

Police Aviation News



HELITECH 2009

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EDITORIAL

September was a particularly heavy month for the UK aerospace industry and particularly the police element. In a short span of three weeks many were exhibiting at the DSEi defence show in Docklands, East London, the PAvCon Police Aviation Conference in Woodford, the Superintendents Conference at Kenilworth and Helitech at Duxford. Each has its positive points that attracts the potential exhibitor/customer interface but they do strain the energy reserves of the exhibitors.

Even with exhibitor numbers holding up it might be said the actual content of the Helitech Show was faced with some trepidation in the ongoing economic conditions. Politicians may have recently declared the sighting of 'green shoots' of growth recovery but they are not exactly a trusted breed.

In the event, on the surface at least, it seems Helitech was not greatly depressed by the current economic downturn. 1,500 came in the doors on day 1 and attendances the following mornings suggested a good attendance perhaps a measure of growth on previous years.

A number of exhibitors saved positive announcements to enhance their presence at the show but the timing of the all important EASA certification of the Bell 429 was one that was not obviously stage managed. That was granted on day 2 and was announced on day 3—and who announces anything on the last day of a show if they can avoid it!

Among the other major announcements there were predictable items including the resolution of the replacement for the West Midlands destroyed EC135P2 but plenty of unexpected nuggets that make up the best of shows. I think it is fair to say that in some ways it was Police Aviation Services show—suitably upbeat to mark their 25th year of trading with new projects and new orders.

Bryn Elliott

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HELITECH 2009

Imperial War Museum, Duxford 22-24 September 2009

For its bi-annual UK foray this year Helitech fielded one of its largest ever displays of static helicopters. The organisers predicted the presence of no less than 32 helicopters to be on show outside the exhibition hall and, true to the prediction, the static area was a very busy place – though not always with the same airframe. The police and air ambulance helicopters in particular came and went. That said some raised concerns whether the high numbers might reflect the high number of aircraft for sale in the UK market.

In another contrast to negative comments the buoyancy of the rotary wing sector was apparently highlighted by significant contracts announced during Helitech 2009. The exhibition saw an unaudited figure* of 4,047 visitors through the doors over the event's three-day run – an 11% increase on 2007's visitor numbers.

Among the headline contracts announced **AgustaWestland** announced that the **Bristow Group** has signed an agreement for three AW139 medium twin engine helicopters to be used for offshore transport operations. The deal includes options for additional AW139 purchases by the Bristow Group, which would reinforce the continuing expansion of AW139 in the oil & gas sector.



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Rolls-Royce signed an exclusive distribution agreement with **AAR**, expanding the global reach for aftermarket supply of RR300 parts and services. Ken Roberts, President of the Rolls-Royce Helicopter Engine business said that with the turn-key solution AAR will provide, RR300 operators will have 24/7 access to parts and services critical for their day to day operations.

As stated in the standard [October] edition of PAN **Eurocopter** announced an order for a new EC135 for the West Midlands Police Air Support Unit and the 'temporary' sale of another older aircraft to keep the unit operational until next summer up until the new aircraft is delivered. Since then a MoD order for the refurbishment of the RAF Puma fleet has been announced o the Oxford site should be busy enough into the future.

By resorting to a little judicious hoarding of the good news **Specialist Aviation Services [SAS]** had a great show. Firstly it was celebrating three new contracts signed at Helitech. Lincolnshire & Nottinghamshire Air Ambulance has signed up for a new MD900 ten-year lease replacing its existing Explorer G-LNAA, which has been a regular visitor to Helitech over the years and was on its last visit there this year.

G-LNAA may well be back at the show in two years time but is will likely be a spare airframe as SAS need to get rid of its remaining BO105 fleet and keep a MD900 spare in their place.



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The biggest coup is the selection of the company to provide a second MD900 to serve Essex Air Ambulance replacing an EC135T2 currently contracted from Bond Air Services [BASL]. This move takes place next spring and will effectively mean that the whole of the south east of England will be covered by MD Explorer air ambulances.

SAS also announced a new multi-year lighthouse maintenance contract with Trinity House whereby the company will put a specially equipped MD Explorer into service at the end of next year to transport technicians and equipment to remote lighthouses around the English and Welsh coasts. Again this is a contract formerly operated by BASL and will highlight the intense rivalry between the two Staverton based operators.

Eurocopter claimed the display of seven craft – represented by six different helicopter types – at the show, but some of its numbers were just visitors. The EC135 was shown in utility, executive and police variants. The company’s EC155B1, EC120B and EC130B4 appeared in executive variants outside the halls but the presence of other Eurocopter airframes including the AS355 further widened the claimed selection on show.

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Eurocopter UK announced the order for a the EC135P2 for West Midlands Police and the temporary provision of EC135T1 G-SUFF but the main thrust of the show for the company was the static display of the first of the ongoing six aircraft order [EC135P2 G-SUFK] outside. Inside the chalet an executive EC135 dwarfed the far from welcoming stand. The designer seems to have set up the showcase like the Grand National.... intrusive and dangerously low walls that cut into the calf and security rope 'fences' everywhere – a far cry from the oh so welcoming 'open house' coffee stop for [nearly] all—it was the envy of the show before the McAlpine name went. The Eurocopter Chalet was even worse, a real holy of holies – just like all the other manufacturers in fact. The fact that there were two possible duty locations for the Eurocopter UK staff [four if you include the outside and the toilets] made finding anyone at best difficult. But that is the style that corporate Eurocopter has brought to town. It's a pity but I guess that is progress, *rant over!*

One of the prime airborne emergency services product lines for Eurocopter is the EC145 [aka BK117C2] and as last time it was down to the Metropolitan Police to promote the type by flying in from Lippitts Hill – albeit to star at arm's length on the field. Next time, 2011, we might expect to see one of the upcoming police machines – either the one for Devon & Cornwall [currently in role equip at Oxford] or the example on order for the Police Service for Northern Ireland.

Helitech 2009 was the chance for the new EC135P2 G-SUFK to star. There was much to see in and on the airframe; it features both the familiar and new role equipment.

The six identical EC135s to be produced – now joined by the seventh in the form of the West Midlands replacement – finally put down the so called 'Mac Pod' high skid role equipment option chosen hitherto by the UK and Norwegian police. There are those in Eurocopter that disliked the high skid option and of course the design authority is now swallowed within Eurocopter so it is unlikely that it will re-emerge. The greatest assets were that it removed equipment from the rear cabin area, the streamlining of the airframe [in as far as you can streamline a heli-



Eurocopter EC135P2 G-SUFK graced the Duxford static line up every day—returning to its base each evening.



copter] and placing the sensor pod and searchlight on the centre line. The latter tactical advantages are perhaps the greatest loss as these airframes can choose whether to undertake a left or right hand orbit of the target to place the camera and light on the target. It did not greatly improve performance, if at all and of course the high skids were a bit of a climb into the cabin. The latter raised Health & Safety issues in some eyes and the high skids were not certified to carry emergency floatation devices as became an issue in the Cayman Islands. All things in helicopters are a compromise and perhaps the pod equipped style was a child of its time.

So the 'new' low skid style favoured throughout police aviation is to hold sway. This robs the extreme rear cabin of half its width but that only really affects stretcher and carry-on bag space so it is not a great tactical disadvantage to a police airframe. The rear doors remain accessible. In contrast the police role MD900 fleet lost all the rear door access space to equipment early on.

New thinking on how to overcome the tactical advantages of left or right hand orbits has come down on right hand orbits for all – and they were always the favoured option anyway. A newly in-service **Meeker** rail allows the standard FSI camera to be mounted on the front of the rail and the latest Spectrolab XP searchlight at the rear. The left and right rails are identical so the equipment can be fitted either side – except that all the electrical fittings are only on the right. No appreciable C of G issues have arisen from having all the equipment and the pilot and one of the two observers on the same side.

Cal Meeker, the originator of the large number of popular mounts for role equipment was at the show and had his own booth for the first time. A previous attendance where he was assessing the market was years ago when he shared with Apical. The final acceptance of a Meeker solution for use on European law enforcement aircraft was a long drawn out process but was predicted within these pages.



Inside the cabin of the Suffolk airframe the Skyquest work station solution is prominent. Although not quite so overwhelming as that in the EC145 the technology is much the same with the latest updates incorporated. Quad screens accepting images from all the sensors in the camera and mapping systems allow the observers a full over view of the operational situation developing below. All the information is downlinked via the **ECS COFDM** transmitter.

At the show **Skyquest** unveiled the first-ever production model HD (High Definition) video recorder. Aimed firmly at the airborne surveillance sector, the world's first lightweight HD recorder – a mere 10% the size and weight of the equivalent commercial device – allows a full mission's worth of HD video to be stored on a standard compact flash card. Back on the ground, all that footage can then be burned onto a single **Bluray™** disk.

Skyquest is the first company to offer air units a compact, airworthy HD recorder offering the highest quality 1080p HD images, compressed on to conventional storage devices that can store up to ten times the amount of data onto a standard 32GB flash card than competitors can currently offer. Two cards can fit into the same device – when one is full, the other will automatically start recording.

The Skyquest VRDV-5000 series recorder is interchangeable with its SD equivalent, the VRDV-3000. It has been tested with



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market-leading airborne systems and, as well as law-enforcement, is particularly suitable for SAR and border patrol operations.

Helitech was also the launch pad for two revolutionary smart displays that, for the first time, will allow customers to run their own software applications on an embedded fan-less PC.

Skyquest Smart Displays offer customers the flexibility to customise their mission software, without the need to run a separate lap-top or processors.

The 25 and 30cm (10 and 12 inch) touch-screen displays are intended for cockpit mounting and each offer Ethernet™ connectivity and up to five USB interfaces. These can be used to add a mouse or 3G modem; or perhaps to download images from a stand-alone digital camera. Skyquest sourced new chips that do not need cooling from fans, which are essential for conventional computers.

The high quality of the standard Skyquest systems integration results in an expensive fit that would horrify most US law enforcement operators but it has reportedly caught the eye of the US army for installation in the Lakota fleet. Skyquest announced that they had gained a start up order from Ranger Rotorcraft Group for their systems to be carried by the **EADS North America** UH-72A [EC145] fleet in the USA. **Ranger Rotorcraft Group** was selected by EADS as a supplier of airborne mission displays, rugged video recorders and video management systems for the Lakota LUH fleet. Each Lakota will utilise three multi-function mission displays, a dual deck digital video recorder and the VMS processor which delivers outstanding video quality to crews on board the helicopter. The set up is expected to be similar to that seen on the Met Police EC145 fleet and operating a system centred on the **Wescam** MX-15 turret but there are detail changes from the UK system – including the substitution of the **Honeywell/Skyforce** mapping system by the **Euroavionics** mapping.

For Skyquest this is a major step up in manufacturing capability – the hitherto small company is expanding its manufacturing capability.

EADS North America already has 128 Lakota's on order from the Army, with potential for up to 345 helicopters through to 2016 assuming that other mooted roles for the type are not taken up. www.skyquest.com

This puts Skyquest, a relatively small company, on the path of a major expansion, an element that bodes well for the quality of support for all their customers. Skyquest was a small company in the background of the aviation business until their solution was installed in the Devon & Cornwall Constabulary Eurocopter BK117C-1 G-DCPA a decade ago.

A negative story circulating at the show is news that progress with the next 'bulk buy' of identically configured airframes for UK police air support has been halted. **West Yorkshire** police, the lead agency in the research process, had already brought together a range of EO/IR sensor manufacturers for a side by side trial but further progress on that front has been halted.

ACPO have put together a National Strategy that will, if carried through, lead to many chief constables losing touch with 'their helicopter' and the formation of a 'national police air support' operation that knows no boundaries. Having near identical airframes in the fleet assists in this strategy.

For many decades the driving force behind the development of police air support that the UK has today has been the pride chief officers have had in their helicopter. In many cases it has been the drive of the individual that has swung the many funding issues. Clear examples of that can still be seen across the USA where the individual police chief drives air support through, when the pushy chief is voted out the air support provision can fall like a house of cards. The UK National Strategy seeks to take away that sense of possession – the passion – to provide an efficient air support service.

As we all know the economy is in a parlous state and it looks likely that the current provision of additional direct funding for police air support is going to be in doubt. Certainly the big question mark is not going to be answered before the next General Election in the UK next May and therefore active research into the selection of new airframes for West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, Lancashire, Merseyside and Western Counties are delayed even though

one of the users requires delivery in 2011. The expectation is that individual airframe lives will be stretched out from 8-10 years to 10-15 years by an additional mid-life refurbishment.

The airborne emergency services were particularly well represented by airframes on site for the three days or simply visiting on a daily basis. The Hertfordshire HEMS and Cambridgeshire Police MD900 Explorer helicopters were pretty much a permanent feature on the flight line in that they were basing their operations from the Duxford showground. The East Anglia Air Ambulance BK117C1 also made passing appearances, as did a Metropolitan Police EC145. A Belgian Federal Police MD900 G-11 stayed on overnight as the guest of Zeiss... a short ceremony marking their recent purchase was played out on the Zeiss stand. On the final day the Belgian unit commander Herman Perdu was presented with a model of one of the unit MD900 helicopters.

The Greater Manchester Police [GMP] brought in their new MD900 G-GMPX for day 2 to sit alongside the Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire MD900 Air Ambulance. The GMP craft has the same Skyquest led technology as in the other new police helicopters, clearly the very latest Skyquest fit will slightly over shadow those of a year or so ago but the whole is much the same. The multi screen array in the GMP airframe seems to fill more of the cabin than on the Eurocopter models but that may just be an illusion resulting from the greater glass-house the European airframes have – in summer they dearly wish they had air conditioning! Unlike any other UK police aircraft the GMP Explorer carries what is arguably the most advanced searchlight on the market – the **Trakkabeam**. At the time the 'identical equipment'

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decisions were made on the fleet of six EC135s the new and untried Trakkabeam searchlight was seen as a leap too far and they went for the Spectrolab product. GMP took another 'leap in the dark' by selecting a new to the UK 600 watt **PowerSonix** public address speaker system. In truth neither was that much of an unknown as US operators had been using both for a considerable time, PowerSonix products have been around for a decade or more.

Noteworthy is the differences in operational preferences between operators. Where the Met crews universally like to use screens showing four images the Manchester crews prefer just two images per screen. The system supports these and other operator preferences.



Skyquest's success has been noticed among its competitors and there were pretenders to Skyquest's skills at Helitech, but not all of them are aware of the Skyquest name. That alone suggesting a lack of effective market research on the part of the would-be newcomers.

Even as the British Skyquest product travels west across the Atlantic Ocean to feed a US programme a US company is planning to send its alternative product to feed into Europe. A lack of competitor awareness cannot be levelled at Florida based **Avalex Technologies**. Avalex is teaming with the United Kingdom's Police Aviation Services to ensure its airborne teams of pilots and engineers have the most rugged, reliable and easy-to-use technologies on the market. In addition to their existing home market in the US law enforcement they are now offering UK customer's access to a lower cost alternative product to Skyquest.

While MD and Eurocopter took the laurels in the emergency services numbers game **AgustaWestland** brought to the show a potential star offering in their latest offering in the Da Vinci version of the 109 Grand destined for Swiss Air-Rescue service [REGA] in Switzerland.

The Da Vinci is a modern top-of-the-range light twin specifically developed from the Grand to meet REGA requirements for their high-altitude mountain rescue and air-ambulance operations. The Da Vinci features outstanding performance and state-of-the-art avionics for the task. How the special performance was achieved was not all that clear from the example on show - the clues being fixed landing gear, the absence of second pilot instruments and some minimalist seats and panel piercings. Less obvious under the paintwork were areas where the metalwork has given way to composites.

It seems unlikely that this variant will make additional visits to Duxford but if it is offered to a wider audience in the future that may change.

AgustaWestland has declared a renewed interest in the world airborne law enforcement market and the new capable Da Vinci is just one element in this. Readers may recall that REGA's earlier 'special mission' A109 [the K2] saw acceptance in a few police forces including Japan where the A109 series is already popular.

The AgustaWestland line up also featured AW119 Ke, billed as the fastest multirole single turbine helicopter, with up to 8 seats and the largest cabin, in its class. It has seen some interest in the law enforcement market worldwide but is generally unable to make many inroads into the EU region by the imposition of widespread negative government funding pressures against singles in the region.



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The same does not apply to the AW139 – despite some negative press this new generation multirole medium twin-engine helicopter continues to offer world beating performance and seating for up to 15 passengers that is being accepted across the globe in the police, ambulance and search roles. One of AgustaWestland’s target sectors is potential replacement for the Bell 212 and 412 in the SAR market where the existing fleet has marginal engine out performance. The example in the static park was one of two operating alongside the British MoD training operation run by Bristow Helicopters/FR Aviation company FB Heliservices in Wales. The rotorcraft is used to support SAR training for an undisclosed export customer currently using a Bell 212. They operate alongside an ageing UK Bell 412 fleet and being readily available to the UK MoD for comparison purposes the scene is set for pressures that may eventually assist AW in selling them to replace the UK MoD 412 fleet.



Other attractions in the static display included a mobile elevating air traffic control tower from **Host Systems**. This is an item unlikely to attract the interest of the average police air support unit [in the UK only the Metropolitan Police have their own ATC facility] but this UK product is in service with the military in Afghanistan so it is no white elephant. An additional plus point on its presence at Helitech it provided an excellent birds-eye view on the show and some of the Duxford residents.



In the shadow of the giant air traffic control cabin Heli Air were hosting what is claimed to be the first **Robinson R44 Police** helicopter in Europe. The white R44 is suitably marked in pseudo law enforcement marks as a POLIcopter registered G-POLI to London based Luxtronic. Imported to the UK this summer the compact policing tool is equipped with a nose mounted FLIR sensor and can carry a searchlight. In the two months it has been in Europe it has already visited Italy on contract work.

A regular item of equipment in the static at Helitech is the **TLC Helilift**. Most UK air support operations have at least one TLC aircraft mover; it has sold worldwide to military and civil operators. For years now this company has been tasked with moving the entire range of

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The principles of the new prototype TLC Helilift are explained to potential customers by Tony Hancock the developer [left].

skid equipped helicopters to and from the static display area, it is quick and reliable and also acts as a GPU for powering up the aircraft for such as ground based training on EO/IR systems. A pretty familiar bit of equipment by now the Helilift picks up any skid equipped helicopter and transports it at walking pace.

All these years of service to the forecourt of shows across the world holds no shrift on the US exhibition circuit. Some US labour unions deny Tony Hancock, the developer of the Helilift, the possibility of showing US customers what his equipment can do on the display area—let alone transporting airframes onto the showground. Unfortunately it is labour saving device that lets one person do the work of many and those same labour unions are very labour intensive.

So his latest model – currently in prototype form – will be even less welcome at US shows it seems. It not only lets one do the work of many it now allows that person to be carried rather than having to walk and it also allows the easy movement of the helicopter sideways – a feature not available on the current model. It is expected that the development work on the new model has a year to go before it is ready for market.

Still on the drawing board is a version offering towing to wheeled helicopters and maintenance gantries.

As occasionally highlighted by 'near miss' instances reported by the certification authorities tool foreign object damage [FOD] is a serious hazard caused by tools left inside the aircraft after servicing. Tools can get tangled in control cables, jam moving parts, short out electrical connections or otherwise interfere with a safe flight.

For decades now the military have worked against the likelihood of this by putting in place visual tool control. A simple system of marking tool chests or boards with the outline of a tool whereby no-one goes home whilst a tool is unaccounted for. Technology has moved on somewhat now and in place of a painted outline there are foam cut-outs and computer tagging – dependent upon the depth of the customer's pocket. Either method works - a gap on the board means something is where it should not be. Some organisations go beyond this and specify that each airframe has its own tool kit and only tools from that kit can be used on a given craft.



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Terry Fryer and Ian Hay of Coplan

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Coplan, a Milton Keynes based company established in 1987 and a leading manufacturer of specialised tools & tool control products offer many solutions to meet tool control. This year was their first Helitech.

Their main product is Intelligent Tool Control (ITC) where every tool from a locked cabinet can be computer tracked and logged at all times without the use of RF Tags or Bar Codes, they also offer the simpler Visual Tool Control (VTC) the at a glance identification of missing tools.

Sloane Helicopters, based at Sywell Aerodrome, Northamptonshire, adopted an electronic access tool control box (E.A.T.C) as a means of controlling specialist tools when working on projects for the military.

The solution was recommended and installed by Coplan after Sloane faced scrutiny by a military audit who challenged its control and accountability of the specialist tools that were on display upon a wall-board. Rather than face losing its contract to service military aircraft, the E.A.T.C system allowed all tools to be removed from the wall board and sit within bi-colour foam to allow the identification of a missing tool at a glance. The system also helps to reduce the risk of cross tool contamination as access to the tool cabinets are only permitted to designated swipe access card holders – thus increasing the control and accountability.

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SkyTrac Systems announced the launch of the ITRACS, its next generation portable transceiver for flight following and text messaging, at Helitech 2009. The system draws on technology transferred from SkyTrac's DSAT, the ITRACS is smaller, lighter, and includes new features and functionalities.

The ITRACS is a fully portable flight following and messaging system that has two internal batteries for extra long life portable operation or it can operate using aircraft power. Users have the choice of using a GPS/Iridium dual antenna integrated into the hardware; a dual antenna installed on the exterior of the aircraft, or portable Velcro or magnet GPS and Iridium antennas. ITRACS is Bluetooth enabled; users wirelessly connect a blackberry to send email messages over the satellite network. www.skytrac.ca

L-3 WESCAM continued its promotion of the new MX-10 EO/IR turret at the show. Although it had featured at the May 28-30 ALEA East Coast event the MX-10 was first officially launched at Paris with its most recent events being the DSEi military show, the PAVCon Conference and Helitech... a pretty intense presentation of the product and attracting a great deal of interest on the stand.

Helitech is pretty much an open event so live system demonstrations were off booth - confined to special closed door promotions in a chalet by the flight line.

Designed to support surveillance missions from small manned and unmanned helicopters, the lightweight MX-10 offers customers many of the MX series features in a smaller package. The optical and laser performance combines with the ease-of-use tracking and installation for the small-ball market sector. It is currently believed that any future cutbacks in UK police aviation funding might make the MX-10 a suitable alternative option to selecting the full-blown MX-15.



Four members of the Belgian contingent at the Duxford Helitech presentation

In recent months the EO/IR sector has widened somewhat to allow South African **Carl Zeiss Optronics** to elbow its way into a crowded market. As always the final arbiter of success in any market is reliability and sales support. It is the latter that drove Wescam to introduce its MX-Raid remote diagnostic capability that enables technicians located at service facilities to perform checks, calibrations and updates on units in the field around the world.

Helitech was an opportunity for Zeiss to again publicly thank the Belgian Federal Police for their custom in again selecting the manufacturer to provide sensors to the operator. The high profile involved in this ongoing activity at various recent show opportunities has cer-

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tainly brought them to the fore and the Zeiss brand is now far better known than its Denel forebear. The commander of the air unit, Herman Perdue, was presented with a model of a MD900 G-12 carrying a Zeiss sensor. The model had in turn graced both the PAVCon and Helitech booths.

Flight Management Systems of Calgary, Canada announced that Zeiss has received 5 FMS Moving Map integration kits intended for the South African Police Service [SAPS] Eurocopter BO105 helicopters and Pilatus PC-6 fixed wing aircraft. This brings the total number of FMS Moving Map systems flying with the SAPS, to eleven.

From time to time this publication has featured aircraft belt manufacturer **Schroth** and the ongoing development of an automatically releasing Water-Activated Buckle. The research and development of this device took far longer than the company ever expected but it has now come to pass and it is now a viable option in the extensive Schroth product line-up. Although primarily associated with standard seat restraints Schroth offer the airborne emergency services industry a range of specialist restraints including the HMR – a High Mobility Restraint suitable for open door photography and winch operators. A specially designed restraint system that can be configured to individual needs is available for medical stretchers. The company name remains but it is now part of the large **BAE Systems** group and may be expected to eventually change its identity.

Bell Helicopter chose the quiet third day of the show to announce that the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) had rubber stamped the certification of the Model 429 in

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Europe. It was FAA certified earlier this year and EASA had been verifying the data. The news reached the Bell team late on day two and the company arranged for Neil Marshall the Project Manager for the Model 429 Program [left] to make the ground breaking announcement the following morning.

A week later, on September 28, the team attended a handover ceremony at the Cologne headquarters of EASA to take delivery of the type-certificate to the Bell 429 helicopter. Certification for this twin-engine, multipurpose rotorcraft (Category A) began in November 2005 and was completed on schedule, following certification by Transport Canada (TCCA) and the Federal Aviation Agency (FAA) in June this year. The helicopter meets the latest EASA/FAA/TCCA regulatory requirements and has been designed specifically to facilitate maintenance.

As of mid-August 2009, the four S-92 SAR aircraft operating in the UK had executed a total of 510 missions – 331 from the base at Stornoway in the Western Isles and 179 from Sumburgh in Shetland – since being introduced in 2007

Sikorsky announced that they are offering an increased maximum gross weight capability and advancements in automation for offshore navigation among enhancements planned in the near future for the S-92 helicopter.

Among the key improvements being planned for the helicopter are:

Increased maximum gross weight from 26,500 pounds to above 27,000 pounds

Improvements to the durability of the main gear box

Limited icing certification

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Sikorsky's S-76D helicopter, the next generation model in the S-76 helicopter series, is continuing its flight envelope expansion, with more than 40 flight hours logged. Among the S-76D helicopter's features are all-composite, flaw-tolerant main rotor blades; an advanced Thales avionics system and autopilot; dual speed rotor with active vibration control; powerful Pratt & Whitney Canada 210S engines; a quiet mode for enhanced public acceptance; and an optional Rotor Ice Protection System (RIPS) for all-weather capability. The S-76D helicopter also will offer an increase in useful load and extended range performance versus the S-76C+™ and S-76C++™ aircraft currently fielded.

The S-434 helicopter produced by the Light Helicopter division of Sikorsky Global Helicopters is flying and pursuing FAA certification.

Civil Defence Supply a company based in Lincolnshire more associated with officer safety products launched their GL3 Portable Approach Path Indicator at the show. Although the company has other products they concentrated on the device—seen as an important new addition to their range.



After two years of intensive discussions the new **European Helicopter Association** (EHA) is now operational and was hosting a number of presentations in its chalet at the Helitech Show.

EHA is formally registered in Cologne and will soon have its offices adjacent to EASA. The Chairman of the new EHA is Dr. Ing. Vittorio Morassi, Italy and the newly appointed Executive Director is Gunter Carloff the former head of German Federal Police Aviation. [See PAN March]. Gunter replaces Jan Willem Stuurman who has retired after 18 years with EHA.

Gunter Carloff of EHA has the Aerodata work station explained to him. Nothing to do with helicopters but Aerodata has just secured the contract to supply and role equip a fully equipped Beechcraft 200 surveillance aircraft to the Armed Forces of Malta. See next month..

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The final speaking slot at any conference event is regarded as the worse of all the bad options. By chance the final place at the 2008 event was a subject important to the audience – HUMS – and became a triumph for the speaker from **Goodrich**. Few expected that the performance would be repeated at the 2009 PAvCon Police Aviation Conference.

Paul Lewin, the Managing Director of Australian company **Avinet** volunteered at the last moment to take the final slot at the 2009 Conference as part of his intense marketing of his company to the European market. The previous week he had been at DSEi military event in London Docklands promoting the same ideals. It is fair to say that Paul Lewin's presentation made the audience sit up and take notice at what he was offering. The result was to set the cash register ringing.

Harking from Adelaide, South Australia Helitech was the civil market launch of Air Maestro™ to the European market. **Air Maestro™** is a web system which enables aviation operators to enhance the Safety, Compliance & Efficiency for their personnel and operational environment. It gives aviation operators control of core operational and compliance information which empowers them to effectively manage their business and to achieve regulatory compliance.

It is currently in use by the majority of leading Australian Helicopter operators, the move to Europe is an opportunity to expand their markets. The product is unique in its design and application as it addresses multiple requirements needed to efficiently run an aviation business in a simple to use, easily accessible and cost effective system.

The system design and deployment also allows it to be competitively priced for small, medium and large aviation operators, where previously smaller operators were not able to implement such sophisticated IT systems.

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More information on Air Maestro can be found at www.airmaestro.co.uk



To the visitors the added value attraction of **Helitech at Duxford** is the resident museum, its aircraft tanks and naval exhibits. This may have been a helicopter show but occasionally the real highlights centred around aircraft of an earlier age. The regular nostalgic rides undertaken in Rapide biplanes regularly turned heads, the end of day 1 drinks reception and swing band music in the American air museum represents a definite draw to US visitors and this year the whole show came to a temporary halt on the last morning as the airfield was beaten up by a Spitfire and 'Me 109' [Hispano Buchon] practicing some unknown air show routine. Unlike the incessant southern state roaming of the HAI Heli-Expo Show the chances of the organisers of this bi-annual event leaving the site for pastures new are at best unlikely!



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