

Police Aviation News

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Issue 352

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NPAS - new leadership

UA Air Ambulance Awards

Greece closes the door

Britain No door to close

APCON & RIAT - Photos

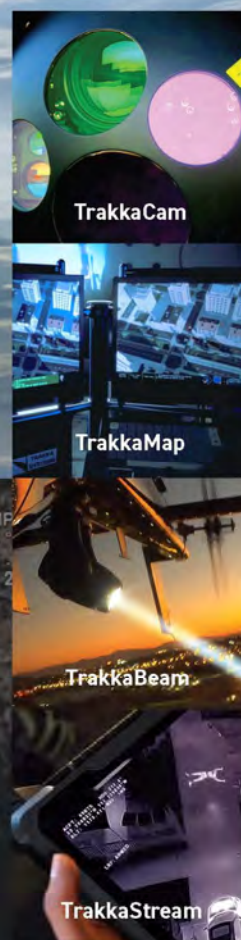


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EDITORIAL

Sir Mark Rowley, the Commissioner of Police for the Metropolis (the Metropolitan Police covering London) has gone on record to call for the number of police forces in England and Wales to be reduced to provide a more efficient set up.

He has called for 12-15 'mega' forces in a shake-up of policing landscape. Mark Rowley says the number of forces needs to be reduced by two thirds and replaced by regional forces who would make better use of the constrained police budget. He claims the way policing is organised in England and Wales is decades out of date and needs a major shake-up. The current system of 43 county forces hasn't been fit for purpose "for at least two decades" and should be replaced. The outcome would be better use of modern technology and a reduction in governance and support costs. Set this against the 17,000 law enforcement organisations operating in the USA!

Unfortunately, history does not bear out his assertion. Despite the fact that the Metropolis has been smaller in area since 1999 and they have significantly more officers, over 20%, they are finding it difficult to put officers on the street and reach the work efficiency of 25 years ago. There are two other pointers towards the failure of the larger model. One is Police Scotland who current reports claim is "stretched to breaking" with a budget that "has not kept pace with demand", according to the Association of Scottish Police Superintendents (ASPS). The Scottish forces were amalgamated in 2013 and for them at least it does not seem to be a winning formula - especially in the light of moans from them when US President Trump turned up for a private visit to his Scottish properties late last month. The other is NPAS, and their trials and tribulations do not really need repeating in this publication. Far from making great savings in governance and support costs the latter organisation suddenly discovered that it was obliged to set up an entirely new and expensive hierarchy that wrote off most of the efficiency savings that were predicted when the combined operation was set up. Far from sharing the part cost of a Superintendent here and there they found they had to fully finance their own heavy and expensive leadership.

Clearly there are other factors at play, be they political interference, funding shortfalls or poor leadership or all three.

Bryn Elliott

LAW ENFORCEMENT

CHILE

CARABINEROS: Recently noted as being test flown in Germany in a new H135 wearing the full Carabineros colours and carrying the serial C-33. The timing of this pretty much confirms the H145 reported in recent months must be C-32 [Parapex Media]

FRANCE

MILITARY: Airbus Helicopters has successfully carried out the first flight of the H160M Guépard, the militarised variant of its H160 platform, marking a key milestone in France's Joint Light Helicopter (Hélicoptère Interarmées Léger, HIL) programme.

The flight took place at Airbus Helicopters' headquarters in Marignane, France, with a dedicated crew of one test pilot and three flight test engineers on board. The H160M, selected by France as a common platform for its Army, Navy, and Air and Space Force, aims to streamline operations across the three branches.

The H160M is based on the civil H160, which entered service in 2022. Named Guépard by the French



COVER IMAGE: Airbus Helicopters EC135T2+ c/n 0560 operated by the German Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI) and photographed at the HEMS base in Duisburg Germany by Alan Norris

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Armed Forces, the new military model incorporates advanced mission systems, avionics, and weaponry to support a wide range of operations, from armed reconnaissance and surveillance to light transport and maritime missions.

Airbus is building three prototypes to accelerate development. The first prototype will validate flight performance and conduct live firing tests starting in 2026, while the second prototype, now in final assembly, will focus on environmental trials, including hot and cold weather campaigns. [Airbus]

GREECE

POLICE: Greek Police are reported to have sold their first helicopter, an MBB/Bolkow BO105CBC/5 SX-HPA c/n s.897 to the former Soviet country of Georgia. It is now registered 4L-AMD, but it is not known whether it is still in law enforcement use. Georgia has recently purchased new build aircraft for law enforcement use so it is unlikely.

Three of the helicopters were purchased new from the manufacturer in the summer of 1995 and all of them have been reported in use until quite recently operating alongside two early Eurocopter EC135T1 subsequently bought for law enforcement operations.

All of the Bolkows were fitted with a nose radar and carried an EO/IR system, this was later upgraded to work with a downlink system.



There have been various reports of other airframes on order but have apparently been orders for other Greek agencies or the aircraft of other nations operating in support of Frontex on the borders.

INDIA

DELHI: The Delhi Police have broken up a racket siphoning off aviation turbine fuel (ATF) from tankers meant for the international airport and selling those in the open market as mineral turpentine oil, causing monthly loss of over Rs 1.62 crore (16,200,000 Indian Rupees, equal to nearly £138,000) to the national exchequer. The racket is said to relate to the extraction of around 5,000 litres of fuel daily.

The illegal operation - running for over three years - was uncovered following a tip-off and that led to the arrest of six people and detention of two others.

The fuel was originally dispatched to the airport from a depot in Bahadurgarh for delivery to IGI Airport. It is alleged that the tanker drivers, in connivance with the transporter and godown (local word for warehouse/depot) owner, manipulated GPS tracking data and diverted the tankers to a concealed location.

The security locks on the tankers - meant to be opened only at the designated airport depot - were bypassed using duplicate master keys. Forged dip rods were then used to fake proper delivery readings.

The siphoned fuel was transferred into barrels and sold as Mineral Turpentine Oil (MTO), commonly used in the ink and paint industry. Three oil tankers carrying 24,000 litres of ATF each were seized along with siphoning pipes, drums, and cash. In addition to the tankers, police also recovered two pickup trucks meant for transporting the stolen fuel, six dip rods (including forged ones), siphoning equipment, nine empty drums, and three duplicate master keys.

The arrested people include Gaya Prasad Yadav (43), the godown owner and former tanker driver. He used to purchase fuel at Rs 30/litre (£0.26p) and sell at Rs 50/litre (£0.43p).

Others include Rajkumar Chaudhary (53), regular purchaser of siphoned ATF which he sold at Rs 43 to Rs 50/litre, and Ashpal Singh Bhullar (53), owner of eight trucks including the three tankers seized. Three truck drivers were also arrested -- Ram Bharose Yadav (44), Anjay Roy (41), and Subodh Kumar Yadav (32) -- who were paid Rs 1,500 (£12.77p) per trip.

Two detainees include driver's helpers Parveen Kumar Yadav (25) and Parveen Kumar Yadav (19) who were paid Rs 700 per trip.

ASSAM: At Kaziranga National Park in Assam rhino protection, and other wildlife protection is now mainly reliant upon drones.

Rhino poaching in the park was once a grave concern, with over 190 rhinos killed between 2000 and 2021. The crisis peaked in 2013 and 2014 when 27 rhinos were poached each year. Recently a determined crackdown by forest officials and the introduction of technology like drone surveillance have turned the tide. Since 2016, poaching incidents have declined by 86%.

The park is home to over 2,600 one-horned rhinos (pictured right) and attracts global attention for its conservation success. But with that success comes a constant threat, especially from poachers looking to cash in on the rhino horn trade. The vast terrain, thick vegetation, and seasonal floods make it nearly impossible for on-ground patrol teams to monitor every corner. That's where drones come in.

Drone surveillance first took off around 2013 as an experimental project with promising results, including a 40% drop in illegal hunting achieved with drones of limited capabilities. More recently drones have evolved from short-range gadgets into powerful tools that fly up to 60 minutes at a stretch and cover large swathes of forest, even at night.



Home to over 2,600 one-horned rhinos, Kaziranga attracts global attention for its conservation success. Picture: WWF India

Equipped with thermal imaging and real-time video streaming, drones help spot suspicious activity, locate animals during floods, and keep an eye on hard-to-reach areas without disturbing the wildlife. During monsoons, when much of Kaziranga gets submerged, drones have also been used to track rhinos migrating to higher ground—information that helps rangers direct rescue or support efforts.

Park officials and Assam police have undergone specialised training to operate them, ensuring drones are flown legally and with due deference to ecological considerations. While catching poachers is a key part of the job, drones are also helping park authorities beyond security. They're being used to map vegetation and monitor habitat change, track injured or stranded animals during natural disasters, detect early signs of forest fire and reduce human-wildlife conflict.

During the monsoons, large parts of the region get submerged, animals instinctively move to higher ground, often crossing highways or venturing near human settlements in search of safety. In these situations, drones become vital rescue tools. They help locate animals in distress, those separated from herds, stuck in floodwaters, or showing signs of injury. Compared to manned flights or patrols, drones are seen as cost-effective and safer.



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Elsewhere other forested areas have also taken up drone technology to monitor the extensive land: in West Bengal drones are deployed to monitor tiger and crocodile movement across the mangrove landscape, especially in conflict-prone zones where human-animal interactions are high. They're also used to track illegal fishing or logging activities.

In Karnataka they have started using drones alongside camera traps to track elephants and tigers, especially near human settlements. In Gujarat, the home of the Asiatic lion, they employ the drones to assist patrolling in remote areas, particularly during the monsoon when access is difficult on foot. [Better India]

JAPAN

AICHI: Aichi Prefectural Police have sold BK117 JA6816 (msn 1131) to New Zealand. The helicopter was noted entering service in early 2002 as Asayake 2. The unit is the first law enforcement unit in the Asia Pacific Region to operate the Bell 505, which it ordered a year ago.



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UNITED KINGDOM

NATIONAL: Chief Superintendent Fiona Gaffney has been appointed as the new chief operating officer at the National Police Air Service (NPAS). She will take over from Chief Superintendent Vicki White who is retiring after 30 years of service to policing.

Chief Supt Gaffney will also take on the role of NPAS accountable manager once approved by the Civil Aviation Authority. In the interim, NPAS head of business services Glenn Shelley will take on the temporary position.



Chief Supt Gaffney is an officer at West Yorkshire Police officer and brings with her a "wealth of operational experience, strategic leadership and a commitment to public service". Her policing career began in 1995 with the Royal Military Police, where she served in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo. Since then, her career has spanned multiple forces and specialist roles. Recent roles saw her managing complex budgets, national portfolios and high-level collaborations but aviation is new to her.

Within days of the new boss arriving NPAS published its latest annual report 2024/25 (thanks once again to the National Audit Office for forcefully reminding NPAS that as a public body they had a duty to actually produce an annual report). The report was signed off by the outgoing Vikki White and introduced by the Chief Constable of West Yorkshire Police, John Robins QPM DL,

They report 20,000 times deployments, leading to 1,376 missing or vulnerable people found, 4,224 suspects apprehended, and 1,987 vehicles located. The full report is available as a download on the NPAS web site. A comment on the document can be found later in this edition under the *Move Along There* column.



GO BIG

Elsewhere in the UK, Sir Mark Rowley the Police Commissioner for London had asked for the government to reduce the numbers of police forces. He has said that 12-15 'mega' forces in place of the current 43 county police forces would be more efficient.

He believes that larger forces would be better able to use modern technology and would reduce "expensive" governance and support functions. He pointed out that the current 43-force model "was designed in the 1960s and hasn't been fit for purpose for at least two decades". "It hinders the effective confrontation of today's threats and stops us fully reaping the benefits of technology,"

DRONE TECHNOLOGY

Hampshire & Isle of Wight Constabulary and Thames Valley Police Joint Operations Unit has integrated Drone as First Responder (DFR) technology to a police control room in the first trial of its kind in the UK.

For over a year the joint operations unit has been testing the DFR concept with trials at the events including the Isle of Wight Festival and the Victorious Music Festival in Portsmouth.

DFR is designed to build up a network of drones positioned in urban areas providing 24/7 fast-response 'eyes in the sky' for incidents reported to the emergency services. Using the latest 'drone in a box' technology, drones will have take-off and landing boxes on the roofs of selected buildings. The drones sit waiting for a call to launch coming from the police control room. When the decision is made to deploy a drone, it will be remotely launched and fly to the incident.



In Southampton, a drone is situated on a rooftop where it can be deployed from the force control room to give a real time picture of incidents. Not only does this enable the effective deployment of policing resources, but it can also track suspects leaving the scene and record footage for evidential purposes.

In future, the drone will be able to team with neighbouring DFR drones to keep watching the original scene while another drone undertakes other tasks, such as following a person of interest leaving the area. DFR drones can also conduct handovers when battery levels mean they need to return to their base to re-charge.

At the end of the task, the DFR drone will return to its landing area and the weather-proof box will close so it can be charged and prepared for its next mission.

Superintendent Taryn Evans is strategic lead for the National Police Chiefs' Council Drones team. She said:

"Our DFR trials have gathered significant pace over the last year with each one testing out how we can best exploit the potential of drones to support policing and improve the safety of our communities.

"This latest trial shows how DFR integrates with 'business as usual' policing. The drone can be remotely deployed from the control room as a key resource in responding to incidents, supporting both community and officer safety."



Superintendent Adrian Hall is Joint Operations Manager for Thames Valley Police and Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary, said:

"We've already seen DFR enhancing our policing response to a number of live incidents and each one has further demonstrated its value for both now and the future in keeping our local communities safe.

"As we move forward, our focus remains on safety and integration, ensuring that our emergency response capabilities are not just effective but also safe and reliable when it matters most."

Over the last year the NPCC has been running DFR trials in Norwich, Southampton, the West Midlands and Gravesend. The various trial sites have been testing different aspects of the overall DFR capability in differing environments:

The police trials are mainly focussed in the southern and eastern areas of England. In Norwich, Norfolk, the trials are primarily focused on the safety of the drones, connectivity between components of the DFR eco-system, and the way they avoid over-flying uninvolved people on the ground. They are leading on the integration of drone parachutes.

In Southampton, south Hampshire and overlooking the English Channel, the trials are integrated with the Department for Transport's Solent Future Transport Zone project and have involved testing feeds from radar and other aircraft and drone detection equipment that facilitates the safe use of BVLOS drones.

In Gravesend, Kent and the West Midlands the trials have focused on the feed of DFR video into control rooms, how it links with systems such as number plate recognition, and the advantages DFR gives to officers handling motorway, public order and firearms incidents.

The technology is next expected to be set up in the northeast of England with Cleveland Police being the recipient.

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UNITED STATES

CALIFORNIA: Riverside Police have finally sold their remaining MD500E N811RP to New Zealand. The Department have transitioned from the MD product to the Airbus H125 in recent years, after operating various models of the MD for nearly 50 years.

San Diego Police have sold N710SD AS350B3+ (4067) to Australia

OKLAHOMA: Oklahoma City Police Dept have sold H125 N720KC (which they bought July 2014) to a new owner in Canada

SOUTH CAROLINA: The last of the Oconee County Sheriff's Office helicopters has been loaded on to a truck and transported to Olympia, Washington. It is believed that the departing Bell OH-58 was N94550 68-712573.

Photo As illustrated here the Oconee operation had access to other airframes in addition to the flightworthy N94550. The identity of the green Kiowa in the background is not known.

Based in Walhalla, SC the sheriff's office has been tinkering with manned air support for a decade thanks to the availability of DoD Surplus helicopters. There were discussions about creating an Upstate law enforcement aviation operation that would serve Anderson, Greenville, Oconee, Pickens and possibly Spartanburg counties. They had access to a handful of helicopters and two fixed wings. The Oconee sheriff's helicopter typically flew 33 times in a year.



They moved to the use of drones in 2019. They never had an EO/IR camera available for the manned aircraft, but the unmanned craft added that to their capabilities at a much lower cost. [upstatetoday]



NEW YORK: As this edition was closing it was learned that the commanding officer of the NYPD, Deputy Chief Winston Faison, 52, was removed from his post and had resigned following a whole string of allegations of mismanagement. If half of the allegations prove to be true, the status of the world-renowned NYPD air operation are going to be blighted for a long time.

Deputy Chief Winston Faison was involved in a helicopter "hard landing" that went unreported to the Federal Aviation Administration [FAA]. When federal investigators arrived, after an apparent tip off from within, he allegedly denied them access. The incident only came to light after former NYPD aviation officers, now working at the FAA, reported the misconduct.

The hard landing, apparently involving the unit's Bell 407 training helicopter, N407PD, was not reported to higher headquarters and Faison is said to have instructed his officers to bar the FAA from the base. NYPD Internal Affairs got involved and interviewed the commanding officer on July 23 and was transferred away from the unit two days later. On July 25 he announced he wished to retire.

The incident and the background issues have raised serious questions about whether the NYPD Aviation Unit is operating safely, and whether internal corruption is being quietly tolerated at the highest levels. Sources confirm the FAA is considering grounding all NYPD flight operations. That level of a shutdown could be catastrophic. Needless to say, the civil rights people are calling for heads to roll.

Just two years ago Faison was welcomed into his post as the first black officer to hold the lead post. There were several other non-white officers in the unit but what Winston Faison may have lacked in flying and management skills appears to have been made up by his apparent closeness to the right kind of people in high ranking positions. He was launched into commanding the unit two years ago and the media made a big news story of his triumph during Black History Month just five months ago. Most, if not all of, that positivity will now be trashed by the stories coming out of the unit.

In light of the revelations the New York Post has declared him was an "incompetent boob" who had numerous breaches in safety as he attempted to make himself the unit's head helicopter instructor. He had a commercial plane license when he joined the unit and managed to obtain two Bell training courses financed by the city and totalling more than \$100,000. He is alleged to have used up many hours in the Bell 407 for his own needs in gaining the instructors rating which has left other pilots in the unit sitting around. Meanwhile it looks likely that the FAA will revoke the very licence he was striving to enhance.

Officially the NYPD are not commenting on the situation other than to say that Faison has been removed from his post. [Eric Sanders Esq, Civil Rights Attorney/Police Misconduct Advocate/New York Post]

TEXAS: The Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) is requesting bids for one Bell 407 law enforcement helicopter for its Aviation Operations Division. The invitation for bids was issued early last month and closed on July 24. As part of the bid a DPS Airbus AS350B2 N702TX c/n 4026 must be accepted as part of the deal as a trade in.

This is not seen as a sign that the DPS is moving away from its long-held preference for the Airbus AStar to meet its patrol single needs – a second request for bids was also posted for five new Airbus H125, also to be traded against AS350B2 and B3s currently in service. [CS]



INSIDE JOB!

One of the potentially damning images to appear in the public domain (mainly the NY Post) was this one of a damaged tail rotor blade. It was clearly photographed by someone within the NYPD Hangar.



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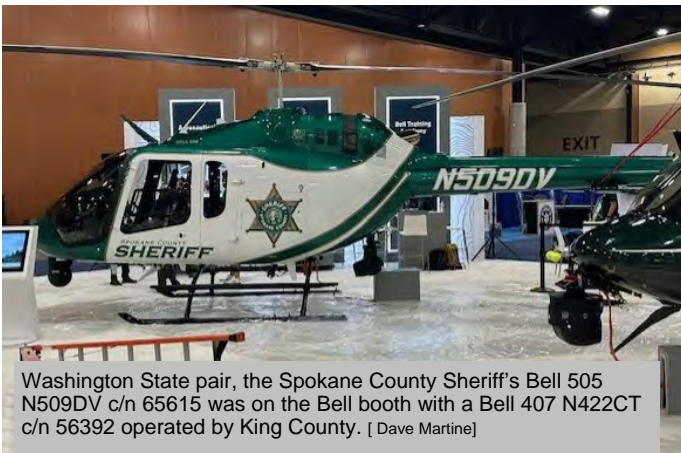
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Washington State pair, the Spokane County Sheriff's Bell 505 N509DV c/n 65615 was on the Bell booth with a Bell 407 N422CT c/n 56392 operated by King County. [Dave Martine]



"The coolest paint job on the planet" This Bell 429 was on the Teledyne FLIR booth

APSCON 2025 in Arizona



Textron Special Mission mock-up (below) and close to home, this 2023 Phoenix Police Airbus H125 N624FB c/n 9291



Airbus H125 N821PD c/n 8914 of the East Bay Regional Parks District Fire in Alameda, California.



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Airbus 135 SP-HXW of Polish Medical Air Rescue (Lotnicze Pogotowie Ratunkowe) at the Plock Airport base. [Alan Norris Norpress]

AIR AMBULANCE

CANADA

ORNGE:

Two Ornge ambulance helicopters serving Toronto have been grounded for upkeep after supply chain issues caused in part by President Trump's U.S. tariffs resulted in maintenance delays.

In a statement to CTV News, Ornge said one Toronto-based helicopter was to be out of service until July 12, while a second one will not fly until July 18. This required the other resources, both land and air, to be moved around. Ornge has helicopters in Sudbury, London and Ottawa.

Ornge has been experiencing "unusually high demand for maintenance" across its AW139 fleet and that the global supply chain delays "have caused significant extensions to maintenance timelines."

Supply issues from primary vendors continue to impact the situation, manufacturers have cited ongoing disruptions tied to raw material shortages caused by U.S. tariffs and the war in Ukraine.

GERMANY

DRF: EMS and rescue operator DRF Luftrettung has signed a deal with Airbus Helicopters which converts the Letter of Intent the two companies announced in March at Verticon (as was the HAI Heli-Expo) to a firm order for ten H140s. The order comes as part of DRF's fleet renewal plans and will see some the operator's H135s replaced by 140s.

DRF operates one of the largest H145 fleets in Germany and is already in the midst of replacing its earlier H145s with five blade main rotor H145D3s and says that the additional flexibility that it expects from the H140s.

DRF's commitment to the H140 comes as little surprise since as an operator of H135s since the mid 1990s and the H145 since 2014 it worked closely with Airbus in the development of the H140.

Although looking to be a simple development of the H135 the H140 offers a larger cabin for enhanced on-board patient treatment, the ability to carry more advanced medical equipment, superior performance and

efficiency for critical missions. The cabin is taller, and the main rotor reflects the developments seen in the H145 series of helicopters including the smoother flight five blades.

GUYANA

AIR AMBULANCE: Tecnam has sold two P2012 Traveller aircraft to Jags Aviation Inc., in Guyana, a member of the BK Group of Companies.

The two new P2012s are powered by two 375 hp Continental GTSIO-520-S engines, are scheduled for early this month. One of the aircraft was recently featured at the EAA AirVenture Oshkosh, highlighting Tecnam's leadership in cutting-edge regional aviation solutions.

The two aircraft are configured for a dual role: transport and medevac. The transport configuration allows for normal passenger operations, while the medevac configuration allows for medical transportation day and night.

PORTUGAL

NATIONAL EMS: Gulf Med Aviation Services, a company within the Medilink International group, officially commenced operations of the emergency medical helicopter service (Helicóptero de Emergência Médica (SHEM) in Lisbon for the National Institute of Medical Emergency (INEM) in Portugal, marking a significant milestone in the group's international expansion. Regular readers may recall they are based in Malta (with offices at Mill Street, Qormi, and a hangar at Safi.) and involved in the small Malta Air Ambulance.

This new, five-year €77.475M, operation represents Medilink International group's entry into one of Europe's most demanding and prestigious emergency medical markets. The Portuguese SHEM is recognised as one of Europe's reference services, considered the "crown jewel" of Portuguese pre-hospital emergency medicine.

In this initial operational phase, two state-of-the-art helicopters have entered service – an Airbus H135 and an Airbus H145 – specifically configured for aeromedical missions. These aircraft, are not new but they are equipped with advanced life support technology, ensure an immediate response to emergency medical needs across Portuguese territory.

The helicopter fleet will evolve gradually from these two initial aircraft to a final configuration of four Airbus H145 helicopters, representing the complete operational deployment envisioned for the Portuguese SHEM service.

The National Institute of Medical Emergency (INEM) is the body of the Ministry of Health responsible for coordinating the operation, in mainland Portugal, of an Integrated Medical Emergency System, which aims to ensure the prompt and correct provision of health care to victims of accident or sudden illness. The provision of aid at the scene of the occurrence, the assisted transport of victims to the appropriate hospital and the articulation between the various actors of the System, are the main tasks of INEM. The new operation is developed in close collaboration with INEM, maintaining all clinical protocols and operational procedures defined by the Portuguese institution. Medical teams continue to be entirely composed of INEM professionals, ensuring continuity of the highest standards of medical care.

The Portuguese air Force began emergency medical transport on the same day with four helicopters (apparently including examples of the Leonardo AW119 Koala) available 24 hours a day, in a temporary



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operation that bolsters the two civil aircraft from Gulf Med. These aircraft will initially only operate during the day.



In practice, the operation of the Medical Emergency Helicopter Service (SHEM) will be guaranteed by four helicopters and medical teams from the FAP, which will operate 24 hours a day and will be activated through the Urgent Patient Guidance Centre (CODU) of the INEM.

The Medilink International group has operated for more than 30 years, maintaining a presence in over twenty countries across Europe, the Middle East and Africa. With more than 500 employees, the group provides specialised medical support to over 6,000 patients monthly through its various international operations.

Gulf Med Aviation Services, founded in 2016, brings to Portugal its proven experience in aeromedical operations, including the successful operation of emergency medical helicopters for Ireland's National Ambulance Service in the southwest of the country.

The international public tender was launched in November 2024 and the final decision to award the contract to Gulf Med was announced in March of this year, foreseeing the operation of four helicopters that will be located at the INEM bases in Macedo de Cavaleiros, Viseu, Évora and Loulé between July 2025 and the end of 2030.

Gulf Med say that their investment in the four Airbus H145 helicopters was €40M and that it also intends to develop the training of Portuguese pilots and create a certified training organization in Portugal.

All is not sweetness and light though. In a statement, the Civil Aviation Pilots Union ([SPAC](#)) rejected the idea of involving the FAP in the operation of emergency medical helicopters, claiming that it constitutes a whitewashing manoeuvre that does not resolve the structural problems identified months ago". [Gulf Med/Portugal News]

Editor: Air ambulances in Portugal are not new, but the means of delivery has changed over the years. They have not been free from controversy and this change of operator is hoped to be part of the healing process. In late 2023 strikes were threatened by the SPAC when INEM pilots were complaining that Avin-cis Aviation Portugal was not respecting minimum rest periods, causing pilots of the Leonardo A109S Grand and AW139 helicopters to be overworked and suffering accumulated fatigue, in addition to not having a company agreement that protects their rights, in line with contracts held by colleagues in Italian and Spanish offshoots.

Gulf Med believe they can overcome these difficulties although clearly, they have not entirely disappeared.

In another lifetime part of the INEM operation was undertaken by former Metropolitan Police Bell 222 helicopters after they were retired from Lippitts Hill in the mid-1990s.



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UNITED KINGDOM

CORNWALL: The new Cornwall AW169 G-CNLL departed the Gama hangar at Gloucester / Staverton Airport on July 7 it arrived later at the Liskeard, Cornwall base of Castle Air .[MJ]

HAMPSHIRE & ISLE OF WIGHT: On July 7 the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Air Ambulance was handed the keys to its new base. The site is not fully operational yet and no date for a full official opening has been announced. Previously the helicopter was based in the north of their area at Thruxton Airfield near Andover with a fundraising headquarters and Head Office on the south coast in Southampton.



It is hoped the £3.6M unit near Southampton Airport in Eastleigh will reduce response times for almost all missions. Once finished, the building will include facilities for an Airbus H135 helicopter, multiple emergency vehicles and a new aftercare support centre to help bereaved families.

More than 70% of callouts were currently south of Winchester, so the location of the new base would allow them to reach the majority of people in their region faster.

LANCASHIRE: Due to essential building works at Royal Preston Hospital, the hospital's usual Helicopter Landing Site (HLS) became temporarily inaccessible from July 7, 2025, for an estimated period of 10 weeks.

The helipad at the Royal Preston Hospital is to close for more than two months – so that it can undergo the largest refurbishment in its history. The facility – which accepts the most critically ill and injured patients from across Lancashire and South Cumbria, will be out of action until September 19.

The overhaul will include the replacement of the landing pad itself, along with the installation of new lighting, barriers, fencing, drainage and a weather station.

During the shutdown, helicopter patients bound for the Royal Preston will instead be taken to Fulwood Barracks and then transferred the one-and-a-half miles by road to the Sharoe Green Lane hospital.

The £720,000 cost of the revamp has been fully funded by the HELP Appeal – established to support helipads across the country – which has handed over what amounts to the largest single donation ever received by Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (LTH).



As the site of the major trauma centre for the whole of Lancashire and South Cumbria, the Royal Preston helipad is the busiest in the Northwest, according to the latest figures.

Between February 1 and April 30, it received 37 patients from the Northwest Air Ambulance (NWAA) service alone, not including those flown in from parts of Cumbria by the Great North Air Ambulance. That puts it ahead of the helicopter transfers to Salford Royal (32) and Manchester Royal Infirmary (29) over the same period.

First created 30 years ago the facility has seen several modernisations down the years. It is believed it was simply an ad-hoc build – a matter of pouring concrete rather than a planned build.

New barriers on the hospital's internal roads and fencing around the helipad will also be installed to help keep vehicles and, in particular, pedestrians out of harm's way when a helicopter flies in – and prevent unnecessary delays in landing.

A health and safety audit were carried out at the Royal Preston in the wake of an accident at a hospital in Devon three years ago, in which a pensioner was killed after being blown over as she walked in the so-called 'downwash' area, close to where a helicopter had landed. The modifications now set in train will mitigate those problems.



The advertisement features the Macro-blue logo at the top center, with the tagline "TACTICAL MISSION DISPLAYS" below it. On the left is a detailed image of a ruggedized tactical mission display unit. The screen shows a flight data interface with fields for "Altitude", "Speed", "Fuel", "Engine", "Comms", and "Weather". Below the screen is a grid of physical buttons for various functions like "MODE", "MENU", "EXIT", and "POWER". To the right of the unit, the text reads "Now Partnering with Technisonic for radio integration." Below this is the Technisonic Communications logo. At the bottom center, the website "www.macro-blue.com" is displayed in blue text.

WALES: At the Staverton, Cheltenham Gloucestershire Airport Gama have been busy now with engineers working on the Airbus H145 helicopters of the Welsh Air Ambulance which they provide maintenance on. Gama bought out the assets of Specialist Air Services when they exited the industry.

Recently they have been working on G-LOYW & G-WROL present for work, these have now returned back in service. [M Jones]

UNITED STATES

NATIONAL: The Association of Air Medical Services (AMTC) is scheduled to hold its 2025 Air Medical Transport Conference (AMTC25) in the CHI Health Convention Center in Omaha, Nebraska later this year on October 27-29. Bookings can be made via the AMTC website although one hotel, the Marriott Downtown, is already sold out.

Attendees can expect a fresh experience featuring unmatched education including hands-on lab sessions and advanced clinical, communications, aviation safety and management sessions. The event features industry expert instruction, as well as uplifting and informative keynote sessions. Our tradeshow is chock full of the newest technologies and most innovative products and services available to the medical transport industry. Get ready for a robust variety of networking opportunities based on professional role, geographic location, personal demographics and different interests.

Each year AMTC celebrates excellence and leadership in emergency medical transport through a variety of notable national awards presented at the annual Air Medical Transport Conference. They have put out

a call for nominations for this year and want to have the in by the end of August for consideration.

The Program of the year Recognizes an emergency medical transport service that has demonstrated a superior level of patient care, management prowess, high quality leadership through visionary and innovative approaches, customer service, safety consciousness, marketing ingenuity, community service, and a commitment to the medical transport community.

The Marriott Carlson Lifetime Achievement Award Recognizes an individual who has made significant contributions to the overall enhancement, development, leadership or promotion of the emergency medical transport community and has been actively involved or participated in an emergency medical transport organization

The Jim Charlson Safety Award Recognizes a team, an organization, or an individual who has made significant contributions to the overall enhancement, development or promotion of safety within the air and critical care ground transport community.

Neonatal/Pediatric Transport Award of Excellence recognises a team that has made an outstanding contribution to a neonatal/pediatric transport service in any of the following areas: enhancing safety, education, leadership, patient advocacy by developing or promoting the improvement of patient care in the medical transport community

The Transport Mechanic Award of Excellence Recognizes an individual who has made significant contributions to the safe operation of medical transport vehicles or the improvement of safe maintenance procedures of medical transport vehicles

AAMS Excellence in Transport Leadership Award Recognizes air and ground critical care transport leader who has demonstrated a superior level of knowledge and management prowess, high-quality leadership through visionary and innovative approaches, customer service, safety consciousness, marketing ingenuity, community service, commitment to the emergency medical community as a whole.

[Submit a Nomination](#) by Friday August 29, 2025. Award winners will be honoured at the 2025 event. Next year's event has been slated for October 2026 in Texas.

ARIZONA: In Prescott Valley, Air Methods Arizona Native Air 14 has served the community for two decades. Last month they held a celebration at the Yavapai Regional Medical Center. The event brought together first responders, healthcare partners, former and current crew members, and families whose lives have been touched by the lifesaving work of Native Air.

On every flight, Native Air crews carry blood products and are trained to administer them en route, an intervention proven to increase survival rates in time-sensitive emergencies. Native Air is fully accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Medical Transport Systems (CAMTS), reflecting its commitment to the highest standards in safety, clinical care, and operational excellence.

Since last December patients in central Arizona receive emergency air medical care faster thanks to Native Air 4 and 14 in Prescott and Prescott Valley obtaining first responder status. This designation allows the pilot to identify a safe place to land the helicopter and enables the medical crew to begin patient care immediately upon arriving. Before receiving this designation, the air medical crew had to remain in the air until first responders on the ground secured a landing zone.

The achievement aligns the Native Air crews in Prescott and Prescott Valley with their sister air medical bases in Payson, Cottonwood, and Williams, which achieved their first responder status earlier in 2024..

TEXAS: The Airbus Helicopters H160B for Memorial Hermann Life Flight (in Houston) was exported from Europe via Antwerp Docks in May and first flew in the US on 27 June at Brunswick Docks in Georgia. The following day it was ferried to Metro Aviation's base at Shreveport LA for completion. It is currently registered to the manufacturer as N463MH c/n 1044.



FIRE

GREECE

ATHENS: As this edition closes, the authorities in Greece are reportedly struggling to contain wildfires around Athens in 40° C temperatures. They have already lost a large Sikorsky helicopter [see Accidents and Incidents] and are meanwhile requesting additional resources from the European Union.

JAPAN

NAGOYA: Japan's Nagoya City Fire Bureau placed an order for an Airbus H160. The helicopter will be deployed for firefighting, search and rescue missions, as well as disaster response operations, including reconnaissance of affected areas.

The Nagoya City Fire Bureau has been flying since 1973, when it introduced its first helicopter, an Alouette III, to protect and serve the community from the air. Today, it operates two AS365N3. With the newly ordered H160, one of the current helicopters will be retired, ushering a new era of aerial support for the city.

The H160 has three units currently flying in Japan — two operated for law enforcement, and one for news gathering missions.

TOKYO: Airbus Helicopters has maintained its position of preferred supplier with the Tokyo Fire Department after being awarded a contract for an Airbus H225 following a tender. This new helicopter will replace an older aircraft as part of the organisation's fleet modernisation strategy.

The new H225 will be equipped to support urgent life-saving operations with speed and precision. Its built-in search and rescue mode enables rapid target detection while onboard emergency stretchers provide immediate medical care. A belly-mounted water tank adds aerial firefighting capability for swift response during critical situations.

The Tokyo Fire Department took to the skies in 1967 with its first helicopter, an Sud Alouette III. Since then, the agency has maintained a steadfast partnership with Airbus, operating a reliable fleet that now includes three H225s and three AS365s.



Across Japan, 24 H225 helicopters are actively operated by the Ministry of Defence and parapublic agencies, taking on critical roles ranging from search and rescue and aerial firefighting to VIP travel, and the transport of personnel and goods.

UNITED STATES

CALIFORNIA: Avionics manufacturer, Anodyne Electronics Manufacturing Corp. (AEM), is proud to support the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) with its continued evaluation of the MTP136D P25 aerial firefighting radio for its aircraft fleet.

CAL FIRE has already purchased more than 60 MTP136D radios, and AEM is working closely to support their evaluation.

COLORADO: Colorado's newest firefighting helicopter was shelved for several weeks during wildfire season

In a case of bad timing, a helicopter purchased by the state for the specific purpose of fighting wildfires has been taken out of service in the middle of the summer fire season.

The "state of the art" Firehawk is undergoing required regular maintenance, according to the Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control. An agency spokesperson told CBS Colorado the craft was taken out of service July 13 for thorough, mandated inspections that are involving five mechanics.

Several wildfires were ignited by lightning strikes on Colorado Western Slope the same day the Firehawk

was taken out of service. Four of the larger fires - the South Rim, Turner Gulch, Sowbelly and Deer Creek incidents – are still burning.

Colorado ordered the aircraft following the 2020 wildfire season, one of the state's worst on record. Colorado's legislature approved almost \$31M in 2021 for the purchase of the Firehawk and the leasing of other helicopters until its arrival. [CBS]

SEARCH & RESCUE

***“Without a border protected, you don’t have a nation.”
John Kerry—Former US Secretary of State***

GREECE

The Greek authorities have warned of ‘invasion’ and has called a State of Emergency as it halts asylum on Mediterranean route into Europe.

Their disquiet is based on 7,000 migrants reaching Crete in the first 6 months of 2025 and over 20,000 crossing the Eastern Mediterranean—numbers comparable with the 24,000 that have crossed the English Channel—this is not a localised problem.

Meanwhile the struggle off Calais and Dover continues unabated with politicians and their advisors at a complete loss about what they might do.

UNITED KINGDOM CHANNEL UPDATE

The numbers of illegal migrants, mostly young men, those leaving the beaches of northern France in large inflatable boats, before being ‘rescued’ in mid-Channel and landed at the Port of Dover by the UK Border Force, continue to increase. Nevertheless, the month of July was also noteworthy for unprecedented political activity, in the United Kingdom and in Europe.

First, in early July, the BBC’s French correspondent, Andrew Harding, together with a camera team, were on a beach near Boulogne-sur-Mer, a regular departure point for illegal migrants, when the French Gendarmerie showed what can be done, with positive intervention, to save lives at sea. This followed a change in the rules, in France, which now permit the police to enter the sea, within 300 metres of the shore to drag, or push those boats carrying people smugglers and illegal migrants back into shallow water, before disabling the boat by puncturing the hull.



Discarding their heavy, stab proof vests, the young French police officers’, members of the Gendarmerie, take positive action to save lives at sea.

Discarding their heavy, stab proof vests the young police officers waded into the sea, hauled the large, grossly overloaded 'taxi boat' into shallow water, before puncturing the hull and helping the migrants ashore - Vive la France!



The Gendarmerie officers waded into the sea before disabling the inflatable boat in shallow water.

ONE MIGRANT IN, ONE MIGRANT OUT

Also, in July, whilst French police officers were stopping large inflatable boats, those carrying illegal migrants, from leaving France, the British Monarch, King Charles, together with the British Government, hosted a State visit by the French President, Emmanuel Macron. At the end of the three day visit, at a joint press conference, Prime Minister Starmer and President Macron announced a new deterrent to stop illegal migrants from crossing the English Channel in small boats, to 'smash the gangs', the people smugglers. A new policy of exchanging migrants, one for one, exchanging those migrants wishing to join their families in the UK, for those whose application for asylum in the UK has been rejected.

At the end of a State visit to the UK by President Emmanuel Macron of France, the two leaders, Starmer and Macron, announced a new deterrent to 'stop the boats', to 'smash the gangs'. Agreeing to exchange migrants, one for one, those permitted to enter the UK would be exchanged for those whose application for asylum had been rejected, before being returned to France.



Home Office

Without any details, who would select those migrants permitted to enter the UK and who would have their claims for asylum rejected, the UK press were quick to dismiss the new initiative as unworkable, no more than a gimmick, a proposal without any merit, a 'meal ticket' for lawyers!

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The popular tabloid press in the UK were quick to dismiss the new initiative to 'stop the boats' as unworkable, no more than a gimmick, a sound bite, dreamed up by politicians and civil servants.

BILATERAL FRIENDSHIP AND COOPERATION TREATY

A separate visit to the UK, by Chancellor Friedrich Merz of Germany resulted in the signing of a Bilateral Friendship and Cooperation Treaty. Alongside the new Treaty, Germany is expected to make a landmark commitment to make it illegal to facilitate illegal migration to the UK. The change in law, expected later this year, will give law enforcement officers the tools to investigate and take action against warehouses and storage facilities used to conceal boats, together with outboard engines, destined to take illegal migrants across the English Channel from France to the UK. This is a significant and long awaited initiative by Germany to disrupt the supply chain, across Europe, for inflatable boats and outboard engines imported into Europe from China, via Turkey, and destined for northern France.

Chancellor, Friedrich Merz has, since May, also, instructed border guards to turn away asylum seekers from Germany's land borders and has pledged to speed up the process of deporting those who have lost their right to remain in the country. In addition, a new 'deportations terminal' is to be built at Munich Airport for the removal of illegal migrants from Germany. The new terminal will process up to 50 flights per day.



British Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer meets Chancellor Friedrich Merz of Germany in London to sign a Bilateral Friendship and Cooperation Treaty.

Whilst these new bilateral agreements, with France and Germany, are most welcome, the cross-Channel flow of illegal migrants from France to the UK continues unabated, with large numbers migrants, up to 70 migrants in each boat. Migrants who stick up two fingers to the governments of France and the UK as they set sail to mid-Channel, where they're met by the UK Border Force, before being landed at the Port of Dover. At the time of writing, in the first 28 days of July, 4,407 illegal migrants were landed at the Port of Dover, bringing the total for 2025, to 24,389, some 45 % more than in the same 7 months in 2024.



A grossly overloaded 'taxi boat', full of young men, leaves France to rendezvous mid-Channel with a vessel belonging to the UK Border Force. Some of the passengers are wearing lifejackets, others carry inflatable rings, some have neither. One migrant, at the front, takes a 'selfie'. Daily Express

The former US Secretary of State, John Kerry, in a wide ranging interview with the BBC, shared his thoughts on illegal migration, *"The first thing any president should say - or anybody in public life - is without a border protected, you don't have a nation."* Is it any wonder that the British public, together with the citizens of northern France, have lost faith in their respective governments. How is it even possible that criminals, people smugglers, can run circles around, in the UK, the Royal Navy, HM Coastguard and the Home Office Border Force and, in France, La Royale (French navy), the Gendarmerie, the Police Nationale and the Police Aux Frontiere.



Migrants, those hiding in the sand dunes waiting for the next 'taxi boat' which will take them to the UK, are easily spotted from the air with manned aircraft and with drones. [AFP]

ILLEGAL TRANSPORT OPERATION

The new, proposed deterrent to dissuade illegal migrants from crossing the English Channel in large, grossly overloaded inflatable boats, 'one migrant in and one migrant out', is seen by many, including the media, as a gimmick, a 'meal ticket' for lawyers. Nevertheless, the other initiatives, also announced in July, those with enormous potential, will be welcomed.

First, the officers of the French Gendarmerie, the Police Nationale and the Police Aux Frontiere must be applauded for risking their own lives to save the lives of complete strangers by preventing them from leaving France in a grossly overloaded, unseaworthy inflatable boats. Second, Chancellor Merz of Germany, together with the government of Germany, must be applauded for agreeing to disrupt the supply of inflatable boats and outboard engines travelling across Europe, from China via Turkey.

Unfortunately, there are some members of the British Government, together with civil servants, particularly those who work in the Home Office, those with responsibility for border security, who will tell you that destroying the boats used by migrants to enter the UK without permission raises complex legal and operational issues. The counter argument is that destroying boats, boats that should never put sea, boats that have been described by the National Crime Agency as 'death traps', saves lives at sea and, therefore, their destruction must not only be supported, it must be applauded!

The change in tactics by the French police, stopping and destroying more boats on the beaches of northern France, may be seen in the numbers for July. In the first 14 days, 1-14 July, there were 8 good weather days when 2,552 illegal migrants were landed in the UK from 43 boats.. In the next 14 days, 15-28 July, there were 10 good weather days, when 1,885 illegal migrants were landed from just 30 boats. Yes, Vive la France!



Picking up migrants from the sea with 'taxi boats' is an illegal and a highly dangerous cross-Channel transport operation which must be stopped. Without the boats this transport operation will be finished. [AFP]

Quite simply, this is an illegal transport operation, therefore, to reiterate an earlier plan, the supply chains for boats crossing Europe must be disrupted. Then, those boats that reach northern France must be destroyed on the beaches, or in shallow water, within 300 metres of the shore. Those boats that evade the police patrols, on land and in the air, must be intercepted at the earliest opportunity, at sea, by the French and the British border security forces, supported by the Royal Navy and La Royale. Also, in addition to the publication, every 24 hours, of the number of illegal migrants landed in the UK, published by the Home Office, the public must also be informed, every 24 hours, of the number of boats, those that are destroyed each day by the French police. The public, in the UK and in France, have lost faith in their respective governments and this must be restored, and quickly too. The numbers of illegal migrants landed in England must be reduced dramatically whilst, at the same time, the number of boats destroyed must be seen to increase. The recommended mantra, for the security services on both sides of the English Channel, is, "Destroy the boats - save lives at sea."



AIR PATROLS



Two deHavilland Dash 8 maritime patrol aircraft, both based Lydd in Kent, are used to patrol the English Channel on behalf of the Home Office and the UK Border Force. This one was recently on display at the International Air Tattoo [Ian Frain]

Whilst the French fly occasional air patrols along the French coast, between Dunkirk and the Baie de Somme, using a variety of light aircraft, Diamond DA62, Vulcanair P68 Observer and Cessna 182, the UK government, the Home Office and HM Coastguard, fly regular patrols of the English Channel. The Channel patrols are flown with two deHavilland Dash 8 maritime patrol aircraft on contract from PAL Aerospace in Canada, together with Beechcraft King Airs' and Diamond DA62 MPPs' on contract to HM Coastguard from the British aerospace company, 2ExCel. Although the French air patrols, along the coast, have the potential to stop illegal migrants from leaving France, the UK air patrols have become part of the illegal transport operation that ferries illegal migrants across the Channel from France to England. To be effective, to 'stop the boats', the air patrols, with their advantage of height, speed and reach, must be persistent, in good weather, the same good weather that favours the people smugglers. Also, they must be flown on the French coast. Air patrols flown mid-Channel are, quite simply, in the wrong place and far too late to assist surface vessels to stop, or turn back those boats carrying illegal migrants.

The French Police Nationale fly occasional coastal patrols with light aircraft, looking for large groups of migrants and inflatable boats. However, to be effective these patrols, between Dunkirk and the Baie de Somme, must be persistent in the good weather which favours the people smugglers. At night the aircraft must have a camera turret with a thermal imager.

Police Nationale

**TO DO NOTHING IS NOT AN OPTION**

After the UK Border Force intercepts the inflatable boats in mid-Channel and then ferries the migrants to the Port of Dover, the next problem, without detention centres, is where to accommodate the migrants whilst their applications for asylum are processed. The previous, Conservative government had a plan to use the central African country, Rwanda as an offshore processing centre, but this plan was cancelled by the new Prime Minister, Sir Keir Starmer, the leader of the new, the Labour government which came to power in July 2024.

Migrants are currently accommodated in hotels which, according to government figures, cost a staggering £8million per day in 2024. In a society where there is a shortage of housing it's not surprising that this preferential treatment for migrants has led to civil unrest, most recently at Epping, north east of London, where a migrant living at the Bell Hotel was charged with sexual assault following an incident involving a 14 year old girl. A further protest took place at the Britannia Hotel at Canary Wharf in central London. A third hotel, the Park Hotel at Diss in Norfolk was also targeted by protestors. Then a fourth hotel, the Brook Hotel near Norwich, also in Norfolk, was targeted by protestors as the protest against illegal migration, fueled by social media, spreads across the UK. These are hotels where large numbers of unemployed young men have been 'parachuted' into communities by the central government, by the Home Office civil servants based in London.

The UK Government, fearful of protests spreading across the country, has introduced a new strategy, to move migrants from hotels into houses of multiple occupation; to placate the British public and, at the same time, to reduce the cost of accommodating asylum seekers. However, several councils have pushed back, fearing yet more civil unrest should illegal migrants be provided with housing ahead of local residents, those with their names on the local authority waiting list for houses.

Civil unrest in Epping, Essex where a large group of migrants, young men, were 'parachuted' into the community. One of the migrants has been charged with sexual assault following an incident with a 14 year old girl. (BBC)



Following a planned protest at the Port of Dover on July 19, where illegal migrants are routinely landed by the Border Force, the disembarkation point for 153 illegal migrants was shifted to Ramsgate, also in Kent. The Prime Minister, Sir Keir Starmer, has now demanded urgent action from government ministers to avoid a repeat of the anti-migration riots that took place in the summer of 2024. According to a government spokesman, it's vital to repair the country's "social fabric" and improve integration in areas that have experienced high levels of migration.

Others will agree that a multi-cultural society can only succeed if there is swift, unequivocal action when the rules are broken, or ignored. When migrants arrive with a visa and then overstay their welcome, and when others arrive in the UK without permission via an irregular route, including the English Channel, they must be detained and deported at the earliest opportunity. As of December 2024, 124,802 migrants were awaiting an initial decision for their claim for asylum in the UK. In June 2024, according to figures released by the Home Office, the total 'work in progress' caseload was 224,700 applications. Those arriving in small boats accounted for 29% of the total. There were just 25,186 voluntary returns and 8,164 forced returns in 2024.

CONCLUSION

Those illegal migrants who are rescued in the English Channel, rescued from a clear and present danger, must, in accordance with international maritime law (UNCLOS and SOLAS) be taken to a place of safety; which could be in France. The current practice, in which the vessels belonging to the UK Border Force

rendezvous with boats carrying migrants in mid-Channel, before landing their passengers at the Port of Dover is an aberration. Why is the British Government providing encouragement to those migrants who break the law, those who leave one safe country, France, before travelling to another safe country, to the UK, using an irregular route, by crossing the English Channel in a small boat? These are illegal migrants, as defined by The Illegal Migration Act 2023. Yet, the UK Border Force, acting on the instructions of the Home Department, the Home Office, collects illegal migrants in mid-Channel and then brings them to the UK, rather than returning them to their point of departure, to France.

In the words of John Kerry, the former US Secretary of State, “*Without a border protected, you don’t have a nation.*” If the French government wishes to discourage migrants from travelling across Europe to set up camps in northern France, outside Calais and Dunkirk, then the cross-Channel route for small boats must be closed! Moreover, in the UK, a reduction in the amount spent on illegal migration, £3billion a year for hotel accommodation alone, would permit an increase in spending on social services, health care, education and defence, together with an increase in the overseas aid budget!

James A Cowan MBE

The author is a former member of the Royal Air Force, a former maritime patrol pilot. Also a former police and air ambulance pilot.

STOP PRESS: As this edition went to press the UK Home Office reported a further 898 illegal migrants landing at Dover on July 30.

SCOTLAND: Norman 'Nam' Macleod, an HM Coastguard winch paramedic has received the Emergency Services prize at the Pride of Scotland Awards.

As part of the crew of the HM Coastguard search and rescue helicopter based in Stornoway, Scotland, and operated by Bristow Group, Nam was nominated for saving the lives of two fishermen critically injured at sea.

The two men had become entangled in the vessel's industrial-scale cable reels, an incident which Nam described as the most challenging scene he's had to deal with in 30 years as a paramedic.

Nam administered emergency medical treatment onboard the vessel in rough conditions. They were then winched up to the helicopter and transferred to hospital. Both men survived.



Try anything once?

There is no truth in the rumour that Dover Command are trying all options, including road blocks, to thwart migrant landings on the south coast of England.

INDUSTRY

July 16-18 was the annual **Airborne Public Safety Association APSCON** event in Phoenix, Arizona, USA. The major event in the airborne public service calendar precipitated a string of announcements, some of which are to be found in this issue.

FL Technics, a globally recognised provider of MRO solutions and a subsidiary of **Avia Solutions Group**, based in Lithuania, has been appointed as an authorized dealer for Collins Aerospace, an RTX business. FL Technics will now be able to offer a range of Collins products and services. These include advanced business and regional avionics systems, integrated communication and navigation solutions, cabin connectivity and passenger experience innovations, and certified aftermarket support and services. Collins Aerospace is a leading provider of avionics, communication, and flight deck systems for commercial, business, and military aircraft. Known for its innovation and reliability, Collins technologies are integral to aircraft navigation, communication and display systems worldwide.

FL Technics is part of Avia Solutions a group that operates a fleet of 209 aircraft worldwide and the parent company of over 250 subsidiaries. Supported by 14,000 highly skilled aviation professionals, the group operates across 6 continents. The group has almost 100 offices and production stations worldwide.

www.aviasg.com

Republic of Ireland based **ECT Aviation** has acquired its first Britten-Norman BN2T-4S Islander aircraft, expanding its operations into dedicated cargo services between Europe and North Africa. The aircraft will be deployed on high-frequency freight routes, notably linking Lyon Saint Exupéry Airport (LFLY) with key North African destinations.

Flights will be operated in partnership with aviation services provider AVICO, with a focus on high-value, time-sensitive cargo including pharmaceuticals, artwork, precious metals, and critical documentation. Headquartered at Lyon Bron Business Airport (LFLY) and registered in Dublin, ECT currently operates a Pilatus PC-12 NGX for business aviation and MEDEVAC across Europe. The BN2T-4S will mark the company's entry into scheduled freight operations, with service launch expected by late 2025, following delivery of the aircraft this autumn. Operations will be conducted under a German Air Operator Certificate (AOC) via Pro Air.

In addition to this initial purchase, ECT has signed a Letter of Intent for a second BN2T-4S Islander, scheduled for delivery in early 2026. This planned expansion reflects the company's strategic intent to build a dedicated, regionally focused cargo fleet serving markets that require speed, flexibility, and operational resilience.

The BN2T-4S is the largest variant of Britten-Norman's proven utility platform, the Islander. It features twin Rolls-Royce 250 B17F turbo-props (400 hp flat-rated), a stretched fuselage, and a 30% increase in internal cabin space. The aircraft has a maximum take-off weight of 8,500 lbs and offers a range of 805 nautical miles (1,491 km), 7+ hours of endurance, and retains the platform's STOL (short take-off and landing) capability, making it ideal for remote or unprepared strips.



The aircraft will be equipped with the latest Garmin G600 TXi glass cockpit, including 10" primary displays, GTN 750/650Xi NAV/COMM/GPS units, and ADS-B Out transponders – supporting enhanced safety, regulatory compliance, and pilot efficiency.

Smith Myers Communications Ltd are sponsoring the Lifetime Achievement Award at next year's Global Search and Rescue Awards taking place in London on May 15.

Smith Myers have led the Mobile Phone Detection & Location System (MPDLS) market since 1987.

Speaking about this year's ceremony - "We were proud to sponsor and present this prestigious award in such apposite surroundings. We have kept engineering at the heart of our business for 38 years," said Peter Myers, Co-Founder of Smith Myers.

"Staying closely involved with this community is one of our core tenets," added Andrew Munro, Managing Director at Smith Myers. "Only by listening to the experiences and needs of SAR professionals can we continue to evolve ARTEMIS MPDLS to meet the fast-changing operational challenges they face every day."

Smith Myers are collaborating with Daher for the installation of ARTEMIS MPDLS in their **Kodiak Aircraft Company** - Kodiak 900 demonstrator aircraft. The integration also includes a Trakka Systems TC300 Gen 2 sensor, and the Rapid Imaging Solutions, LLC mission system.

Smith Myers greatly appreciates working with the consummate professionals from DAHER, Trakka, Rapid Imaging Solutions, Viewpoint, and CROIX INTERNATIONAL LLC to offer a superbly versatile aircraft suitable for ISR, LE, SAR, wildfire, disaster management, wildlife protection and border security missions to name but a few.

ARTEMIS MPDLS was exhibited at APSCON by Smith Myers, Trakka and Kodiak Aircraft

<https://www.smithmyers.com/>



Metro Gulf, a leading provider of advanced aviation solutions, is developing a Supplemental Type Certificate (STC) for the installation of the FlightSat Starlink in-flight connectivity system on Cessna 208 and 208B Caravan aircraft.

This STC marks a major advancement in airborne connectivity for single-engine turboprops. Caravan operators will have access to high-speed, low-latency broadband internet through the Starlink satellite network, providing download speeds of 100-300 Mbps, upload speeds of 20-40 Mbps, and latency of 20-80 ms in flight.

The installation includes a low-profile antenna, power and data interface, and cabin connectivity system, all optimized for the Caravan's high-utilization mission profile.

Metro Gulf offers installation services directly at its Lafayette, Louisiana USA facility. The company also provides integration support and ongoing maintenance for the Starlink system under the new STC.

STC completion is anticipated for the fourth quarter of 2025, with follow-on aircraft to include the Pilatus PC 12 series and the Daher Kodiak 100.

Metro Gulf, also announced the launch of its new Fixed-Wing Special Mission Console, purpose-built to support a wide range of special mission applications, including surveillance, law enforcement, and border patrol operations.

Building decades of innovation in airborne mission support, Metro Gulf's new mission console combines modularity, durability, and ergonomic design to provide unmatched operational capability in demanding environments. Developed in collaboration with field operators and mission specialists, the console offers customizable configurations to support mission equipment, including sensor control units, radios, mapping systems, and data recording hardware.

"Our goal was to create a truly operator-focused solution that can adapt to evolving mission requirements and we feel that we have achieved that," said Joey Calandra, Director of Maintenance at Metro Gulf. "This new console brings the same level of innovation and reliability that customers have come to expect from Metro Aviation — now available for fixed-wing platforms."

The New Mission Console features a modular design for quick re-configuration and easy maintenance, along with an optimized layout that enhances operator efficiency and reduces fatigue during long missions. It includes integrated power and data management systems to support high-demand equipment and is built with lightweight yet rugged materials for durability in harsh environments.



The console is compatible with multiple fixed-wing platforms, including the Cessna 208/B Caravan, Cessna 408 SkyCourier, King Air, and Pilatus PC-12. It has already undergone successful trials with key government and commercial partners, and installations are underway for U.S.-based operators. With this launch, Metro Gulf continues to strengthen its role as a trusted partner in public safety and special mission aviation.

magniX, and **Robinson Helicopter Company** have agreed to jointly develop a battery electric demonstrator based on the Robinson R66 platform. The two companies plan to have the first flight of this demonstrator take place in late 2026.

magniX will provide its fully integrated electric powertrain for helicopters, including the first of its range of lightweight, high speed HeliStorm engines designed for rotorcraft applications. It will also share its Samson batteries, with the highest energy density in aerospace and unmatched cycle life.

In 2022, magniX powered the first flight of a retrofitted electric Robinson R44 helicopter followed in March 2025 with the world's first piloted flight by a hydrogen-electric helicopter, another retrofitted R44. In 2026, the electrification of the R66 – one of the world's most ubiquitous helicopters with over 1,500 units in service and more than 100 new units sold every year – will revolutionize the vertical take-off and landing (VTOL) market with its single rotor simplicity and flight proven capabilities.

The PhilSCA Flying School has committed support to improving the operational capability of the Air Unit of the **Philippine National Police (PNP)**.

Retired Brig. Gen. Gerardo M. Zamudio Jr., director of the PhilSCA Flying School and Chairman of the Philippine Media Network Service Cooperative, emphasized the vital role the PNP Air Unit will play amid the ongoing pivot to territorial defence of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

This, he said, will leave the PNP to focus on the internal security matters.

In his speech during a ceremony at the PNP Air Unit headed by Police Col. Serafin Petallo, Zamudio highlighted what he described as transformative leadership of PNP Chief Gen. Nicolas Torre III. He compared Torre to a painter who, through reform, is reshaping the image of the police institution marred by past controversies.

The presence of a strong and reliable PNP Air Unit will send a powerful message-not only to criminal elements but to citizens that the PNP is ready, capable, and serious about its mandate.

As has been reported several times by PAN and other leading aviation commentators MD Helicopters continue to lose its grip on police aviation across the world and this is all the more evident in the United States where at one time the sector was evenly spread between MD and Bell helicopters.

A recent comment on-line provides an update on the steady decline in the fortunes of a technology that started with Howard Hughes and the Hughes Tool Co helicopter manufacturing. At one time the Hughes/MD line was pretty much wedded to law enforcement aviation by both military surplus and civil sales.

"It's no secret that MD Helicopters has lost its presence in law enforcement. Let's see if we can compile a list of departments that used to fly an MD product but have since switched to a different manufacturer, or just dumped their MD. This list will not include OH-6's (the military surplus variant).

"Here goes, Border Patrol, CHP, San Diego SD, Orange County CA. SD, Riverside SD, San Bernardino SD, Riverside PD, Newport Beach PD, Costa Mesa PD, Anaheim PD, Corona PD, Long Beach PD, LASD, Ontario PD, Compton PD, Ventura SD, Kern SD, Sacramento SD, San Jose PD, East Bay Regional Parks PD, Phoenix PD, Maricopa SD, Pima SD, Pinal SD, Tulsa PD, Oklahoma City PD, Bernalillo SD, Dallas PD, San Antonio PD, Tampa PD, Citrus SD, Hernando SD, Marion SD, Jacksonville SD, Dekalb Co. PD, Nashville PD, Indiana SP, Louisville Metro PD, Washington DC PD, WVSP. Suffolk Co. PD, Dale SD. Warren PD, Indianapolis Metro PD.

"I didn't include Wichita PD or Hamilton SD since their units were shut down while they had their MD's.

That's a lot of customers to lose over the years!" [Jon Goldin]

Editor: It seems that Jon's list missed one or two that other commentators provided, but it is a long list. He was also concentrating on the USA market so left out many of the foreign use MD500s and most of the operators of the MD900 Explorer series – the type that should have provided continuity of technology from the Vietnam era MD500/369/OH-6. It possibly was a type brought to market before its time – nowadays there is a greater acceptance of the light twin in the US market but in the 1990s that was not the case, the single engine prevailed. That tended to restrict the market for the US product to foreign markets and the total production barely exceeded 100 airframes. Of the Explorer there are some in service across the world but the major players (Belgium, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom) have already given them up



or are about to. MD simply failed to follow through with promises to develop the 900 and even modernised 500/600 projects turned to dust as others, including the Bell 429, picked up a developing 'light twin accepting' market.

In the original single engine market, the winner is all this has been the French designed Aerospatiale/Eurocopter/Airbus AS350/H125. The difference has been development. 50 years ago, the AS350 was a fairly flimsy executive machine, and it is fair to say that the MD product was far superior in robustness and crashworthiness. In the years since one was extensively developed and enhanced in capability and crashworthiness and the other virtually stood still, partially distracted by the dead end that was Notar. Notar never really recovered from outright rejection at birth by the US Army although some, relatively few, remain firmly committed to the technology. It is going the way of airships..

Over the years, time and time again, the customer was denied what they asked for – mainly more engine power. More recently the new owners of MD have had some success with upgrading the 500 airframes to the 530 specifications but it is clear that this has been too little too late and even that option is failing to gain customer acceptance against the latest offerings from Airbus, Bell and Leonardo..

Other commentators have pointed out that in the 500, occupant safety is now compromised due the lack of free space. When avionics or other equipment must be fitted beneath the seats, it reduces or eliminates the effectiveness of the 20G-rated crash attenuating seat and crush-box structure. Because the H125 has the extra power, can carry a greater amount of equipment and increases mission capability, it significantly reduces crew stress. The MD 500 was designed for young 1960s wartime crew members who were light and slender, the general bulk of the older average law enforcement officer, taller, more muscular and heavier can make getting into a 500 difficult.

Although the recently agreed tariff agreement between the **United States (US)** and **European Union (EU)** has its critics the aircraft industry appears to have been somewhat shielded from the worst of the criticism.

The industry appears to be among the big winners as the USA and EU agreed a framework trade deal on tariffs between the two economic powerhouses.

President Donald Trump and the EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen met in Scotland on July 27, where a 15% tariff on European goods entering the US was agreed.

In a subsequent statement, the EU said that there would be "zero-for-zero tariffs on a number of strategic products" including all aircraft and component parts along with certain chemicals, generics, semiconductor



The poster for the Annual Safety Conference 2025 in Copenhagen features a vibrant blue background with abstract circular and wavy patterns. At the top left is the 'EU 2025' logo. The main title 'ANNUAL SAFETY CONFERENCE' is in large white capital letters, followed by the tagline 'AVIATE-NAVIGATE-COMMUNICATE' and 'SAFETY TODAY | SAFETY CROSS-DOMAIN | SAFETY TOMORROW' in smaller white text. The dates 'NOVEMBER 12-13' and the year '2025' are prominently displayed in large yellow and orange font, with 'Copenhagen' in white below. The EASA logo is in the bottom left, and the Trafikstyrelsen logo is at the bottom center. On the right, three overlapping images are shown: a white commercial airplane in flight, a woman in a white lab coat holding a tablet, and a person standing on large rocks by the water.

EU 2025

ANNUAL SAFETY CONFERENCE

AVIATE-NAVIGATE-COMMUNICATE
SAFETY TODAY | SAFETY CROSS-DOMAIN | SAFETY TOMORROW

NOVEMBER 12-13
2025
Copenhagen

EASA

Trafikstyrelsen
Danish Civil Aviation and Railway Authority

equipment, agricultural products, natural resources and critical raw materials.

President Trump had threatened the EU with a 30% tariff but the final deal, though not perfect, seems to suit both sides. The EU confirmed that the framework deal would still involve a small amount of work before being officially signed off.

Hurricane season officially began on June 1, and the most active period in the Americas is fast approaching. At the time of writing, Colorado State's hurricane forecasting team expects there to be 9 hurricanes, including 4 major hurricanes, this season. This would mean a similar season to 2024, which was the 3rd most costly hurricane season on record and featured 2 category 5 hurricanes. Aviation services play a vital role in the immediate response to natural disasters like hurricanes, from delivering essential supplies to ensuring emergency specialists can access the areas where they are needed most.

The global air charter specialist Chapman Freeborn is a leading provider of emergency and humanitarian aviation services. Part of Avia Solutions Group, the company has a recently formed division, **Aviation Emergency Service (AES)**, which is dedicated to this area of work. They have five decades of operational experience - including missions during Hurricanes Katrina, Milton, Dorian, Maria, and Helene. - delivering vital equipment and supplies after a hurricane hits. This typically includes the transport of power generation equipment, along with supplies like water, MRE ("Meals Ready-to-Eat") and foodstuffs. Naturally, medical supplies such as mobile hospitals, equipment, medicines, and vaccines are also needed.



As a charter broker, Chapman Freeborn has long-standing relationships with partners around the world, enabling the quick deployment of any size aircraft, anytime, anywhere. The hurricane season is an unpredictable and stressful time, and this requires additional training exercises to support the team.

Urgent humanitarian relief flights before or after a large hurricane require extensive collaboration to deliver the correct manpower and equipment to the correct location on time.

Chapman Freeborn's global disaster relief work has seen it fly passenger and cargo charters to remote and challenging locations including Pakistan, Haiti, Nepal, Yemen, Darfur, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The Chapman Freeborn Group was established in the UK in 1973. The company has offices worldwide including North America, Europe, Africa, Asia and Australia. In the cargo market, Chapman Freeborn Air-chartering specialises in the charter and lease of aircraft for a wide-ranging customer base, including freight forwarders, multinational corporations, governments, humanitarian agencies and a host of industries around the globe.

Chapman Freeborn is part of Avia Solutions Group, the world's largest ACMI (Aircraft, Crew, Maintenance, and Insurance) provider, operating a fleet of 209 aircraft on 6 continents. The group also provides a range of aviation services: MRO (Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul), pilot and crew training, ground handling, as well as a variety of associated aviation services.

For more information, please visit www.chapmanfreeborn.aero



ACCIDENTS & INCIDENTS

25 April 2025 Bell 407 N407NY. New York Police Department. During a solo flight up the Hudson River the pilot occupied the wrong seat against manufacturer's rules. There are emergency procedures that can only be performed sitting in the right (hand) seat. [New York Post 26/7/25]

June 2025 Bell 407 N407NY New York Police Department Nearly crashed at the Brooklyn home base while flying the unit's Bell 407 training helicopter with a student next to him during a hard landing in the last week in June. "He and the student hit the ground hard," the first source said. Neither was hurt. [New York Post 26/7/2025]

4 July 2025 Bell 407 N407NY New York Police Department Damage caused during flight. Caused structural damage to a \$40,000 tail rotor while practicing a 'quick stop' manoeuvre over rocks [New York Post 26/07/2025]

7 July 2025 Sikorsky UH-60 Black Hawk U.S. Army National Guard helicopter aiding civil authorities. Based wholly on a report from the search authorities on scene at the severe flooding in Kerr County, Texas. A helicopter conducting emergency operations in Kerrville was forced to make an emergency landing after being struck by a "private" drone being flown illegally in restricted airspace, leading to a critical piece of emergency response equipment being taken out of service. It seems that the original story was incorrect and that the drone was operated by an unidentified law enforcement entity on an automatic search sequence. The area was under a temporary flight restriction while crews conduct search and rescue operations. The temporary measure was established after the devastating flooding of the Guadalupe River in the Texas Hill Country on the Fourth of July. [Fox 26/Facebook]

10 July 2025 Eurocopter AS355N Ecureuil twin.9M-PHG Royal Malaysian Police. At least five people were injured when the police helicopter undertaking a nuclear plant security drill got into difficulties and crashed into a river at near Sungai Pulai, near the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency jetty during an honour flypast held as part of the MITSATOM 2025 exercise involving Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, and Singapore. The helicopter entered the water upright and at a high sink rate. All five on board were rescued two reported to be badly injured.

13 July 2025 Beechcraft B200 Super King Air PH-ZAZ Air ambulance operated by Zeus Aviation BV, in the Netherlands. Took off from London Stansted Airport on a positioning flight to Lelystad Airport in the Netherlands and immediately turned over and crashed onto the grassed area adjacent and burst into flames killing four on board. Two pilots, a doctor and a flight nurse. ADS-B data suggest that the aircraft arrived at SEN at 13:49 UTC after a repatriation flight from Pula (PUY), Croatia. It remained on the ground at SEN for about an hour and began taxiing to runway 05 at 14:52 UTC. It backtracked on the runway and began the take-off roll at 14:57 UTC. After lifting off the runway, an eyewitness reported that the aircraft rolled left, almost to an inverted position, before it hit the ground.

20 July 2025 Airbus Helicopter H135 N620MT(?). Air ambulance of the University of Mississippi Medical Center' operating with the Smith County Emergency Management, as Rescue 7 reported to have made a precautionary landing whilst undertaking a patient transfer from Hattiesburg to Jackson, Mississippi. The pilot made the emergency landing on open grassland near SCR 57 north of Mount Olive, MS, [WJTV News]

22 July 2025 Sikorsky S-64E Skycrane N194AC helicopter operating on behalf of the Greek authorities by Erickson on firefighting mission. Crashed into the sea off the Elefsina Gulf, in the Athens region. Ended up upside down in water visible. The three people on board are in good health and have already been pulled from the sea. The helicopter was trying to fill with water, and behind it, at a higher altitude, there was a second helicopter for the same water supply process.

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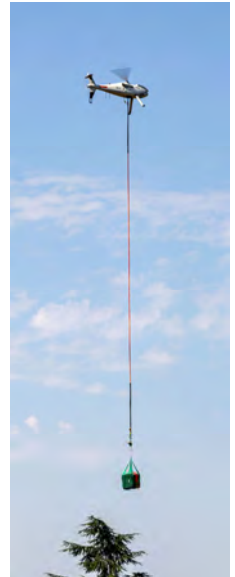
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UNMANNED

Schiebel's CAMCOPTER® S-100 Unmanned Air System (UAS) successfully participated in the European Defence Agency's (EDA) first-ever Operational Experimentation (OPEX) campaign, showcasing its autonomous cross domain logistics capabilities in a complex, simulated operational environment.

Held over five weeks at the Italian Army's Multifunctional Experimentation Centre (CEPOLISPE) and UTTAT (Ufficio Tecnico Territoriale Armamenti Terrestri di Nettuno), the campaign brought together six leading European defence companies to showcase the performance of Unmanned Air and Ground Systems (UAS and UGS) executing autonomous logistics missions across both the aerial and terrestrial domains.

The event marked a significant step in fostering innovation and interoperability within the European defence landscape. Schiebel's CAMCOPTER® S-100 conducted multiple daily logistics missions using an underslung cargo net, successfully transporting suspended cargo of more than 50 kg under challenging battlefield conditions.



The U.S. Department of Homeland Security just published a TechNote outlining the framework for the procurement of authorised equipment for Drone as First Responder systems.

In an emergency, a fast response saves lives. Unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) or 'drones' have become a critical tool for providing real-time situational awareness in public safety operations. A Drone as First Responder (DFR) system includes prepositioned drones at launch stations, enabling rapid, remote UAS deployment to an incident.

Launch stations are spaced strategically so drones can arrive on the scene in minutes, often before emergency response personnel. The drones transmit critical information back to emergency teams in real time, allowing for faster and better-informed decision-making.

This equipment falls under the DHS Authorized Equipment List (AEL) number 03OE-07-SUAS, titled "Systems, Small Unmanned Aircraft."

Homeland Security (DHS) established the System Assessment and Validation for Emergency Responders (SAVER) program to inform emergency responder equipment selection and procurement decisions. Under the Science and Technology Directorate, the National Urban Security Technology Laboratory (NUSTL) manages the SAVER program, which – with the participation of emergency responders – performs objective operational assessments of commercially available equipment.

SAVER publications provide information about equipment that falls under the DHS Authorized Equipment List (AEL) categories and focus on two questions for the responder community: "What equipment is available?" and "How does it perform?"

The 2-page document can be [accessed here](#).

PEOPLE

The National Aeronautic Association (NAA) has awarded MedAire founder, Joan Sullivan Garrett, with the 2025 Wright Brothers Memorial Trophy.

Garrett founded MedAire in 1985, inspired by her experiences as a critical-care flight nurse and chief medical officer to ensure basic emergency medical treatment would be available to everyone, no matter where they were. The company states that it provides expert medical care, training, and equipment to clients in the air, on land and at sea.



Garrett provided testimony in 2001 to the U.S. Congress which is considered to have prompted the FAA to require airlines to carry automated external defibrillators and enhanced emergency medical kits. She served as MedAire's CEO until 2006, and she served as both chair and vice chair of the NBAA Advisory Council from 2011-2015.

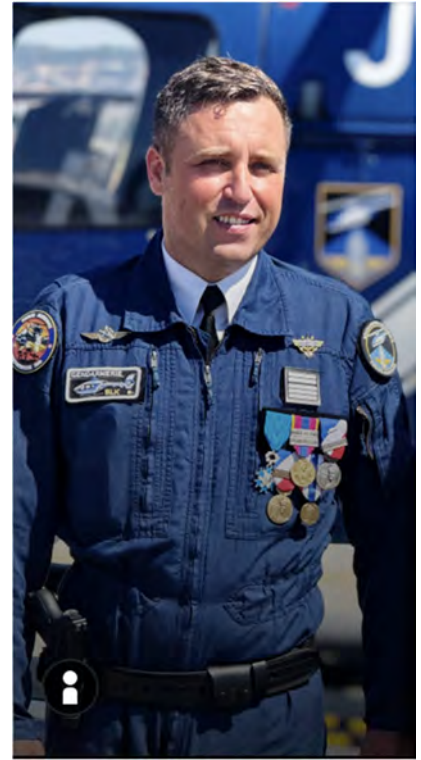
The Wright Brothers Trophy has been presented by NAA in partnership with the Aero Club of Washington since 1948. The award recognizes a living American for significant public service of enduring value to aviation in the United States and will be displayed at the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum. The NAA's 77th Annual Wright Memorial Dinner will be on December 12, 2025, in Washington, DC USA

On July 1, 2025, the change of command of the Air Force of the Southern Gendarmerie took place at the Air Section of the Gendarmerie of Hyères (a French town on the Mediterranean coast). This symbolic moment saw Colonel PATIER hand over command to Colonel Julien BULLOCK. The change of command will officially take effect on August 1, 2025.

Colonel PATIER, whose command has been praised for his commitment, rigour and proximity to the units, will take over as head of the Landes Departmental Gendarmerie Group as of August 1, 2025.

Colonel BULLOCK, [right] who succeeds him, has until now held the position of Chief of Operations at the Air Force Staff of the National Gendarmerie. His arrival at the head of the Southern Air Force marks a continuity in the operational requirements and influence of this strategic unit. He is now taking over, with the stated desire to continue this operational dynamic and meet the challenges ahead.

This ceremony took place in the presence of Lieutenant General A. BROWAËYS, Commander of the Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur Gendarmerie Region and the Southern Defence and Security Zone, and by General JOSSE, Commander of the Air Forces of the National Gendarmerie, the Prefect of the Var, as well as many civil and military authorities.



Metro Aviation is proud to announce the promotion of Chad Lavolette to Operational Control centre Manager.

Chad joined Metro Aviation two years ago as an Operational Control Centre Specialist and has quickly proven himself as a trusted leader committed to safety, communication, and operational excellence. With over 30 years of combined military and aviation experience, Chad brings a wealth of operational knowledge and leadership to his new role.

A retired U.S. Army First Sergeant, Chad led large, diverse teams and coordinated statewide recruiting operations before transitioning into civil aviation. He holds a bachelor's degree in professional aviation and has experience as a licensed pilot, aeronautical chart specialist, and OCC professional. His proven ability to lead under pressure, his dedication to detail, and his unwavering focus on mission success make him an outstanding fit to lead our Operational Control

More rewards for failure in the face of migrant traffic emerged last month. Sir Matthew John Rycroft KCMG CBE a 1968 born British civil servant and diplomat who served as Permanent Under-Secretary of State Home Office from March 2020 to March 2025, has retired from his role which included overlooking the migrant crisis and picked up some 'unseemly' bonuses.

Rycroft previously served as Permanent Secretary at the Department for International Development (DFID) from 2018 to 2020 and as the Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York from 2015 to 2018.

In February 2025 Rycroft announced he was retiring as Permanent Under-Secretary of State and was paid over £455,000 despite record numbers of boat migrants being reported as entering Britain.



MOVE ALONG THERE

The recently published annual report of NPAS has naturally caused some comment from those that remember better times before the creation of the UK national police air support 'solution.'

To put the latest set of figures in historical content the thoughts of someone who has been there and done it at the front of technology in the Northwest of England and, subsequently, elsewhere on the world stage. He was also a leading figure in the integration of airborne digital radio into the whole fleet.

For Steve Fitzgerald, still resident in the northwest of England and having knowledge gleaned from operating police aircraft in Lancashire and the Caribbean Sea one thing that jumped out of the report as a bit of a shock was the base operating hours away from London. Clearly it was the northwest where he was most knowledgeable.

What used to be covered by five aircraft, and probably one of the busiest groupings in the country, Merseyside, Greater Manchester Police (GMP), Lancashire, Cheshire and North Wales now has one 24-hour aircraft at Barton (GMP), and one 12 hours base at Hawarden (North Wales). The North West Air Consortium in the early 2,000's wrote the manual of no cost mutual aid, and flew around 4,500 hours annually.

The northeast is no better with two aircraft covering the Scottish border to East Midlands, includes Newcastle, Sunderland, Leeds, Sheffield, Hull to name a few very high-risk areas. That effectively is three helicopters flying 24-hour units covering the entire north of England north of the midlands.

And on a 65% availability rate! 15 years ago, in Lancashire they boasted a 95% availability, the one that let them down at about 80% was the GMP MD Explorer generally waiting for engine parts. GMP were a little unlucky in that their first Explorer was a brilliant high availability airframe that tempted them to buy another. Unfortunately, the new acquisition turned out to be a real dog, like too many of the type in UK police service, that left them in the crew room awaiting the attention of the engineers.



He opines that a £48M budget, just to arrive at 11,000 total hours equals costing £4,500 each flying hour pales against what was then normal.

The fact that NPAS are carrying 30 vacancies and often flying just pilot and one TFO is unsustainable. They will never address this, hence why we need to fill the gaps and come up with a viable alternative that puts local back into air support. [Steve Fitzgerald]

Editor: As our late Queen Elizabeth II stated "recollections may vary" but most agree that UK police air support has seen better days.... Weeks Years.

TODAY

Coinciding with the blast from the past NPAS announced that it had provided aerial support to Lancashire Constabulary during a targeted day of action in Ribbleson, Preston, focusing on illegal off-road bikes, E-bikes, Sur-Rons, and illegally modified bicycles.

The operation, part of Operation Centurion, led to the seizure of 40 vehicles, including uninsured and suspected stolen bikes. Cannabis was also recovered, and educational advice was given to young people and their parents.

This deployment also supported line training for a new NPAS pilot. The aircraft was later relieved by another pilot, meaning two fixed-wing aircraft were operational over Preston during the operation - maximising coverage and coordination with officers on the ground.

Editor: All of which adds to the ongoing confusion that is NPAS! I distinctly recall the big rows that reportedly took place between the Metropolitan Police (NPAS London) crews and a certain Chief Inspector Watson (who was not an active flyer and was supposed to be in charge of NPAS ground staff) over why the air crews were wasting time and effort pursuing rogue motor bikes in east London, at the time one of their prime functions.



RECENT EVENTS

RIAT 2025

The International Air Tattoo (RIAT) attracted the cameras of PAN photographers and brought forth some announcements and comment. This year seems to have seen a particularly extensive effort by the Canadian's with the Dash-8 derived airframes.

Canadian company PAL Aerospace is now the first to deliver next-gen SATCOM to contractor-owned ISR fleets via its Force Multiplier program: <https://palaerospace.com/coco-satcom/>

Additionally, the fleet now operates with HENSOLDT's PrecISR radar, integrated with CarteNav's AIMS-ISR software to enable all-domain surveillance in one system: <https://cartenav.com/news/products/hensoldt-precisr/>

Also at RIAT 2025 with the theme of 'Eyes in the Sky' was the Metrea DHC-8 Q300 'Fireswift'.

Metrea selected this airframe for firefighting it can carry up to 5,700 litres of water, foam or fire retardant maximizing the type's versatility. The on-board mission commander who can use the inbuilt EI/OR FMV to detect fires and develop an efficient attack profile.



Fisheries Patrol Reims Cessna F406 Caravan II operated by the Airtask Group sitting next to one of the Home Office Dash *s at RIAT.





A Leonardo AW101 Merlin from the Portuguese Air Force / Força Aérea Portuguesa 751 Squadron SAR performing at RIAT. The FAP celebrates 20 years of the Merlin in service, it was largely selected to replace the SA330H Puma for SAR coverage of the Azores in terms of range and endurance, operating from Lajes Air Base.

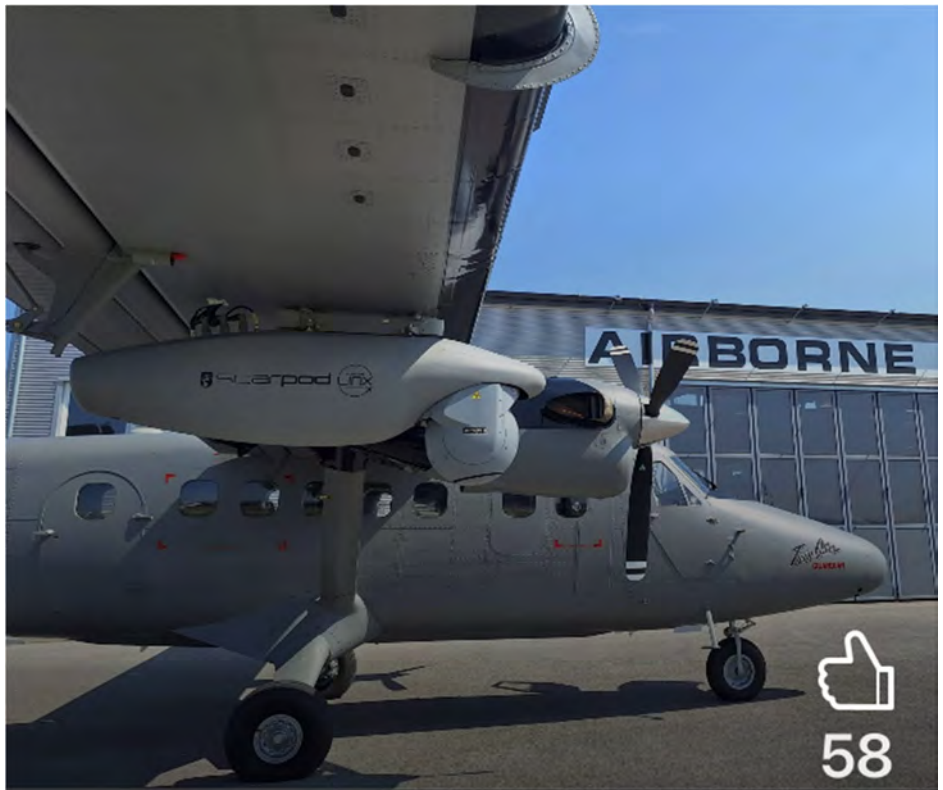
Also at RIAT were Airborne Technologies with their recently completed DHC Twin Otter demonstrator [right].

UPCOMING EVENTS

2028 L.A. Olympics and Paralympics. A comprehensive guide to at every official venue for the \$7.1 billion 2028 Los Angeles Olympic and Paralympic Games has now appeared on the internet to allow you to see which events will be local, Not all of the venues are in Los Angeles.

The 2028 Games are predicted to be the largest in modern Olympic history. L.A. will host the Paralympics for the first time. The proper stage for the more than 15,000 athletes competing in 2028 requires more than just Hollywood's most iconic landmarks.

From the Pacific Ocean to the San Gabriel Mountains to the great plains in Oklahoma, the Olympics will use more than 30 venues to host 36 sports and 52 disciplines.





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