

Police Aviation News

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Special Edition PAvCon 2012

PAR

PAvCon 2012 REPORT



Bundespolizei Sankt Augustin June 5-6

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Dateline...5-6 June 2012...Sankt Augustin, Germany

PAVCon 2012 can go down in the annals of Police Aviation Research [if such matters are considered important!] as the best of its type yet operated. With two hundred attendees its final attendance figures far exceeded the pre-event guesstimates based on steady growth. That will of course create a very difficult to beat precedent for future years.

If the delegate numbers were not enough, the number of countries they represented provided a further measure of instant growth. This year there were twenty-five nations represented the highest number ever and adding a number of nations not previously exposed to these European conferences, arguably the nearest product to the annual ALEA Conference and Exposition. PAVCon does not 'do' events like the annual Pig Picking meal favoured by the ALEA but it is growing its own European equivalents based on the country it occupies—all designed to foster a meeting place for both industry and operators.

The chosen dates – effectively the choice of the hosting German Federal Police – turned out to be awkward for some potential visitors from the United Kingdom but at the time the slot was chosen no-one was aware that it would coincide head on with the Golden Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II. In the event both the PAVCon and the Jubilee were battling with bad weather, fortunately the conference got off lightly in comparison with the deluges of rain affecting the British crowds.

The 4th **PAVCon 2012** took place in association with the German Federal Police at their vast special forces base near Bonn. The police air support [Fleigergruppe] headquarters facility, a large heliport, in Sankt Augustin, adjoins the private airfield of Hangelar and it afforded the opportunity for the event to attract some fixed wing aircraft to its static display.



COVER IMAGE: Flightline image at the police heliport showing the Indra/Airborne Technologies Tecnam MRI OE-FIN with just visible beyond it the Vulcanair P68 Observer and beyond that an example of the locally based EC135T2 helicopters. [Image © PAR]

Confusingly all of the names, Sankt Augustin, Hangelar and Bonn rightly relate to the location with both of the former names being randomly used by locals to pinpoint the site but the postal address harks back to the civil Federal Police' former paramilitary identity as the BGS – Bundesgrenzschutz 100, Sankt Augustin. Much has changed with the Federal Police since the organisation was called the BGS. Like the former military formations of a number of European nations the German operation has embraced a civilianisation that has seen many of the BGS structures swept aside. All ranks are virtually the same and the officer class has been disbanded – a factor that worked in the favour of PAvCon.

The hosting police pulled out all the stops to ensure that they were offering a first class venue to PAvCon and the other visitors. They succeeded in ticking all the boxes, being terrific hosts. The building chosen to house the conference and inside exhibition was that of the privately operated Kantina, an organisation akin to the NAAFI and occupying the former BGS Officers Club – it was the only building on site with all the right facilities. It was not perfect – the exhibition rooms were too spread out for some tastes but naturally it came to 'first come first served' and the late applicants tended to lose out in comparison.



To a near capacity conference room audience the Keynote presentation was provided by Thomas Striethoerster Head of Directorate 2, Federal Police HQ with a supporting hosts presentation given by the Officer in Charge of the Bundespolizei Aviation Wing Colonel Thomas Helbig.

The varied two day conference room programme centred on crew resource management [CRM] issues but included a blend of other subjects and industry marketing presentations. The latter remain a subject area the audience can dread, but many of them were delivered well and included a necessary splash of humour to ensure that the audience recalled them for all the right reasons– some were memorably in that they did not. It is always a difficult but necessary area at conferences, as was proven by a number of industry speakers theirs is the presenting of insights into the future, in the main operator presentations are more about learning from the past.

The supporting inside industry exhibition of 25 companies was unexpectedly spread across two widely spaced rooms due to a late change in connecting room availability but some ad-

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justments to the plans overcame what was a challenge – the simple relocation of the coffee and setting up some special events seemed to resolve many problems. Events such as this never go without hiccups and in the event this was a minor irritation.

Throughout the extended lunch breaks guests had access to an interesting static display of aircraft drawn from the helicopter fleet of the Federal Police and some flown in fixed wing exhibits. The latter was something of a mixed blessing. At one stage five fixed wing were expected but late in the planning process it seems that some surveillance missions cropped up and the aircraft from CAE, Diamond and AEM simply failed to get to Hangelar. Business is business.


With the whole of the helicopter fleet being a mix of Eurocopter types the manufacturer was always going to enjoy a ‘home from home’ situation, despite our hopes, no other manufacturers types arrived to alter that situation. Examples of each of the in-service operational models, the EC135, EC155 and the AS331L1 and the EC120 trainer were displayed in a temporary hangar while outside examples of the Tecnam and a Vulcanair P68 graced the hard standing.

We were expecting Airborne Technologies to bring the Tecnam MMA demonstrator fresh after its demonstration tour with NPAS and Greater Manchester Police in the UK but the company decided that the arrival timescales were tighter than they preferred so they arranged for an alternative project to ensure timely attendance.

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The Tecnam MRI OE-FIN is the flying element of a recently launched joint maritime surveillance project with Indra in Spain. The overall layout may be different to the MMA but it included both EO/IR and radar sensors and both satellite and digital links.

As a major player in the systems integration market Airborne Technologies also have their systems in the other fixed wing presence, that of the Vulcanair P68 Observer D-GHEA recently delivered to the Egelsbach based Hessen Police.

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The two aircraft represent a significant contrast in achieving similar aims, with them Airborne Technologies offers its systems at different levels across all of the major fixed wing options, the absence of the Diamond DA-42 was all the more noticeable under the circumstances.

The P68 represents the conventional Lycoming powered twin, modern enough systems but older thinking as befits its past in police services across the world. The Tecnam is significantly smaller, newer in design and powered by the more modern Rotax engines. Conventional [old fashioned] wisdom in mainstream aerospace may favour the Lycoming but the Rotax is probably leading edge and equally widespread. The engine powers masses of light sport aircraft and has quietly earned its spurs as a reliable powerplant away from the perception of the wider, mainstream, industry.

The overall result is a type with a significant reduction in first cost and running costs that would allow multiple units to be acquired for the cost of both fixed or rotary wing alternatives. In the police airborne sensor role the P68 is true multi-seat option but in the surveillance role the four-seat Tecnam is pilot plus systems operator – a two seat option. Ultimately even that crew of two option is being challenged by proposals from Indra, there is a plan to leave the systems operator on the ground and effectively operate the type as a UAV with a pilot.

The static display included opportunities for manufacturers to attach their supplementary displays onto the static aircraft. The companies nominally making some use of the opportunity included Aerodata, Airborne Technologies, Eurocopter, ECS, FLIR Systems, Indra, Tecnam, Turbomeca and Vulcanair. Ten companies on six aircraft.

To overcome the less than ideal and unexpected display situation – the former Officers Club was never designed to be an Expo Centre – special events were held in conjunction with the more remote display room and they proved popular and useful in ensuring delegates visited all of the exhibitors.

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Above: The unscheduled Microdrones flight demonstration proved a popular diversion. Right: The Bundespolizei recently took delivery of new EC155 helicopters dedicated to maritime duties. Below: Front page star of the June 2012 edition of PAN the Hessen P68 attracted a great deal of interest. [All images ©PAR]





Undoubtedly never displayed with highlighting the current cracking problem this EC135 rotor head did nonetheless attract comment related to the ongoing issue.



In the back—of the Hessen Police P68 [©PAR]




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Small UAVs are finding increasing acceptance as helicopter crews grow in realisation that these small craft are not a threat to manned craft, theirs is a niche role mainly attractive to firearms and tactical units such as GSG9. Two UAVs were represented at the event; a small quad craft from Microdrones and the Shiebel S-100.

Shiebel called off attending PAvCon with a full size S-100 at the last moment in the wake of the fatal accident in South Korea but they were represented ably enough at the event by agents in the display room. The accident did however halt all ideas of the presence of the real thing and removed from the agenda a decision about actually flying it. Larger unmanned craft may be becoming more acceptable but when you get to the size of the S-100 truly free flight in public areas remains a thorny issue.




There were no issues surrounding the small Microdrone craft and it flew a display sequence in the open air for 20 minutes, a very popular and unplanned sideline to the main event and a useful adjunct to the 'coffee and a smoke' area outside the main Kantina.

Another unplanned event was on the joint CAE/Deguarde display where the US sourced Persistent Surveillance multiple camera system was demonstrated. I recall encountering this system at a US show a few years ago and seeing its potential as a 'Olympic Games

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2012' site monitor. You cannot get it right every time and I am certain it never made the grade in the face of a games that appears to be policed almost exclusively by pole mounted CCTV but the fact that Deguarde and CAE in Luxemburg have the system in Olympic year shows I was not totally wrong.

PAVCon is not simply a daytime programme of conference presentations spread over two days, many opportunities are provided for business related meetings to take place at pre-show and evening events. To that end it is not for profit, as many resources as possible are ploughed back into events to facilitate the transportation and accommodation of speakers and delegates. Times are indeed hard and getting police officers with some level of buying capability – the prime customer – to cross borders has become increasingly difficult to achieve. The funding principles surrounding PAVCon have greatly improved accessibility.




There were a number of clear instances at Bonn where industry was able to meet the customer wholly through the opportunities afforded by PAVCon and historically there are other previous instances that tend to support an ongoing thread of positive Networking through its ideals. The proof of that capability underlines the worth of the event and ultimately leads to the level of industry support of the event.

The event served as one of the launch platforms for Turbomeca's new on-line maintenance facility BOOST. Still in development BOOST offers operators the opportunity to put the not inconsiderable paperwork relating to maintenance and modification standard of its engines in the cloud. Being on-line there should be a single standard of documentation for the engines rather than potentially conflicting copies for the aircraft and the workshop. It is early days yet and prices have yet to be announced but there was clear interest in the concept.

On day two of the event an alternative to the static display was offered to the Delegates and taken up by around 30 of them. Manfred Schmickler of the renowned ADAC HEMS Academy based on the adjoining Hangelar airfield provided a presentation of their training facilities within the conference programme and backed it up with a conducted tour of their amenities and the British made simulators during the midday break.

The ADAC HEMS Academy facility has international customers but the core medical training relies upon German and is not therefore widely attractive.

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Full crews, pilots and medical staff train together upon D-HELP a wooden replica of an EC135 that acts as a systems and CRM trainer. HELP is quite a faithful reproduction—it is difficult to see the join - but it is to be replaced in the near future with a decommissioned BK117.

To ensure full continuity in the training the HEMS Academy also has a fully laid out emergency room where treatment of the victim 'flown in' in the aircraft can continue in an adjoining room.



The restriction on language cannot be said of the flight training in the Cue-Sim simulators for the EC135 and EC145, these adhere to the usual English language. The exhibitors at PAVCon included Adams Aviation Supply Co. Ltd/Cobham, Aerodata AG, Airborne Technologies GmbH,

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The 21 national law enforcement agencies attending were boosted by the presence of members of a FRONTEX group. Overall there were 25 nations attending from countries that included representatives from Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Cyprus, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, England, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, United States of America, and Wales. The majority of the European Union Police Nations made up most of the nearly 200 attendees.

The actual extent of the growth of this year's event was something of a surprise and will be a hard act to follow next year. We are extremely grateful to the Bundespolizei for their enthusiasm and assistance in making this year's gathering such a success.

The PAvCon websites are www.policeaviationconference.com and www.pavcon.org

Previous editions of the PAvCon Police Aviation Conference have been held in the UK [Prince Regent Hotel, Woodford Bridge, 2009], Prague, Czech Republic [2010] and Bilbao, Spain [2011]. The location of the PAvCon next year has not been announced.

Police Aviation Research also produces a monthly niche market on-line magazine 'Police Aviation News' that is free to all and can be accessed via www.policeaviationnews.com

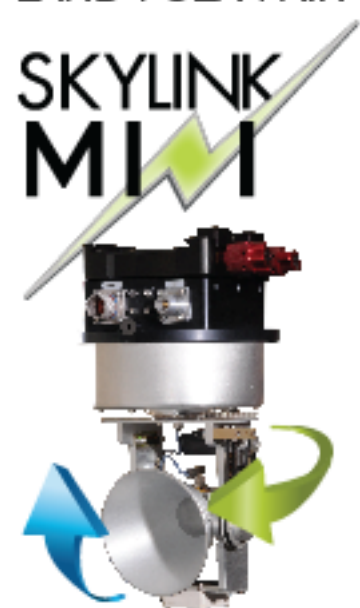
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One image that pretty well sums up what PAvCon is all about— getting the international brotherhood of police aviators talking to and learning from each other.

Polizeioberrat Timm Paulsen of the hosting Federal Police chats with Sergeant Andy Morgan from South & East Wales Air Support ©PAR



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