

PAVCon EUROPE 2025

Le Castellet, France May 27-28

The Networking Continues



Police Aviation News
Special Report



May 27-28 2025 at the Le Castellet International Airport South of France.

There is a seed change underway at PAvCon Europe as the day-to-day management of the event moves away from PAR (Bryn Elliott) to Dynamic Range (Steve McNair and Imogen Banks) who have been associated with police aviation conference IT support since 2006 and all PAvCon specific events since 2011. The change has been seamless as the old still fully cooperates with the new. Perhaps more importantly the police input to the event has stepped up to provide a new and dynamic element – mainly in the training aspects .

The training session undertaken on the first day (Monday) attracted almost 50 booked attendees, the highly commendable best yet performance on the part of the training team in offering an attractive programme has made a massive difference. That figure did include attendees from the industry sponsors of the event but it was notable that the nationalities of police attending included Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Slovenia, Sweden and very notably two attendees from the National Police Air Service in the United Kingdom. The content this year was welcomed but already there are plans underway to broaden and make more attractive future subject matter. It is not just about law enforcers, the event also includes all air-borne emergency services where their duties overlap .



This years event was hosted by industry. The original planned location, Aéroport Sud de France Perpignan, became unavailable due to a lack of exhibition floorspace for what is a growing event and meeting airport regulations. As PAvCon has found before at medium and large sized airports, the Health & Safety regulations regularly get in the way. As a result this year the event moved from the area close to the slopes of the Pyrenees deeper into France than originally intended. Our host Air Attack Technologies based at Perpignan found us a new location less affected by the regulations and well endowed with hangar space at Le Castellet. Le Castellet famous for its motor racing circuit, Circuit Paul Ricard, sits in the southern slopes as the Mediterranean coastal strip gives way to the Alps.



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For many years, Air Attack technologies have been carrying out intelligence, counter-terrorism and border protection missions [ISR], overflights of all the French coasts for the benefit of state bodies, to collect data on sea operations, pollution and a range of other events using aircraft including the Beechcraft King Air, Cessna 208 and Vulcanair P68. They also undertake maintenance, role fits and training. They sent two of their fleet to PAvCon.



Caption: This years static was rich in static surveillance airframes, in addition to the Air Attack King Air and the more familiar Vulcanair P68R F-HPTF there were two examples of the Airbus Helicopter H160, the Teledyne/FLIR Pilatus PC-12 Spectre demonstrator N812GS and a EASP Dornier 328 PH-EAB configured to undertake Frontex ISR missions.





CONFERENCE

With a deliberately varied content there should be something for everyone and noting the number people sat in the hall listening from the start the programme clearly met expectations.

Perhaps the highlight of Day 1 was an emotional presentation on **The Flooding in Valencia**. The speaker was Javier Lozano Parilla, a former Spanish Air Force Fixed Wing and Rotor Wing Pilot who now holds the status of a SAR Captain with the Spanish Sea Maritime Rescue Service, at the Valencia Base.

Javier was a pilot of one of the rescue helicopters involved in responding to the worst floods to hit Spain in decades on in late October 2024. The waters and the structures they enveloped led to the deaths of at least 230 people, covered towns in mud and debris, destroyed bridges, roads and rail lines and submerged cars, mainly in the eastern region of Valencia.

The presentation on the flooding of Valencia was further exposed to public view after Javier promoted the presentation to two Spanish television channels. The promotion was during prime time "in the News" on two major Spanish Channels – Cuatro and Telecinco.

PAvCon Europe did not get its name mentioned specifically but the term "**Congreso Internacional de Aviación Policial** celebrado en Francia" can only have referenced one event!.

Over the years the PAVCon brand has attracted the welcome attentions of the foreign language media; there are several clips on the event still on You Tube covering earlier forays into Austria and Spain. During this years event there were on-site recordings of interviews conducted by Circuit Paul Ricard and Rotorhub.

On Day 2 there was an interesting, indeed compelling, presentation by the Irish Garda on their new aircraft fleet acquisition process. Currently they operate two Airbus helicopters and a now stored Britten-Norman Defender 4000.

"The new Irish Police Helicopter and Airplane" was presented by Sergeant Mark Campbell, Training Sergeant - Garda Air Support Unit, (G.A.S.U.) An Garda Síochána – Ireland's National Police and Security Service, Republic of Ireland.

Full of highly informative light humour we know what to expect should PAVCon Europe ever stray towards the G.A.S.U. base at Casement Aerodrome, Baldonnel, Dublin. Suffice to say, in a sharp contrast with the warm and sunny conditions experienced at this years event in the south of France, he predicted that substantial rainwear will be a pre-requisite!

The new fleet research goes under the name of Project Endurance and includes the new airframes and

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maintenance set to replace the current 25 years old Eurocopter EC135T2 and a somewhat younger 2006 EC135T2+ with new Airbus H145 airframes and the retired BN2T-4S Defender 4000 with a DHC Twin Otter Guardian 400 being completed by Airborne Technologies and Austria. The old fixed wing asset is now nudging 30 years service but will only be disposed of after the arrival of its replacement. Delivery of the new assets is due this autumn. The H145 contract relates to a number of such airframes acquired for the Air Corps for civil and military roles.

Key to the project is the ability of the new fleet to be able to deploy to anywhere in the Irish Republic and return to base without the need to refuel. That requirement gives a nod to the often poor Atlantic coast weather that results in few true all weather airfields across Ireland and requires the inclusion of weather radar and white phosphor NVIS in the new airframe specification.

The presentation was perhaps more poignant than others in that the back story of Garda Police Aviation related to the recent death of the former PAvCon regular John Osmond. For better or worse JO was one of the sales team behind the Eurocopter/Airbus Garda helicopter fleet from the start of their almost independent operations in 1997 and is known to have been involved in their research of the new fleet in the latter days of his consultancy company.



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THE EXHIBITION

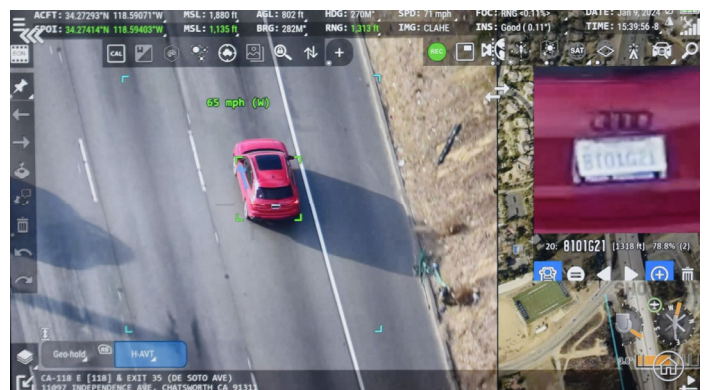
The number of exhibitors and serving airborne emergency services attending the event fluctuates regularly but this year was particularly well endowed with both. There were late cancellations in both categories but in both cases there were the inevitable late bookers and arrivals to add balance.

Proof of whether the gathering was good for everyone can only be confirmed by the number of rebooking's for next year, but suffice to say that there were no complaints that opportunities to intermingle with customers and suppliers were lacking. They have been, and remain the primary object of the event.

For many of the flight crews and engineers the opportunity to see new technology first hand is a major factor. For the exhibitors the opportunity to implant awareness of their product into the crews is a prime aim. Best case scenario is to expose information into the consciousness of the buyer but ultimately any one of the fliers can have an influence on whether a product is considered. In most cases it is years before the suppliers see a tangible sale as a reward for their efforts.

There were winners and losers in the interest stakes and from personal observation I would say that the new technology winner this year fell to Erin Sperling of Shotover Systems. She had the queues most often as the visitors sought to understand the technology of the odd-looking new to market 'James Bond' movie camera from New Zealand. The M2 EO/IR camera is not new, it was prominent at last years event in Austria, but deliveries are still low so the number of potential operators with experience of it reflects that.

Somewhere in the throng is Erin presenting the mechanics and graphics of the Shotover M2 EO/IR camera that has now reached a handful of airborne emergency service operators. A feature included is the enhanced capability of highlighting and reading vehicle registration plates.





STATIC OFFERINGS

This year the set dressing static aircraft park was well provided for and there were some bonus additions that were not strictly part of the intended showcase – and I am not referring to either the roar of the flight-line or the Paul Richard Circuit just a few metres away.

The PAvCon specific aircraft included a new French registered Airbus Helicopters H160 that the manufacturers brought along for the first day, this was supplemented by two surveillance aircraft brought in by Air Attack, one Beech King Air 90 and a Vulcanair P68R that is familiar as the Airborne Technologies demonstrator for the UK NPAS fixed wing fleet. Teledyne FLIR, a sponsor of the training day. Brought along their Pilatus Spectre demonstrator and over the two days they conducted demonstrator flights for the attending police crews. A late arrival, on day two was a somewhat secretive Dornier 328 prop-jet turbine that is based in the Netherlands and regularly features in the operations of FRONTEX. It was primarily present to lend gravitas to a day 2 presentation to the gathered operators. Unlike the Spectre, entry into its interior was strictly restricted, a factor which added to its air of mystery. We do know that there was a degree of commonality between the two in that both currently use the Teledyne FLIR EO/IR sensor. By now the Dornier is expected to have been refitted with a new HD 380 turret to the latest specification.



The unexpected bonus presences to the static included a second H160B c/n 1042 LX-HGG which was subsequently found merely parked up in a corner of the same hangar and offered for sale by Aero Asset, presumably for the operator Lux Copter Services – it looked pretty enough though and I bet there

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Not really present.... The unexpected bonus H160!

are relatively few air events yet able to boast the presence of two H160s! Lets face it Helitech at ExCel in London can rarely manage any helicopters these days.

The presence of the diminutive Italian Lamanna Helicopter Escape two seat helicopter in the display hall was perhaps something out of a time warp. It is a long time since police forces saw small helicopters of this type as viable air assets in day to day policing, if only on the basis that police officers tend to break all but the most robust craft! The prototype spent the start of day 1 on the flight line but by the afternoon it had taken cover from the none too violent Mistral winds outside in the calmer display hall.



To the subject relevant line up could be added several other airframes as a backdrop but these were passing business jets and a Cessna single.



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PLANNING

Every PAVCon Europe event brings with it organisational lessons, and 2025 was no different. It may be weeks after the event before these can all be identified but there were the glaring and unexpected 'surprises' to come to terms with. Each was faced and resolved.

The area is beautiful and served by good quality hotels of the type befitting a busy business aviation airport and a world class motor racing circuit. The latter set the bar on overall costs and expectations – the motor racing crowd being well known for driving up costs.

This was the first PAVCon Europe event organised in southern France and apparently it is perfectly acceptable for a fully booked hotel to close its restaurant to service for the first few days of the week. It is fair to say that having no formal food outlet was something of a surprise for people who had travelled thousands of miles to get there. There were limited snacks to be had at the bar or the alternative was to drive to other nearby establishments to dine.

Unfortunately it turned out that the hotels among them had also closed their restaurants under the same local convention! The alternative eating places were apparently limited to serving only not particularly Gallic pizza and pasta options and their remote location required transport to reach them.

Not everyone had hired a car when getting to Castellet from Marseilles airport, an hour and some 93km (58 miles) by road. Utilising an airport cab was far cheaper than car hire but there was an unrealised caveat. For those seeking sustenance in attractive mediaeval town of Castellet just a few km down the road from the hotel there were both taxis and Uber's available but they all operated from bases in Marseilles and were therefore wholly uneconomic! Not one hotel in the area was offering a local taxi service. Another lesson learned!

No one starved but it was good to know that as we were all packing to leave on the Wednesday night the restaurants were open everywhere for the rest of the week! You could not make it up—but fortunately you did not need to!

OTHER

This year we welcomed the literary support of the 'rival' magazines from HMG Aerospace (Rotor), Voyager (Air Med & Rescue) and MHM Publishing (Vertical and Valor). The latter brought with it limited interaction with the highly popular Hangar Z Podcast, co-host Harald Brink (Netherlands), shared exciting updates from the PAvCon conference to a world audience.

The message being put out by each was that

"This week, police aviation professionals from across Europe are gathering at PAvCon to share mission insights, new technologies, and critical training methods."

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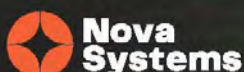


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