fast patrol vessels. Again, all to no avail. In fact, in 2022 the number of migrants landed in the UK after being 'rescued' from the Channel reached a record total of 45,774. The total for 2023, currently 27,708, may soon exceed the total of 28,526 in 2021, but only if the weather is favourable. With 2 soldiers in command, at the very top, the Home Secretary, Lt Col James Cleverly, and the Director of the Border Force Small Boats Operational Command, retired Maj Gen Duncan Capps, we must now hope

that in 2024 the illegal cross-Channel route, with migrants being ferried from France to England in large inflatable boats, will be closed forever! Closed with 'boots on the ground', together with 'spotter planes' in the air, on and above the beaches of northern France. On and above the 'line in the sand'; the same line that has been described by the UK Minister for Immigration, the Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP, as the 'goal line'.

James A Cowan MBE

Note: The author, a former Royal Air Force senior officer, completed 41 years of military service, including 12 years in the RAF Volunteer Reserve. In the RAF he flew the BAe Nimrod, the 'Mighty Hunter' for 10 years, including the longest operational flight, with No 201 Squadron, Crew 7, of 19 hours 5 minutes during the Falklands conflict. During service with the RAFVR he was also a police and an air ambulance pilot.

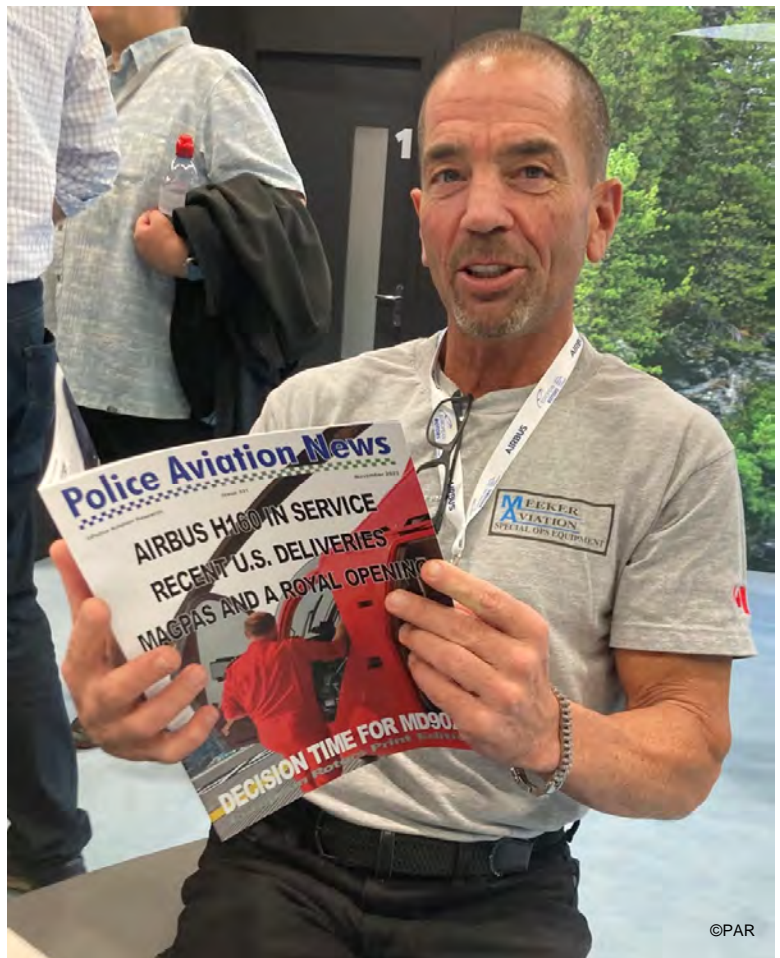
## DELAY IN PUBLICATION

Regular readers will be aware that this edition of PAN is late in posting. This was because the editor was in Madrid looking over the November 27-30, 2023 European Rotors Madrid in Hall 9, IFEMA Convention Centre, MADRID, Spain.

The organisers of EUROPEAN ROTORS spoke only in positive terms about the show before it opened and my job is to report on that from being there. A story will follow!

Enough to say that the halls were buzzing and there were some fine people to see and speak to, The subject on many lips was PAVCon. Where is the next PAVCon Europe to be held? All will be revealed, All I can say at the moment is that an event is assured.

*Cal Meeker an exhibitor at European Rotors Madrid late last month—he recently sold out but remains still in charge of his unique engineering enterprise. See story on page 19 this issue and the item on his motor racing prowess in the November issue he was reading in Madrid..*



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COMING NEXT TIME.....