

# Police Aviation News

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**VISITATIONS IN OZ**  
**H145 QUEUE JUST GETS LONGER**  
**POLISH TRAFFIC FLEET**



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# LAW ENFORCEMENT

## INTERNATIONAL

**CONFERENCE EUROPE:** The PAvCon Europe police aviation conference is set for May 28 and 29 at the hangar of Airborne Technologies GmbH, Viktor-Lang-Straße 8, 2700 Wiener Neustadt, Austria. The June 2022 event was held at the same venue and this edition will follow similar guidelines.

On May 27 there will be an Aircrew Tactics session principally aimed at Tactical Flight Officers (TFO). This will be run by the usual European team led by Harald Brink of the Netherlands.



## AUSTRALIA

**NEW SOUTH WALES:** The unit welcomed morning television to its base last month. The Seven Network's Sunrise is one of Australia's most popular early morning programmes.

The visitation was fronted by Sam Mac (Samuel McMillan a Television reporter, producer and radio presenter with Channel 7) who brought his sunny personality to the Aviation Command headquarters near Sydney.

**COVER IMAGE:** Several new images have been placed on-line by the Bell agent in Poland, JB Aviation, Warsaw, marking the entry into service of the four Bell 407 GXi recently completed on their behalf by Airborne Technologies, Austria. JB state that they are proud to announce the successful completion of the largest project in the history of their company. As previously reported the fleet was acquired mainly to undertake traffic patrol and have a role suite comprising a Trakka sensor and searchlight.





On a recent visit to Australia Kath Fisher, a TFO with the UK National Police Air Service called in on the NSW police air unit and posted these images on social media.

On Linked-In Kath states she is very much an aviation person with her skills beyond acting as TFO including acting as Flying Display Director, Lifeboat crew, Advanced driver. Before law enforcement aviation attracted her attention, she was an RAF Air Traffic Controller and holds a pilot's licence.







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QUEENSLAND: Townsville, a city on the north-eastern coast of Queensland, and seen by many as the unofficial capital has a population around 180,000 which makes it big in local terms. The city hosts a significant number of governmental, community and major business administrative offices for the northern half of the state and it now has a police helicopter.

Queensland is massive, with an area of 1,852,642 square kilometres (715,309 sq. mi), so the relatively recently added POLAIR helicopter fleet based on Bolkow BO105 and EC135P operate over just a tiny part mainly in the coastal strip. This year they will be taking delivery of new Bell 429 helicopters, meanwhile the older airframes remain to serve.

As the police in Townsville grapple with a spike in their crime rate, they are getting encrypted radios and a dedicated, if temporary, Airbus Helicopters EC135P2 helicopter. A permanent POLAIR helicopter is expected in Townsville by mid-year. This is assumed to be one of the new Bell 429s.

Longstanding calls for aerial support in the north Queensland city intensified late last year after almost 80 vehicles were stolen within a week. [ABC]

*The new Bell 429 fleet for Queensland will replace the existing contracted helicopters in coming months.*



## FRANCE

INTERIOR MINISTRY: The French Armament General Directorate (DGA) ordered 42 new H145 helicopters at the end of 2023, on behalf of the Ministry of Interior, with deliveries set to start in 2024. Of these 42 helicopters, 36 are destined for the French rescue and emergency response agency, Sécurité Civile, while the French law enforcement agency, Gendarmerie Nationale, will use six. The contract includes an option for a further 22 H145s for the Gendarmerie Nationale and a range of support and service solutions from training to spare parts, as well as a complete initial support package for the aircraft.

“We have a long-standing relationship with the Gendarmerie Nationale and the Sécurité Civile and I am very proud that we will add another chapter to our shared story,” said Bruno Even, CEO of Airbus Helicopters. “The H145 has already proven its worth with the Sécurité Civile conducting many rescue missions in the difficult mountainous environment of the French Alps”, he added. “The H145 is operated by many law enforcement agencies across the world. The Gendarmerie will benefit from a state-of-the-art helicopter equipped with the latest mission systems,” he explained.

The Sécurité Civile currently operates four five-bladed H145s, ordered in 2020 and 2021. The 36 H145s will progressively replace the 33 EC145s currently in operation for rescue and air medical transport services, throughout France. The 145 series was launched as a tail rotor equipped EC145 airframe with a similar sized order for the French Interior Ministry over 20 years ago Deliveries commence in 2001.

The six H145s will initiate the renewal of the Gendarmerie’s fleet, composed of Ecureuils, EC135s and EC145s. They will be equipped with an EO/IR system and a mission computer to perform law enforcement missions.



H145 © AIRBUS



H145 © AIRBUS



# GUATAMALA

**AIR ASSETS:** Guatemalan law enforcement is mainly performed by the civilian-led National Civil Police of Guatemala (PNC) assisted by its military. In the pas the police have leased in helicopters and operated a Bell Huey in its own name while remaining able to call on the military when needed.

It is with this background that the Guatemalan Air Force added a new Bell 429 Global Ranger helicopter to its inventory in mid-December 2023. Delivered to La Aurora International Airport in Guatemala City, as a result of a foreign military sale executed by the U.S. Army Security Assistance Command (USASAC) that roles envisaged for the helicopter include national disasters, humanitarian crises and law enforcement. The main police role is expected to be reconnaissance in areas of high incidence of drug trafficking and organized crime.



Representatives from the U.S. Army Security Assistance Command, Multi-National Aviation Special Project Office, Security Assistance Management Directorate, Bell, and Security Cooperation Officers for Guatemala, pose for a photo in front of the Guatemalan Air Force's new Bell 429 helicopter December 12, 2023. (Photo: U.S. Army)

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## ITALY

**CARABINIERI:** The first of 20 Leonardo AW119Kx helicopters ordered by Italy's Carabinieri has started flying. The service has also received its sixth AW169M.

The first Leonardo RH119A (a variant of the AW119Kx), ordered by Italy's Carabinieri, the Italian national gendarmerie, was noted sporting its final livery during a recent test flight from Leonardo's plant in Vergiate. The aircraft, s/n 15501, carries experimental registration CSX 82103 and codes CC-61 is the first of 20 Koala built for the military police against an order placed in October 2022.

The AW119Kx is one of the three new helicopters models acquired in recent years (AW139 and AW169M being the other two types) to replace the AW109N and AB412 helicopters and modernize the helicopter fleet.

## KENYA

**POLICE AIR WING:** A surge in aircraft accidents in Kenya, noted over recent months is being blamed on lack of proper investigations to ascertain causes of the mishaps. In turn this has led to a serious shortage of aircraft for emergency operations.

The International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), local and international aviation bodies, and a National Assembly committee have in the past expressed concern over the rampant accidents and lack of proper investigations.

Last year the critical shortage of local air assets led to the government having to request a Mil Mi-17 helicopter from the United Nations World Food Programme to be used in the aerial distribution of relief supplies after the country was hit by El Nino.

Currently, there is only one National Police Service (NPS) Mil Mi-17 available to undertake duties engaging the Boni enclave operations, a military campaign in response to al-Shabaab's occupation of Boni forest.

Recent accidents of note have involved Defence Forces and civil aircraft rather than police, but the flight safety issues read across to the emergency services arena in a region where flight assets that can fly are so few.

Failure to conduct successful investigations has been blamed for a number of factors including shortage of competent investigators, alleged collusion with airlines, and official interference. There is an Air Accident Investigations Department, but it suffers from a lack of technical knowledge, skills and experience. Training is lacking. Attempts to increase the number of trained investigators failed after four candidates were found unsuitable and lacking the required skillsets.

Disquiet has been expressed outside of Kenya when the official representing the country missed several meetings in a row. Last year EASA contacted the Kenya CAA requesting information regarding the aviation system in Kenya, especially reports on aircraft accidents and serious incidents investigation outside Kenya involving Kenyan registered aircraft. This was instigated after Kenya's nominated international representative failed to take part in discussions outside Kenya under the auspices of ICAO. [People Daily]







Two of the recently delivered Bell 407s © JB Aviation

## POLAND

**POLICE:** No longer breaking news but several new images have been placed on-line by the Bell agent in Poland, JB Aviation, Warsaw, marking the entry into service of the four Bell 407 GXi recently completed on their behalf by Airborne Technologies, Austria.

JB state that they are proud to announce the successful completion of the largest project in the history of their company. As previously reported the fleet was acquired mainly to undertake traffic patrol and have a role suite comprising a Trakka sensor and searchlight. The four are noted as being SP-NYA/A109, SP-NYB/A110, SP-NYC/A111 and SP-NYD/A112.

## UNITED KINGDOM

**DEVON & CORNWALL:** Late last month Devon & Cornwall started its first 3-week initial drone training course of 2024, with students from three western police forces: Devon and Cornwall, Dorset and Gwent.

Becoming a UK police drone pilot (also called a 'Remote Pilot') begins with completing the General Visual Line of Sight [GVC] course before then completing further operational competency training.

Devon & Cornwall are currently one of only three UK Civil Aviation Authority authorised Recognised Assessment Entity (RAE) and therefore able to deliver the GVC course to prospective drone pilots.



© D&C Police on LI

© D&C Police on LI



**NPAS FIXED WING:** In mid-January NPAS issued one of its rare press releases concerning the move of its fixed wing aircraft from Leeds-Bradford Airport to the East Midlands Airport at Castle Donnington.

NPAS are now reporting that they see the latest move to East Midlands as permanent. The service was forced to find a new base from which to operate the fleet of four Vulcanair P68R aircraft following the announcement by Peel Group in 2022 of the closure of Doncaster Sheffield Airport (DSA). For just over a year, the fleet has flown from a temporary base at Leeds Bradford Airport, a short-term measure until a more suitable solution could be secured.



NPAS Head of Operations Chief Inspector Sarah Whitworth said: “We wish to thank the Multiflight team at Leeds Bradford Airport for accommodating us on a temporary basis, enabling the continuation of our critical, national service with limited disruption.

“Credit also goes to our team of pilots and tactical flight officers who, despite facing significant personal disruption, have continued to deliver vital operations across England and Wales whilst assisting in the relocation of their base, and everything that entails.

“Thanks also go to the NPAS project team and the staff at East Midlands airport who have worked hard behind the scenes to establish safe operations from our new base.”

Flying operations from East Midlands Airport began on 26 December 2023. Initial operations, daily patrols and tasking was in support of twelve police forces, including West Yorkshire, Derbyshire, Staffordshire, West Mercia, South Yorkshire, West Midlands, Gwent, South Wales, Humberside, Devon and Cornwall, North Yorkshire and Thames Valley. The fleet provides air support for all police forces, with the exception of the Metropolitan Police Service, across England and Wales.

In the last financial year (1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023) the fixed wing crews attended 737 calls for service and flew for 687 hours in support of 41 different police forces.

The ability of the aeroplanes to stay airborne for extended periods gives them great resilience – especially when it comes to policing large-scale events, protracted public order incidents and pre-planned, long-running operations. Once in flight, the aircraft can remain airborne for almost a full shift, transiting from one job to the next. [NPAS]



© RVL Aviation

*Editor: The fixed wing element of NPAS now resides with RVL Aviation at East Midlands Airport. The hosting operator flies a mix of traditional surveillance aircraft, 4 x Beechcraft B200 King Air, 1 x Beechcraft 260 King Air, 6 x Reims-Cessna F406, in support of government and commercial customers. RVL Aviation has extensive experience in providing airborne surveillance on behalf of government agencies. Completed missions include marine pollution observation, fisheries enforcement, maritime security patrols, border protection, vessel TSS enforcement, and search-and-rescue. Fielded sensors include EO/IR, multi-mode*



radar, sideways looking airborne radar (SLAR), and high-resolution cameras.

The 2010 built base is a hangar at Building 21, Anson Road, East Midlands Airport., alongside Dakota Avenue, the Long Stay Car Park and also the air ambulance base.

The most positive aspect of this event is that it meets a long-held aspiration of NPAS. Ten years ago, when they set out their plans for the future, East Midlands Airport was one of the bases NPAS aspired to, and in the time since they have regularly approached the airport to get a base there (including when they were first looking for a base for the fixed wing). Until now each of those approaches has been shunned.

The negative on this is that they are hangar sharing rather than having a wholly owned secure entity. With the move of the fixed wing element of the NPAS fleet to East Midlands Airport now a matter of fact it was time to visit the former base at the now closed airport near Doncaster. Despite its £2.5M cost to the police aviation organisation the Doncaster Sheffield/Robin Hood Airport facility now lies abandoned and unmarked, bar a small Gama Aviation sign over a door, on the still deserted airport.

Overall, the airport appears to be dying. The Peel Group may well have professed a long term wish to turn the airport into an industrial estate but currently there are signs that many current occupants are getting out and not necessarily being replaced. There are aviation jobs being advertised locally as related to Doncaster but, with WFH being firmly an option, most now fit into categories that are not wedded to the airport. A recent meeting of the South Yorkshire Infrastructure Enquiry included efforts to promote a reduction of the effects the closure is having on local employment and investment as a primary aim – pending the hoped for return to airport status.

According to the Yorkshire Post, currently the mitigation efforts are not showing much success pending a clear revival path being identified – just the impression that The Editor detected. The other local aviation project that Peel was involved in, the defunct Sheffield City airport in Letsby Avenue, is hardly a shining example of past corporate acumen.

Utilisation of the four P68R remains relatively low key. The original plan was to have three aircraft operational with one in maintenance but currently only one aircraft is operating, although a second is expected to join the flight line shortly. This is said to be partly due to a lack of pilots and TFOs. There is currently advertising for two Line Pilot's on a salary of £65,457 to £68,874 per annum (plus Market Factor payment of £7,000 subject to annual review).

The NPAS report that there were only 737 calls for service and 687 hours flown in support last year is depressingly low when compared with the aspirations of the rotary wing fleet to achieve up to 1,000 hours each per year. A great deal of the flight time of the fixed wing fleet is transit and loiter but each of the fixed wing contributed significantly less than 200 hours each.

Meanwhile, in France, the Airborne Technologies P68R used in promoting the type to customers (including NPAS) has started its new life as F-HPTF with Air Attack Technologies based at Aéroport de Perpignan. It was sold by Airborne Technologies in October last year and will include wildfire detection among its new roles. AAT has been undertaking the wildfire role for the past decade using a Cessna 208.



New Life © Air Attack

## UNITED STATES

FLORIDA: Lee County Sheriff's Office has officially launched its third H125/AS350 helicopter into its current fleet. It arrived late last year and has been working up to the official launch, announced via their Facebook account last month. The new arrival is N73LC (9356), and it introduces the most advanced camera, systems and rescue hoist to the fleet.

"I'm proud of how far we've come here at LCSO with regards to innovation and technology," stated Sheriff Carmine Marceno. "Over time, we have focused efforts on upgrading our technology to ensure better safety practices, efficiency, and cost effectiveness are at the forefront of the expansion."

The aviation unit's six pilots, six tactical officers, and two mechanics have been learning how to handle the new AStar and the digitally advanced technology it came equipped with.





New tool © Lee County SO

This is not the first time the aviation unit has had more than two helicopters. At one point the unit had four military surplus OH-6A helicopters, though only two were operational while two others were used for spare parts.

The new arrival is the only one of the three with an operational hoist and a hook that can move equipment or transport an injured person or recover an LCSO unit in rough territory.

The units three current AStar's cover a wide range of dates. The oldest is N72LC (2628), an AS350B2 that was acquired pre-used is now over 30 years old, N71LC (7994) arrived eight years ago. The new arrival is nominally a 2022 build airframe delivered last year and has been working up on the new role fit. [LCSO]

NEW YORK: Fifteen years after famously settling Flight 1549 (an Airbus airliner) on to the Hudson River former airline pilot Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger visited the NYPD Aviation Unit in Brooklyn with Lorie, Kate, Nikki, his family and had the opportunity to meet, for the first time, Detective Rodriguez, Detective Delaney, Sgt. Hendrix, and others who were in the Hudson River on that fateful January day in 2009.



Remembering dangerous times © New York Police Dept LI

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Like everyone involved in the rescue, they made it their mission in life to make sure every everyone was saved that day.

Sully expressed his gratitude to them for their diligence and bravery. They too faced a novel situation and applied all their experience to adapt and solve the problems they were facing. He will always be grateful to them.



Remembering dangerous times © New York Police Dept LI



#### FEDERAL OFFERING

Currently on offer on the Government sales site is the 1998 Eurocopter AS350B2 N5204/3118 formerly operated by the US Department of Homeland Security. Total flight time is 9,455 hours and 11,896 cycles. This aircraft is in a non-airworthy condition but repairable. The helicopter, currently located in San Angelo, Texas is being offered on the GSA Auctions web site until February 2. On January 28 the highest bid was \$151,000. <https://www.gsauctions.gov/auctions/preview/269385>

## AIR AMBULANCE AUSTRALIA

**TASMANIA:** The Government has welcomed a new funding agreement with Westpac Banking Corporation to enhance emergency helicopter services that provide life-saving care to the Tasmanian community.

The agreement is for an initial term of two years to 2026 and will enable the purchase of specialist equipment, training, and other service enhancing measures to ensure that the Tasmanian emergency helicopter services deliver world-class care. Westpac has sponsored the emergency helicopter service in Tasmania since 2000.

The Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service also provides important capability for Tasmania Police and has been deployed to save lives in a variety of challenging environments over many years. [MoH]



## UNITED KINGDOM

DEVON: Mission statistics for 2023 reveal a record number of missions and patients for Devon Air Ambulance (DAA), illustrating just how vital the medical emergency service remains to the people of Devon.

Throughout another challenging year for many public services and charities, the crew at Devon Air Ambulance were tasked to attend 2,226 incidents across Devon and assisting across borders in neighbouring counties of Cornwall, Somerset and Dorset.

Of those 2,226 missions, 1,040 were to help patients with medical emergencies (those suffering with a medical condition) and 1,176 were trauma-related incidents (accidents and injuries caused by slips, trips, falls, burns and road traffic collisions to name just a few).

The number of times DAA deployed a helicopter or one of the Critical Care Cars increased by

In 2023, DAA crews assisted 833 male and 507 female patients and 159 children (Age 0-17) who also needed their expert care. DAA's crews were tasked to many patients taking part in their favourite sports & leisure activities, with equestrian related incidents, 39, being the highest.

399 missions were in the hours of darkness where many of the charities invaluable Community Landing Sites were used to enable the aircraft to land safely. DAA now has 199 pre-surveyed Community Landing sites and are looking forward to launching their 200<sup>th</sup> site in Fremington, Barnstaple, at the end of January.

Unfortunately, road traffic collisions continue to remain high on the charities annual incident report and 2023 saw them tasked to 307 road traffic collisions on Devon's roads.



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**GREAT WESTERN:** 2023 was the second busiest year for the Bristol based air ambulance with 1,979 callouts. The EC135 operating charity believe that there is a very good chance 2024 will be even busier. [GWAAC]

**MIDLAND:** The Helicopter Emergency Landing Pad (the HELP Appeal) has funded two helipads and an enclosed hangar space constructed at Midlands Air Ambulance Charity's new airbase and headquarters at Airbase Avenue, Neachley, Shifnal TF11 8UR on the Shropshire / Staffordshire border.

The HELP Appeal, operated by County Air Ambulance Trust, distributes grants to fund helipads at hospitals and at air ambulance airbases across the UK. The organisation agreed to fund £2.5M for the two helipads and hangar in 2018, the construction of which was completed early summer 2023. Since Midlands Air Ambulance Charity moved its operations from nearby RAF Cosford to the new facility in August 2023, the helipads have enabled the service's helicopter to already take off on more than 180 vitally important air ambulance missions.

Hanna Sebright, chief executive of Midlands Air Ambulance Charity, said: "Planning for our new airbase and charity headquarters started in 2017, and the construction of the site has come to fruition thanks to funding from granting giving organisations and corporate partners. This has meant that generous donations from our communities funds our daily lifesaving missions.

"We simply could not operate our service without our airbase helipads and the hangar to undertake maintenance repairs and house our helicopters at night. We are sincerely grateful to the HELP Appeal for funding these critical functions at our Cosford airbase and headquarters, which has ultimately assisted our organisation in attending those who are critically unwell or injured in our region."

Robert Bertram, chief executive for the HELP Appeal, who met the team to see how the helipads are making a difference said: "It was fantastic to visit Midlands Air Ambulance Charity's airbase to see how the HELP Appeal's funding has been put to very good use. Helipads can be often forgotten about in emergency care, but if air ambulances can't land and take off, safely or quickly from their airbase at any time of the day, patients' lives could be put at serious risk."

*Editor: The air ambulance charity operates three air ambulance helicopters based at Shifnal (Cosford) airbase in Shropshire, Tatenhill airbase, near Burton-on-Trent Staffordshire, and Strensham Services on the M5 located on the Gloucestershire / Worcestershire border. The charity's three aircraft each carry a crew comprising a pilot, two paramedics or flight doctors plus full life-support medical equipment. The fleet*



*The Care Quality Commission (CQC) has rated the new Headquarters and Airbase (previously known as Cosford airbase), run by Midlands Air Ambulance Charity, as outstanding [image supplied]*



of critical care cars each have critical care paramedics on-board with full life-support medical equipment. The service costs between £13-14M just to keep the three charity helicopters and fleet of critical care cars operational. Each air ambulance mission costs £2,950 on average and each critical care car mission costs £288, which is entirely funded by the generosity of the public and local businesses. The service is free to users at the point of need.

The HELP Appeal has funded 45 helipads, which have received almost 26,000 landings. It too relies solely on charitable donations and does not receive any government funding or money from the National Lottery. [www.helpappeal.org.uk](http://www.helpappeal.org.uk)

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) has rated the Headquarters and Airbase (previously known as Cosford airbase), as well as the Tatenhill Airbase, run by Midlands Air Ambulance Charity, as outstanding following its first inspection in August and September last year.

This inspection was carried out as part of CQC's continual checks on the safety and quality of healthcare services. [cqc.org.uk](http://cqc.org.uk)

## UNITED STATES

NEVADA: The Regional Emergency Services (REMSA) Health and Care Flight announced the unveiling of a new Airbus H125 helicopter at the end of January. Care Flight 1 replaces a similar, but older, model. It will be based in Fallon and will be one of four helicopters in Care Flight's fleet.

On January 24, Community leaders including Sparks Mayor Ed Lawson, City of Sparks Councilmen Donald Abbott and Kristopher Dahir, and City of Sparks Councilwoman Dian VanderWell; Washoe County Manager Eric Brown and Washoe County Commissioners Michael Clark and Mariluz Garcia attended the launch event.

Care Flight 1, the 2023 build H125 N906CR c/n 9381, is particularly well-suited for the high altitude, alpine environments and extreme temperature spans typical of the northern Nevada region.



The new H125 © REMSA

Purchase of the helicopter was made possible by a \$5.3M grant from the William N. Pennington Foundation, the largest made to REMSA. The Pennington Foundation provides grants to Nevada-based organizations in the areas of education, community services, healthcare, and medical research. Only registered on January 15, it is scheduled to enter service later this year after completion and training. In the coming years, the other Care Flight helicopters will need to be replaced with new aircraft to ensure REMSA Health can continue to provide emergency air ambulance services to some of the rural communities it serves.

Care Flight has transported and treated critically ill and injured patients across the region for more than 40 years. As a critical component of access to healthcare across rural Nevada and eastern California, Care Flight's helicopter service transports approximately 1,500 patients every year, across a region of more than 50,000 square miles. Accredited for 21 consecutive years by CAMTS, the US national organisation that evaluates medical air services.



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# FIRE

## CHILE

**VALPARAISO:** Early in January two Erickson S-64E Air Crane helicopters arrived by sea in the port of Valparaiso. The pair were unloaded, cleared customs, and assembled over several days.

The helicopters, one being N247AC, are to remain in Chile throughout the fire season to combat wildfires. [\[Linked In\]](#)



Deck Cargo © Erickson

## CYPRUS

**POLICE:** In early November a team from Campbell, Texas, USA based Volo Mission travelled to Cyprus to provide bucket training and discuss a little aviation psychology with the Cyprus Police Department.

Based at Larnaca Airport, CPAU operates Bell 412s and Leonardo AW139s, undertaking a range of law enforcement missions including aerial firefighting and SAR. In the firefighting role the AW139s utilise 100' long lines with Bambi Buckets, while the Bell 412s employ belly hooking with the Water Hog bucket system.

A total of eight pilots and nine crew members participated in extensive ground classes, field briefings, and flight training. The comprehensive training covered various aspects of aerial firefighting, encompassing safety practices and emergency procedures through to dip-site recognition, drop techniques, decision-making, and focus, to name a few of the topics covered. Additionally, two senior instructors underwent a train-the-trainer course and will continue to actively work with the team to sustain and elevate the unit's skill level, preparing them for fire missions this summer. Photos Volo Mission Rotorhub  
Volo Mission is at this year's 2024 HAI Heli-Expo in Anaheim. On February 27-29 they will be at Booth 8223. [www.volomission.com](http://www.volomission.com)



The Cyprus Police operate both the Leonardo and Bell © LL



# SEARCH & RESCUE

## CANADA

**AIR FORCE:** It is now predicted that the life cycle costs of buying, owning and operating the air force's troubled Sikorsky CH-148 Cyclones through into the late 2030s is now expected to top \$14.87 billion. The figure comes from a leaked internal Department of National Defence briefing document obtained by CBC News.

Most of the expense — \$10 billion — is being attributed to the cost of sustaining the aircraft; the CH-148 Cyclone is unique to Canada; no other nation flies the maritime helicopter which is based on the Sikorsky S-92.

The estimate was arrived at two years ago as part of a 65-page Department of National Defence document requesting additional funding from the Treasury Board. An additional \$111M was approved.

Meanwhile the Air force is still awaiting delivery of last two aircraft from the order for 28. It is expected that the penultimate airframe will be delivered later this month and the last next year. Back in 2021 it was believed that Sikorsky was expected to face difficulties in completing the final airframes through a lack of components.

Among the major concerns cited in the briefing document was the fact the federal government paid \$41.8M for a radar warning system that was included in the cost of the original contract but not delivered due to U.S. government technology transfer restrictions prohibiting it.

The document identified higher than expected complexities and costs. [CBC Canada]

## MALDIVES

**RESCUE SERVICES:** In the past the Indian Government has supplied Maldives with aircraft suitable for emergency situations, notably two Advanced Light Helicopters and a Dornier Do228. The aircraft have featured heavily in providing emergency services in humanitarian work in the Maldives, but they are owned and operated by the Indian Navy.



In recent weeks the Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu has been promoting his "India out" stance which would break ties with India and return the three aircraft and their operating crews. It is said he intends to draw a line under the matter by next month.

The presidential plan is that a fixed wing air ambulance to carry patients will hopefully start flying on March 1, but this excludes the Indian helicopter. No details of the replacement service have been released but it appears to rely upon the conversion of one of the Bombardier Dash-8 aircraft already in the country. The President has stated that the replacement of the handful of existing Bombardier Dash 8 aircraft operated



by the National Airline Maldivian has now begun. Maldivian is currently changing the entire turboprop fleet from Dash8s to ATRs. Maldivian has nine Dash8s which were meant to be sold at the end of the ATR transition period.

Both ALH helicopters were provided to an earlier regime more aligned with India than the current government in the Maldives. The "India out" stance seeks to make the country "free of foreign interference". India has over 75 military personnel in the Maldives and removing them is part of the movement. [India TV]

## UNITED KINGDOM

**MIGRANT TRAFFIC:** No channel crossings were recorded for nearly a month from December 16 – the longest gap in five years according to official figures. The first recorded arrivals, over 50 persons, were reported on January 12, 2024. The politicians claimed it was their policies that stopped the crossings but it was clearly weather related.

Within days more drownings were being reported. The figures from France are a bit confusing with, according to the BBC, around 70 migrants trying to get into one small boat, from which 32 rescued and 5 lost their lives! The ultimate fate of the other passengers was not stated but the vesse was close to the coast of France so perhaps they returned there.

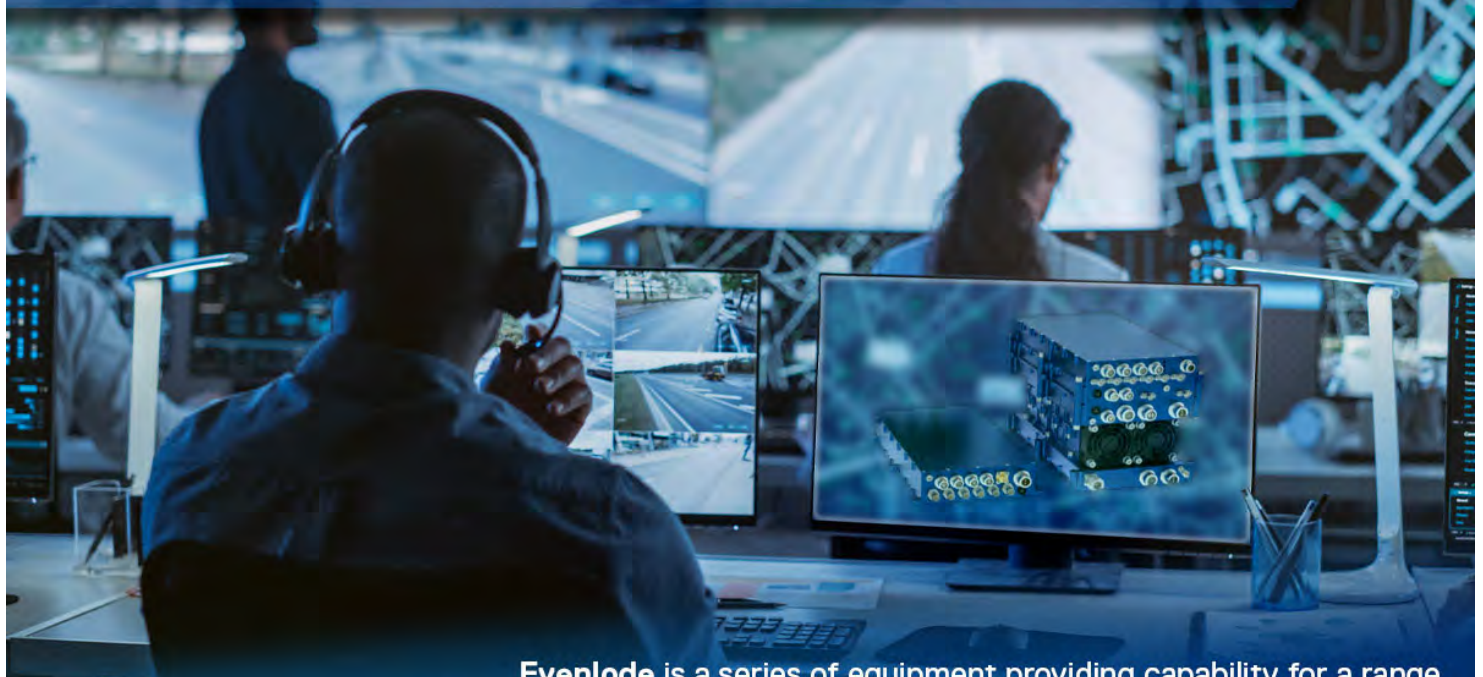
Regardless of that, with a few breaks caused by inclement weather the one-way traffic continues.

*Editor: Despite the irrefutable evidence media reports still spoke of poor weather conditions that 'may have' had an effect on the rate of arrivals.*

*Despite the weight of evidence, the British continued to fly expensive and lengthy patrols across the English Channel to ensure no would be migrants slipped in undetected. Unfortunately, once they were in the UK it appears that the Home Office neglected to ensure the arrivals were securely housed, and a significant number simply disappeared into the black economy.*



## FROM RECCE TO RESPONSE, A SEAMLESS SYMPHONY



**Evenlode** is a series of equipment providing capability for a range of **information exchange** requirements. The new video and data encoder enables police forces to react to evolving scenarios in real time thanks to the low latency of **<120ms**; equipment can be deployed for air and ground which provides innovative video solutions for **police applications**



# INDUSTRY

Early in January Helihub revealed that negotiations were underway between **Specialist Air Services** (aka Police Aviation Services and Medical Aviation Services) at Staverton, Gloucestershire and **Gama Aviation** for the latter to take them over. The move, subsequently confirmed by other sources, would see the current management under CEO Luke Farajallah leave. [Helihub]

The deployment of the TrakkaBeam TLX on the Carabinieri AW169M helicopters was showcased at the recent European Rotors 2023 event, further solidifying **Trakka Systems'** position as a leader in mission-critical vision technology solutions for the law enforcement community (see PAN Special Report on the show).

Trakka announced the successful deployment of its TrakkaBeam TLX searchlight on the AW169M helicopters used by the Carabinieri. The Carabinieri have received 5 AW169M's and the option for 11 additional helicopters in the same configuration.

The new TrakkaBeam® searchlights provide the Carabinieri with unparalleled performance and versatility for their nighttime operations, including search and rescue, surveillance, and crime prevention. The advanced searchlight features exceptional illumination, delivering 22,000 lumens of white light, able to illuminate large areas with exceptional clarity. The compact and lightweight design seamlessly integrates with various helicopter platforms, minimizing drag and maximizing efficiency making the systems ideal for multi-mission performance.

China's independently developed AC313A large civil helicopter has embarked on its cold-weather flight tests, according to the **Aviation Industry Corporation of China (AVIC)**.

The AC313A, a model that greatly resembles the Sikorsky S-92, conducted multiple tests during its first cold-weather flight test mission at an airport in Mohe, China's northernmost city. The areas of interest included airspeed, rotor speed, environmental control system, hovering performance, level flight and climb performance and engine starting test.

The AVIC-developed AC313A is a 13-tonne-class large multi-purpose civil helicopter with a single main rotor and tail rotor. It can carry up to 28 people on board and load up to 5 tonnes of water for firefighting missions. It took to the skies for its maiden flight on May 17, 2022. [Xinhua]



The Central Operations Division of Australia's **Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS)** recently operated one of its Pilatus PC-24 aircraft on a remote section of the A87 Stuart Highway, South Australia, in a demonstration of how the type was suitable for attending incidents in areas of low population without resort to using fully equipped airports.

The flight onto the Traeger Road Strip was preceded by a police Pilatus PC-12. This was the first time a PC-24 landed on an Australian Outback highway, according to Pilatus Aircraft.

In a (available on You Tube) the landing and take-off are preceded by the road being closed to traffic, an aiming point is painted across the highway to help guide the pilot's touchdown point. The smooth landing was undertaken in a 12-knot crosswind and temperature greater than 100 degrees F.

The area where the simulation took place is north of Glendambo in South Australia, and the highway extends 1,740 miles (2,800 km), serving an area with a population of more than 2.1 million but with only five hospitals. In comparison, Switzerland is 56 times smaller and has approximately 276 hospitals. [Pilatus/AIN].



After submitting the documentation in October last year, **Airwolf Aerospace** of Middlefield, Ohio, USA, has received Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) supplemental type certificate (STC) approval for the installation of True-Blue Power TB17 lithium-ion batteries for five makes and ten models of helicopters. The kits are now approved and in stock for: Airbus H125/AS350, AS355, H120, H130/EC130, Bell 206A/B, 206L/L1/L3/L4, Enstrom 480B, Hiller UH-12E and the MD 369/500.

The STC allows optional installation of the battery in H125 helicopters in the baggage compartment, the large door tail cone, and the small door aft tail cone positions.

They come complete with battery, mounting hardware and Airwolf annunciator and are easy to install with no major modifications to the aircraft required.

Significant advantages including Lower weight, up to 63% lighter, faster, cooler engine starts, Higher voltage for starts and a longer service life – an average of eight years. Operators can look to reduced maintenance with a two-year maintenance cycle. [Airwolf/FAA STC SR04637CH]

A Beechcraft King Air 360 completion equipped with the very Aerodata Maritime Patrol package and ready to go into operations.

All major modifications were carried out by **Aerodata** in Braunschweig - an EASA Part 21 Organisation for Design and Production and EASA Part 145 Maintenance Organisation. [Aerodata AG]



Ready for service © Aerodata

Launched in 2006 as an executive air charter business, in 2015 **DEA Aviation** based at Gamston Airport outside Retford, in Nottinghamshire rebranded to the surveillance business it is now when a new management team joined. The company is best known for using Diamond DA-42 and DA-62 aircraft undertaking surveillance across Europe – the work includes sorties for FRONTEX.

John Sullivan of DEA announced that the company had secured an unspecified new contract delivering new capabilities using their Beech King Air. The bidding task was undertaken in a compressed timeline of 60 days across the December holiday period.

Achieving this has been another whole team effort - from Engineering, Accounts, and Compliance to our Mission Systems technicians, Operations staff and, only then, to our Analysts and Aircrew to deliver cutting-edge operational capability to a new Customer in a new location. [John Sullivan DEA]

From the second quarter of 2024, Pilatus will gradually take over **RUAG Aerostructures Schweiz AG's** entire workforce of around 230 employees, as well as all its machinery. The takeover stands in line with

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the Swiss government's strategic goals for RUAG International. In the future, Pilatus will manufacture its own components at the Emmen site.

RUAG Aerostructures Schweiz AG has produced parts and components for Pilatus Aircraft Ltd since the early 90s, including fuselages for the PC-21 and horizontal stabilizers for the PC-12. The acquisition of both employees and machinery will allow Pilatus to increase its own production capacity and add new competencies.

The takeover will allow Pilatus to strengthen Central Switzerland as a business location, safeguard jobs and create new perspectives."

Pilatus will rent a spacious facility from RUAG Real Estate AG at the new site at Emmen airfield. Future operations will be directed exclusively to making parts and components required for aircraft production in Stans. For a limited period, Pilatus will continue to take orders from external customers previously served by RUAG Aerostructures Schweiz.

A separate agreement between RUAG Real Estate AG and Pilatus also sets out options for the acquisition of an adjacent plot of land which would offer Pilatus additional prospects for development. Against this background, the partnership with RUAG is to be reinforced and further jobs will be created in the medium to long term.

The number of Subaru Bell 412EPX helicopters in Japan is set to increase after both Nara Prefecture and Miyazaki Prefecture signed purchase agreements for two of the 412EPX helicopters with **Subaru Corporation**.

The two prefectures currently utilize the BELL 412EP. The transition to the SUBARU BELL 412EPX was a beneficial next step, considering the commonalities they share. With its extended hover ceiling, increased load capacity, robust main rotor gearbox and dry run capability, the SUBARU BELL 412EPX delivers better operational performance and efficiency while maintaining its long-standing reputation of reliability for utility operations.

Scheduled for delivery in 2025, the aircraft will be configured for firefighting, rescue, emergency, and medical operations.

By 2026, Japan's Subaru Bell 412EPX fleet in the commercial space will expand to nine aircraft. These purchase agreements are a testament of Subaru Corporation and Bell's commitment to ensuring every helicopter flight and every piece of MRO work in the Japanese archipelago is effective and reliable.

*Editor: On the subject of the roll out of the Bell 412 into the market, Jon Goldin in the USA commented that there is something of a catch-up mentality taking place in US law enforcement. He says that the east coast heard that the west coast was trying to play catch up with 412s and decided to stay in the lead. The South Carolina Law Enforcement Division just got a 412 with a camera, light and hoist. Coming in right behind them is the Georgia State Patrol with the purchase of the former Delaware State Police 412. So that brings the east coast total to five agencies, with seven 412's. The west coast lags behind with three agencies for what will be a total of four agencies with four 412s. He also notes that there is still no Bell 429's in service on the west coast.*

The latest chapter in another 'Never ending story' relating to the **Emergency Services Network** was played out in Parliament in January

In answer to a question by Alan Brown of the Scottish National Party – what the original completion date for ESN was and what is the planned timetable is for the completion of that project; and what is the (a) original and (b) current cost estimate for that project.

Chris Philp the Minister of State, Home Department provided a written answer. He stated that the 1921 revision of the Business Case set out the expectation that the transition to ESN would start in 2024 with Airwave shut down by the end of 2026. Nine years late.

In 2021 the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) launched an investigation into Motorola's profits on Airwave and as a result Motorola left the Programme in December 2022. Motorola's withdrawal from the Programme means that even the revised timeline cannot now be achieved. The CMA's final report in 2023 ruled that Motorola had enjoyed 'supernormal' profits and recommended Charge Controls on the Airwave service. This ruling was upheld by a tribunal in December 2023.

The Home Office is in the process of procuring a new supplier for mobile radio and data services and intends to release a revised Business Case in 2024, which will set out a new timetable and costs. A new



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timescale cannot be confirmed until the procurement is complete. ESN must be ready prior to Airwave shut down and time has been set aside to allow a safe and orderly transition of users.

The 2021 Full Business Case estimated the cost of the programme to deliver ESN at £1.6bn, compared with the original estimate of £1.2bn. When combined with the Airwave and Legacy contracts, and the ongoing costs of the replacement ESN service, the total cost of providing critical emergency services communications between 2015/16 and 2036/37 in the July 2021 Business Case was estimated at £11.3bn. This assumed Airwave and legacy system costs of approximately £450m annually compared with ESN at around £250M per annum. The Charge Control imposed by the CMA will save the taxpayer in the region of £200M a year from 2023.

In the same vein, Members of Parliament were involved in a debate on the many gaps in the 'public' cell phone network in rural areas in Westminster Hall on January 24. They were talking about the 4G signal with a backdrop of the 3G signal now being progressively switched off.

During that long winded discussion, it was stated that there is an aim to increase 4G coverage in rural areas from 91% now to 95% of the UK landmass by 2025, and to ensure that there is coverage by all providers of 84% of the area by the same date. The Government are investing £0.5 billion in new masts in total 'notspot' areas, which is very welcome, and the industry is spending about the same on ensuring that rural areas now covered only by one provider—partial notspots—get a signal from all providers by that date. Emergency calls are reliant upon there being at least one provider (there are four in all) having a signal in any given spot. Clearly, we are already 'accepting' nearly 15% of areas with no emergency signal at all. Even when the target is reached in 2025 there will be a 10% chance of no 4G signal being available to any callers. The non-data service may well provide an acceptable emergency telephone signal.

In 2023, **Airbus Helicopters** logged 410 gross orders (net:393), highlighting a steady market recovery with a strong performance this year for the light twin and medium twin helicopters. Orders came from 179 customers in 47 countries. The Company delivered 346 helicopters in 2023, resulting in a preliminary 54% share of the civil and parapublic market.

Despite its legacy status, the H145, in particular, has experienced a record year with 186 orders for the type in 2023. The H145M military variant attracted the attention of German Bundeswehr, which ordered for 82 of the light attack helicopters. Across the range the type has logged more than seven million flight hours.

Another legacy type in the Airbus Helicopters range of models, the H125 also performed well with 108 orders in 2023, followed by the H130 with 39 orders. One of the only true modern airframes, the H135 came in with 29 orders. The H135 maintains a strong position in the emergency medical services (EMS), private and business aviation, and oil-and-gas markets.

The Airbus Helicopters performance increase is around 10% compared to 2022 and highlights its stable growth despite the ongoing global instability. Airbus' 2023 full year financial results will be disclosed on 15 February 2024.



In a major boost to 'Make in India', Airbus Helicopters has announced that it is partnering with the **Tata Group** to establish a Final Assembly Line (FAL) for helicopters in the country. The FAL will produce Airbus' best-selling single engine H125 helicopter from its civil range for India and export to some of the neighbouring countries.

The FAL will be the first instance of the private sector setting up a helicopter manufacturing facility in India, providing a major boost to the Government of India's 'AatmaNirbhar Bharat' (self-reliant India) programme. Under this partnership, Tata Advanced Systems Limited (TASL), a subsidiary of Tata Group, will set up the facility along with Airbus Helicopters.

The announcement was made during the two-day visit of French President Emmanuel Macron to India as Chief Guest at the Republic Day celebrations on January 26.

The FAL in India will undertake the integration of the major component assemblies, avionics and mission systems, installation of electrical harnesses, hydraulic circuits, flight controls, dynamic components, fuel



## May 28 & 29 2024

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2700 Wiener Neustadt, Austria

The Networking Continues

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system and the engine. It will also do testing, qualification, and delivery of the H125 to customers in India and the region. The FAL will take 24 months to set up and deliveries of the first 'Made in India' H125s are expected to commence in 2026. The location of the FAL will be jointly decided by Airbus and the Tata Group.

*Editor: What goes around comes around and it seems that just such an outcome is in the making in India. Not so many years ago the Indian Government rejected the AS350H125 as its long overdue answer to replacing the many helicopters based on the Sud Alouette II and III that still keep the military in the air. The type chosen instead was a Russian Kaman, at this moment in time Russia is not a too popular nation so getting the Kaman fleet into production, let alone service is, shall we say, "difficult" in the extreme. It may be that the Kaman project will get going in the future, but meanwhile Airbus seems well placed to meet both the airframe requirement and the production schedule with this deal should the Indian Government tire of waiting for the Russian product.*

## ACCIDENTS AND INCIDENTS

**20 December 2023 Airbus Helicopters H145 G-YORX.** Made an emergency landing on the main runway at Teesside Airport following loss of one of its engines. No damage caused, was roaded out to its base at Alanbrooke Barracks (the former RAF Topcliffe) and returned to service 4 January 2024. [David Thompson]



**8 January 2024 Leonardo A119Kx Koala PR-FKC** Policia Rodovaria Federal (PRF), Brazil undertaking an air ambulance mission. Helicopter operating at low level over built up area at Belo Horizonte, eastern Brazil had just taken off to transport a person injured in a traffic accident to a hospital. It loses control and suffers a heavy landing on a roadway at the Avenida Tereza Cristina in Belo Horizonte. Suffering a tail rotor strike and collapsed skids. It remained upright but suffered substantial damage. Two videos of the incident show the helicopter at low level skimming over housing and making a reverse turn over the roadway to put down. The second (a dashcam) show the last seconds of the impact with the road. [ASN/media]

**11 January 2024 Airbus Helicopters AS350B2 N204TX.** Texas Department of Public Safety. The helicopter was damaged when it made an emergency landing. The crew of two reported slight injuries. The helicopter was conducting a border interdiction patrol flight in support of Operation Lone Star at night under VFR conditions. The pilot and copilot were using night vision goggles. The helicopter reached North FM 1908, just west of FM 131 in Kinney County, the crew experienced a total loss of power. The 2003 build helicopter entered into an auto-rotative descent and landed heavily but upright. The skids collapsed and the MRB was damaged. [Media]

**15 January 2024 Thrush S-2RT EC-NPL** Water bomber/firefighting. Was making a low-level water drop parallel to Route 5 roadway and runway of Panguilemo Airport, Chile when it struck a utility pole and crashed onto the road, striking a car, and burst into flames. Th pilot died and several other persons were injured on the ground. [ASN/24horas]

**20 January 2024 Bell 206L-3 N295AE.** Air ambulance of Air Evac Lifeteam based at Weatherford, Oklahoma, USA, after transporting a patient to the Mercy Hospital Campus, Oklahoma City. Crashed near Hydro, Oklahoma, just outside Weatherford and about 63 miles from Oklahoma City. The three-crew on-board, pilot, a flight nurse and a flight paramedic, were killed and the airframe was a total loss.

**20 January 2024 Eurocopter EC135 N911XH** Air ambulance of Air Med Services Lafayette, Louisiana, USA. Helicopter was returning to their Shreveport base after departing New Orleans. While flying at 1100 MSL, 296 heading, just south of Baton Rouge Metropolitan Airport (KBTR), both the pilot and crew member in the SIC seat noted a large drone flying approximately 100-200 ft. above them. The PIC reported the incident to ATC and Metro Operational Control Center. Air Med Comm Center reported the incident to the Baton Rouge Police Department and a case was filed. CISM procedures were activated.

## SAFETY

On January 25 EASA issued an Emergency Airworthiness Directive applicable to the plentiful fleet of EC135/635 aircraft. The specific types identified are the Airbus Helicopters Deutschland GmbH (AHD), formerly Eurocopter Deutschland GmbH; Eurocopter España S.A. Applicability: EC135 P1, EC135 P2,



EC135 P2+, EC135 P3, EC135 T1, EC135 T2, EC135 T2+, EC135 T3, EC635 P2+, EC635 P3, EC635 T1, EC635 T2+ and EC635 T3 helicopters, effectively all variants, all serial numbers (s/n) of the type. The affected part is the tail rotor blade assembly (the Fenestron), having Part Number (P/N) L642A2002111 or P/N L642A2002112.

Cracking has been reported on some blades, this was detected after increased vibration of the tail rotor was reported on a helicopter. Subsequent inspection identified a ruptured tail rotor blade assembly. Further investigation determined that the affected parts can be subject to intergranular corrosion, possibly leading to cracks. This condition, if not detected and corrected could lead to rupture of tail rotor blade assemblies, possibly resulting in reduced control of the helicopter. To address this potential unsafe condition, AH issued the ASB to provide instructions for repetitive inspection of affected parts, which can be accomplished by different inspection methods. The AD requires repetitive inspection of the affected parts and, depending on findings, replacement. This AD also provides additional requirements for installation of affected parts. This AD is considered to be an interim action and further AD action may follow.

Although they are now returning to service after inspections, Alaska Airlines grounded all of its Boeing MAX9 jets after a window and a chunk of the fuselage blew out of the plane shortly after take-off, causing the aircraft to make an emergency landing in Portland, Oregon, on January 5, 2024. Photos from the plane that was able to land safely confirmed that there was a large hole in the plane's side. Oxygen masks were deployed indicating that the passenger cabin had been depressurised. Minor injuries were reported among the 174 passengers and six crew members following the emergency landing of Flight 1282 that took off from Portland International Airport. After about six minutes of flight, while climbing through 16,000 feet altitude at close to 450 mph, the Boeing 737 MAX left aft door plug reportedly failed under cabin pressurisation and flew out into the atmosphere, instantly depressurising the aircraft and subjecting all passengers to extreme cold and low oxygen levels. After 14 minutes the airliner landed back at Portland where NTSB and FAA safety investigators are once again investigating a major 737 MAX safety problem.



*Someone with a little artistic time on their hands produced this fine example of an Alaska Airlines Boeing airliner repair – using Gaffa/Duct Tape. [X]*

The Alaska MAX9 aircraft were already stopped flying long overwater legs as a precaution after there were undiagnosed warnings triggered. A post incident inspection revealed that there were instances of the door structure not being fully bolted into place. Without any real evidence being taken, EASA immediately endorsed the NTSB and FAA Airworthiness Directive relating to the aircraft.

The incident again highlighted aviation community worries about allowing the Boeing MAX8 to fly again too hastily in Boeing's efforts to get those planes back in the air after a two-year grounding following two fatal air crashes. Documents have tended to prove that Boeing was more interested in profits over safety, particularly when faced with the market pressures of Airbus having released a profit and market share challenging new aircraft into the market.

Meanwhile civil litigation is pending in Chicago, and a conspiracy to commit fraud case against Boeing is pending in Texas. These relate to the earlier incidents, the latest incident will only place further pressure on the certification authorities and Boeing. [Clifford Law Offices]

Early last month Japan Airlines flight JL516, an Airbus A350-941 (JA13XJ), collided with a Japan Coast Guard DHC-8-315Q MPA aircraft (JA722A) on the runway at Tokyo-Haneda Airport. Communications released by Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism indicate that JL516 had been cleared to land on runway 34R. JA722A had been instructed to hold short on taxiway C5. This instruction was read back correctly, however, the surviving member of the DHC-8, the captain, is reported to have stated he had been cleared for take-off, contrary to the ATC record. Additionally, it appears the stop bar lights for taxiway C5 (and other taxiways) was unserviceable, as per Notam published on December 25: [ASN]

Back in June last year an Airbus Helicopters AS365 N164CF air ambulance operated by Air Methods for CareFlight Air and Mobile Services as CareFlight 4, accepted an interfacility flight from Upper Valley Medical Center near Dayton, Ohio, USA to IU Health Methodist Hospital, Indianapolis, Indiana. The patient was picked up at UVMC without incident and flown to the Indianapolis Downtown Heliport. Af-



ter completing the patient transport, prior to lifting from the IU Downtown Heliport, the crew called the Communications Center at 05:02 hrs. and advised they would be dropping off medical equipment back at UVMC prior to returning to their base at the Darke County airport back in Ohio. Later the crew called the Communications Center and advised that due to weather coming in, they will be departing and flying directly to the Darke County base without stopping at UVMC for the equipment drop off.

The aircraft lifted from the Indianapolis Downtown Heliport for the return flight to base. Minutes later the PIC declared an Inadvertent Instrument Meteorological Condition Emergency (IIMC) At this point the pilot contacted ATC and began an instrument approach to the Dayton International Airport. At 06:02 hrs., the PIC advised a return of VFR conditions was able land safely at Miami Valley Hospital, Dayton. [Concern]

## UNMANNED

Last month the UK based **Emergency Services Times** ran a four-page item on Stuart Lawless is the UK National Police Chiefs' Council operational lead for drones,

Stuart Lawless is the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) operational lead for drones. He talks about why the push for consistency across all forces will improve efficiency and safety when it comes to using drones in law enforcement, leaving plenty of space to drive innovation from users and suppliers alike. Early in 2023, NPCC published an update on its national review of drone capability to understand how UK policing could enhance drone capability for operational use. One of the biggest issues that came out of the review was to be able to use drones beyond visual line of sight. Ten percent of the 900 police drone pilots in the UK are involved in the programme; most forces have at least one drone pilot involved.

BVLOS can mean simply going beyond a building line in a built-up area, a matter of metres but it can be much further in more rural areas. There are worries about drone failure in flight and the resultant unchecked falling out of control on to the ground.

Nearer to home is how each police operator handles its craft. Flying the craft creates data on the flight and outcomes and currently each police force has its own way of recording data from drones. There are 48 forces, and each has a different data recording standards. An ongoing task is creating a common standard which will ease the assessment of overall performance.

Selecting a common air vehicle is another project. Just as they did in another lifetime for manned aircraft – that was around 30 years ago - the NPCC is in the early stages of setting up a catalogue of suitable craft. That project should see the light of day by the end of March 2025.

Coming this Spring is the long promised first responder project based in Norfolk. Signs are that there is a lot of work to be done to realise an operational air vehicle. There is no sign that anything suitable has yet been identified but Norwich is a perfect environment for this pilot in that it has an airport that is located north of the city and runs east to west. As a result of that the city is all in controlled airspace which makes management of the trial a lot easier.

*Editor: Lots more detail on this in the original article in Emergency Services Times, check out [Emergency Services Times article](#)*

## PEOPLE

In a pioneering initiative to inspire the next generation of aviation professionals, the UK Government Aviation Minister Anthony Browne last month announced the appointment of ten new Aviation Ambassadors, a group of people selected to inspire and guide the next generation of aviators. As the sector continues to grow following the pandemic, having a young and diverse workforce that can embrace and adapt to new challenges – whether that be new technologies, cleaner travel or emerging trends – will ensure the UK is



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at the cutting edge of the aviation industry.

Over the next two years the ambassadors will serve as mentors and advocates, attending schools, mentoring events and workshops to showcase their experience and encourage young people to use their skills in aviation. As well as delivering their own bespoke outreach activities to underrepresented groups, the ambassadors will also offer advice on where pathways into aviation can be created or improved – making it easier for young people to join the sector.

The Aviation Ambassadors Group works with the Department for Transport to help deliver a skilled, diverse and sustainable aviation workforce fit to seize the opportunities of the future.

Among the group of thirteen Ambassadors is Keith Bennett, a police sergeant involved in aviation. Keith is a serving police sergeant with 28 years of experience in front-line policing. He is the drone and counter-drone capability lead for West Midlands Police and as the Flight Safety Manager he oversees development, guidance and support for 50 emergency service pilots. As well as this, Keith has worked collaboratively with the National Police Chiefs' Council to develop UAV solutions and training, and more recently has worked alongside the Home Office.

Keith has developed the West Midlands Police drone youth engagement programme and is keen to share his passion for aviation and drones with a wide audience.

Keith Bennett has moved from West Midlands Police where he led its drone unit, to the College of Policing to oversee the development of Approved Policing Practice for drones.



Handling the only commercial twin engine drone © Tekever

## MOVE ALONG THERE

I do not often read the *Yorkshire Post*, very much a home county regional paper not readily available as a hard copy in London but one day this past month let me into some news I would likely have missed normally. For instance, there was the story that the Mayor of West Yorkshire Tracey Brabin is looking to take the local bus services under her control in the near future. I do hope she has better success with that venture than she had with operating the police fixed wing. [YP]

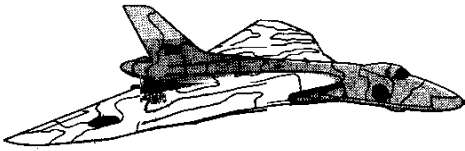


Meanwhile it seems that the groups trying to resurrect the Doncaster Sheffield Airport [DSA]/Robin Hood are finding time to squabble among themselves. The leader of an online group campaigning to bring DSA back into operations by holding discussions and promoting the various moves by politicians to a common end. The group discourages political debate on-line but took part in the recent meeting of the South Yorkshire Infrastructure Enquiry which is set to reduce the negative effect the closure is having on local employment and investment. The fact that one person independently controls the content of the Facebook group and that politicians choose to recommend that group clearly irks some who would probably never lift a finger a to help the cause. [YP]

[www.policeaviationnews.com](http://www.policeaviationnews.com)  
Emergency Services First







Right: Peter Kennan, a passenger on a KLM flight over Yorkshire happened to be in the right seat at the right time last month and managed to get this image of DSA as he overflew it. Clearly evident are the 'X' markings denoting the closed runways at the former Vulcan bomber base. The question remains, will they be permanent? [X]



In the United Kingdom there is a furore growing of a large number of wrongful convictions of individuals operating post offices across the nation. Hundreds of people were wrongly convicted of false accounting and many imprisoned, others were made to “pay back” large sums of money to avoid prosecution. Eventually it became clear that all the false accounting was an error in the computer system rolled out by Post Office chiefs and as a result there is a move to undo the convictions and to exonerate and compensate those wronged. At the core of this is the erroneous belief that computers are infallible. It is all being handled painfully slowly, and people are dying of old age for want of some real action. Where politicians get involved, everything gets mired in red tape. No doubt it will be resolved in the end, but it just goes on and on.

Another aspect of this whole affair relates to the tech company at the root cause of the problem. The designers of the errant computer system adopted by the Post Office were Japanese company Fujitsu. The system was designed by ICL, but they were taken over by Fujitsu from 1990. So far, they have been trying their best to stay out of the limelight and no doubt somewhat in trepidation of the final outcome of this unhappy story; being obliged to find and pay compensation is likely to be the least of their problems. Japanese culture does not smile too kindly on failure and other companies and their CEOs have been obliterated over lesser instances of being found wanting.

Horizon, the software that led to the furore remains in service – albeit now no longer trusted so emphatically. It is the same system that still regularly shuts post offices around the country and forces the staff to put signs on the door to apologise for “system failure.”

Another detail that might come around to haunt UK policing is that Fujitsu also designed and support the aged 30-years old UK Police National Computer (PNC). Last year Fujitsu was awarded a renewed contract for support and maintenance of the PNC after no other companies tendered for the work. The contract awarded to **Fujitsu Services** in London is worth £48M (\$56.6M), it covers a four-year period until the end of March in 2026.

A few months ago, there were questions being asked in Parliament over how Fujitsu got the contract, now it seems the reason is clear, no-one else wished to take on a computer with a clear ‘history’ of liabilities.

[Hansard/YP/PAR]

*What else could go wrong? As with other difficult technical subjects like aviation and Command & Control there is an all too familiar apparent failure of senior police figures to challenge developers of systems like Fujitsu Services. Computers have helped crime fighting but, as we have seen, they are massively labour intensive to set up and when they fail, they can kill people..*



Meanwhile on X (formerly known as Twitter) NPAS (formerly known to be a real neighbourhood asset) have been marketing themselves....

“As part of Neighbourhood Policing Week we ask, how can air support help with neighbourhood policing? Our crews include highly experienced police officers, seconded from local forces. They’ve policed your neighbourhood for years and know the communities like the back of their hand”.

The trouble is most of them are operating so far from their home base that they often have to rely upon their now not so trusted computers and, more positively, their intuition!



## Supporting your neighbourhood policing



NATIONAL POLICE  
AIR SERVICE

## HELI-EXPO

The end of this month sees the doors opening to the 2024 Heli-Expo in Anaheim. Time is running out to register for this, the world’s largest annual helicopter trade show. HAI HELI-EXPO 2024 is set to run from February 26-29 at the Anaheim Convention Center in Anaheim, CA.

New for this year is a two-day Tactical Flight Officer course as a conference course. The training instructor is Lieutenant Clay Lacey, a fixed wing and rotary pilot with the Texas Department of Public Safety and a past instructor at the PAVCon event in Europe. Stationed in Dallas-Fort Worth Clay built up the DPS TFO training from the ground up and currently serves as an instructor with the unit. He also teaches around the world on behalf of the Airborne Public Services Association and individual law enforcement units.

Contrasting the free instruction offered at the European event this is a pay for event. Current prices are \$700 for a member and \$1,020 for a non-member. There were significant discounts on offer, but they expired on January 12.

Over the two days delegates will look at TFO Selection and Training, Helicopter patrol tactics, Crew Resource Management, tactics and perimeter containment, vehicle pursuit management, personal protective and safety equipment, EO/IR imagery theory and tactics and more.



The show is all about the best in helicopter hardware and accessories and will see a rejuvenated Enstrom returning to the halls. Representatives of the type are excited to join more than 14,000 industry professionals for a week full of networking opportunities and educational courses.

You’ll find Enstrom in at Booth 6102 near the entrance across from the HAI gift store. Two Enstrom helicopters will be on display. President Todd Tetzlaff and owner Chuck Surack will be in attendance to touch base with current Enstrom owners and share the Enstrom story with other rotorcraft enthusiasts.

Along with the event comes the announcement of a tranche of awards.

HAI announced that Fairfax County (Virginia) Police Helicopter Division **Chief Pilot Andrew Edgerton** is the recipient of the 2024 Salute to Excellence Law Enforcement Award. This award, sponsored by MD Helicopters, recognises an individual or organisation that has contributed to the promotion and advancement of rotorcraft in support of law enforcement activities.

Edgerton fell in love with aviation at an early age, spending hours flying airplanes with his dad. Originally, he hoped to be a naval aviator, until he learned during his high school years that he had less than perfect eyesight. He continued to fly nonetheless, earning his single-engine land and sea airplane ratings in his early 20s before switching to helicopters. Working at a desk job in the telecom industry, Edgerton built his helicopter ratings to include commercial, instrument, flight instructor, and instrument instructor ratings. He began teaching flight instruction in helicopters in 2006, teaching on weekends and evenings until he landed a full-time news helicopter job.

In 2010, Edgerton joined Virginia's Fairfax County Police Helicopter Division as a civilian line pilot flying the agency's Bell 407. He was a part of the unit in 2011 when it became the first law enforcement agency and air ambulance service in the United States to use Bell 429s. When the division's chief pilot position opened in 2021, he stepped up.

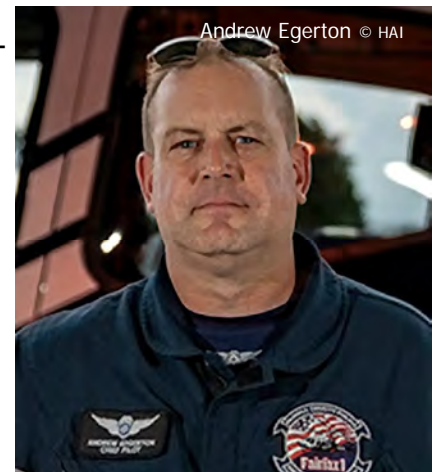
When he took the position, the helicopter division was temporarily based at Manassas Regional Airport (KHEF) in Virginia, where it had been since July 2020 while its heliport in Fairfax was being rebuilt. He was responsible not only for running the helicopter division from a temporary facility, but also for overseeing the complex process of designing and constructing a new heliport—and then facilitating the unit's successful relocation to the structure in 2023.

**Michael Sagely**, senior pilot with the Air Operations unit of the Los Angeles County (California) Fire Department (LACFD), is the recipient of the 2024 Salute to Excellence Pilot of the Year Award. The award recognises an outstanding single feat performed by a helicopter pilot or UAS aircraft pilot during the past three years or for extraordinary professionalism over time.

Sagely, who in 1984 learned to fly helicopters in the US Army, has expressed extraordinary professionalism, leadership, and skill throughout his career. His story differs from that of most other army aviators. Sagely joined the service in his mid-20s after having been an athlete in men's volleyball at San Diego State University.

After enlisting in the army, he was accepted into flight school flying the UH-60 Black Hawk. During his 22 years in the army, Sagely served in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm and received seven Air Medals and a Bronze Star for his actions in multiple combat operations. Upon retirement from the army, Sagely worked as a contract fire pilot for the Angeles National Forest Rappel/Helitack crew before being hired by the Santa Barbara County (California) Fire Department. He became the first pilot in the unit's history to conduct night-vision goggles (NVG) snorkel operations. Sagely joined the LACFD in 2009 as a pilot. His leadership skills and pilot talents led to his promotion to senior pilot in less than two years. He has since earned two valor awards from the department and three separate rescue awards from Sikorsky for heroism for his part in multiple rescues and other lifesaving missions. Sagely says it isn't the awards and heroic missions that define his experience, his particular passion has been making LACFD Air Operations better.

Captains **Steve Buhagiar** and **David Sidorski** are to be recipients of the Salute to Excellence Matthew S. Zuccaro Land & LIVE Award. This award, presented by HAI in honour of the former HAI President Zuccaro, recognises outstanding aeronautical decision-making, crew resource management, and/or coordinated actions performed by a helicopter pilot(s), flight crew member(s), and/or maintenance personnel during the year. On the afternoon of September 24, 2022, Buhagiar and Sidorski were flying four passengers in a Bristow Group Leonardo AW139 to Houma, Louisiana, from an offshore oil platform. When the flight was about seven minutes from the airport, the crew heard a loud "whoof" sound and saw thick smoke coming from the overhead circuit-breaker panel. Smoke immediately filled the cockpit as the low-rotor rpm warning alarm sounded, both engines began racing, and the aircraft started a rapid climb. Buhagiar, the pilot-in-command for the flight, fully lowered the collective as he fought to bring rpm back and maintain aircraft control. Meanwhile, Sidorski snapped the left-side door window in two and, to protect the



Andrew Edgerton © HAI



Michael Sagely © HAI





Steve Buhagiar and David Sidorski © HAI

tail rotor, pulled half of it in and behind the seat to clear smoke from the cabin. Buhagiar then lowered the landing gear as a precaution. The engines were at 140% torque as rotor rpm slowly returned to 100%. Even with collective full down and nose level, the aircraft was in a 1,700 ft.-per-minute climb. “We’d climbed from 3,500 to almost 7,000 ft. in the span of a few minutes,” Buhagiar recalls. “I remember thinking at that point we were going to climb to 20,000 ft., flame out, and be a lawn dart into the marsh. I didn’t know how much more the aircraft could take. We needed to reduce power. I asked David to bring engine one down to idle to see if that helped.” Sidorski brought engine one to idle and the rpm immediately deteriorated to 80%. He rapidly brought it back and rpm slowly returned. During that manoeuvre, however, the aircraft had descended 1,000 ft. With no other option seemingly apparent, Buhagiar nosed the aircraft forward in an attempt to lose altitude. The aircraft sped up to more than 186 kt., well above the aircraft’s maximum speed, as Buhagiar flew in a large, gradual spiral to descend. Once lined up for the runway, the crew decided to bring engine two to idle in an attempt at an autorotation. The rotor rpm immediately plummeted to 67% before returning with full engine power. Now knowing the aircraft could still fly at 67% rpm, Buhagiar and Sidorski elected to exchange rpm for altitude by throttling back the engines and immediately powering back up repeatedly to descend. The two pilots continued the manoeuvre, exchanging rpm for airspeed in the end to lose the last several feet. The helicopter touched down at what Buhagiar believes was about 60 kt. Both main landing gear collapsed while the aircraft skidded 800 ft. down the runway before sliding 15 ft. into the grass and stopping. Buhagiar’s and Sidorski’s actions were instrumental in preventing a potential tragedy. The NTSB determined the incident was caused by incorrectly routed wiring that chaffed, caught fire, and caused the upper carbon-fibre collective torque tube to melt and rotate, leaving the rotor blades in a full pitch position even when the collective was down.

The Neonatal/Pediatric Transport Team at **Children’s Health in Dallas** is the recipient of the 2024 Salute to Excellence Golden Hour Award. The award recognises the efforts of an individual, group, or organisation that, through a particular activity or contributions over time, has advanced the use of helicopters or UAS aircraft in air medical transportation.

On a hot summer night in July 2022, a baby was born prematurely with multiple complications at a community hospital in North Texas. With no neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) at the hospital, doctors decided to transport the baby to Dallas. After receiving the call, the Children’s Health Neonatal/Pediatric Transport Team launched the Sikorsky S-76C++ from Dallas Love Field. During the 30-minute flight, registered nurse Alex Cross, respiratory therapist Korey Roberts, and paramedic Hali Henry pre-cooled the equipment while the community hospital team began stabilising the baby and preparing the infant for transport. The effort of both teams allowed the transport crew to begin the cooling process by 3 am, well within the golden six hours.

Children’s Health and the transport team’s readiness and rapid delivery of cooling therapy was instrumental in helping the infant.



S76C++ © RotorMedia

**Rainbow Helicopters** is the recipient of the 2024 Salute to Excellence Humanitarian Service Award. The award, sponsored by Sikorsky, honours the person or persons who best demonstrate the value of rotorcraft to the communities in which they operate by providing aid to those in need.

Employees of Oahu, Hawaii-based Rainbow Helicopters woke to the devastating news that a fire had destroyed the town of Lahaina, Maui. They had an immediate and overwhelming desire to do something, anything, to help their greater Maui ohana—their Hawaiian family. Throughout the day, the Rainbow Helicopters team reached out through its wide-ranging network to learn what was needed. They soon received a clear message: people had left their homes with nothing, and mothers and babies in particular needed immediate assistance. They bought in as much formula, diapers, baby wipes, and other supplies that could fit in an Airbus AS350 helicopter, \$4,000 worth of supplies. Staff and helpers at the operator stayed on past their shifts, and others returned to volunteer their time to aid in the humanitarian effort. On August 11 the helicopter flew its first relief flight to Maui, landing at Kapalua Airport, as close to Lahaina as it could safely land.

Volunteers met the helicopter with vans to unload and transport the supplies to families in need. The helicopter then flew to Maui's international airport in Kahului, where the team loaded more supplies that couldn't get to Lahaina by ground and took them to Kapalua.

Over the next several weeks the entire team donated hundreds of hours of off time to purchase, receive, and catalogue supplies; package and weigh loads; load helicopters; and fly relief missions. In several weeks, Rainbow flew 13 missions to Maui carrying more than 5,500 lb. of supplies, including 275 containers of formula, 175 cartons of diapers, 175 boxes of baby wipes, and more than 19 gallons of breast milk. Castle & Cooke Aviation donated all the jet fuel and Rainbow covered the avgas and aircraft for all the flights, which were flown in both R44 and AS350 helicopters.

*Editor: It is rare for there to be a public disagreement but this line up of awards tends to follow a common pattern that is dictated by HAI being a US company with 'inward looking' tendencies.*

*One publisher from New Zealand begs to argue that the award winner for HAI's 2024 Humanitarian award, falls short of the criteria normally expected.*

*The publication nominated a New Zealand company and a squadron from the RNZAF for their work in the middle of Cyclone Gabrielle in New Zealand – rescuing over 800 people in two days, many of them off the roofs of houses in rising flood waters – majority of whom would not have survived if these crews did not rescue them.*

*The award though went to a US company that apparently received the award for loading a couple of helicopters with baby supplies and fly them from Honolulu airport to Maui airport after the fires.*

*How do you compare the two—especially when there are vested interests involved? Like it or not HAI is a US organisation that seeks to embrace the international (like many do) just occasionally it loses grip on the wider reality. I guess we all do that from time to time.*

*Further muddying the waters, it seems that the decisions on the awards are made by the HAI Board of Directors and the owner of the company that won the Humanitarian award is the Chairman of the Board of HAI.*

*You cannot please all the people all the time. Each has its merits and every year plenty of people miss out on the awards in each category. This apparent nepotism is not the first and it will not be the last.*

## EVENTS

Next month sees the return of the **Home Office Security & Policing** event to Farnborough, Hampshire UK.

This year the organisers [nominally the Home Office] are introducing a new zone highlighting the vital service of the fire and first response industry and supported by the National Fire Chiefs Council, NFCC National Resilience and International Search and Rescue. The Fire/First Response Zone will bring together professionals and capabilities in a dedicated area.

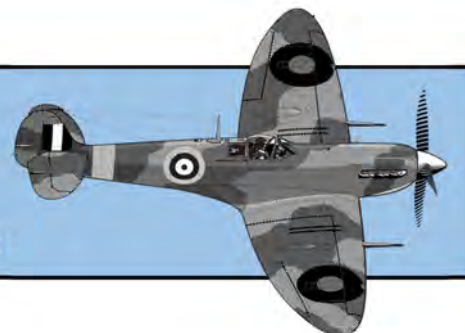
The official UK Government global security event is held at Farnborough International Exhibition and Conference Centre, is hosted by the Home Office's Joint Security & Resilience Centre (JSaRC). For a limited sector of people Security & Policing offers an opportunity to meet and discuss the latest advances in delivering national security and resilience with leading UK suppliers, UK and overseas Government officials and senior decision makers across the law enforcement and security sectors.

*Editor: The first strapline that the organisers state to promote the attendance of exhibitors or visitors is*

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*"Does your product and service cater to the UK's security and resilience sectors?" Unfortunately, that simplistic requirement is not enough by far or PAN would have been able to report direct from there in the past. If you meet the strict criteria (check out the website) it's a good show to be at – or you can go to DSEi where most of the same exhibitors will be displaying their technology next year with far less restrictions. [www.securityandpolicing.co.uk](http://www.securityandpolicing.co.uk)*



Fire/First Response Zone



Home Office

SECURITY & POLICING  
HOME OFFICE EVENT

Hard to believe it but next month will mark the completion of 28 years of Police Aviation News—PAN. Although the subject matter has strayed a little from time to time so that it is not all about Police Aviation News the title has remained the same so as not to confuse the audience too much. I note that Air Beat, the in-house organ of APSA [or ALEA as I still occasionally lapse into] has also retained its original title. Not for either the confusion of this week 'Emergency 911' next week 'Valor' or some such misspelling of the English language. The content remains pretty much the same and it may matter that both 911 and Valor are Americanisms when you are trying to interest the wider world in your publication.

**24-25 February 2024** Singapore Air Show, Changi Exhibition Centre, Singapore [Visit Website](#)

**27-29 February 2024 HAI Heli-Expo** in Anaheim, USA. Convention Center, 800 W Katella Ave, Anaheim, California USA [www.heliexpo.com](http://www.heliexpo.com)

**7-8 March 2024 Aerial Firefighting, North America.** Sacramento USA [www.aerial-firefighting-northamerica.com](http://www.aerial-firefighting-northamerica.com)

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