

Police Aviation News

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Issue 354

October 2025



**DENMARK BUY AGAIN
SCOTTISH CHARITY H145**

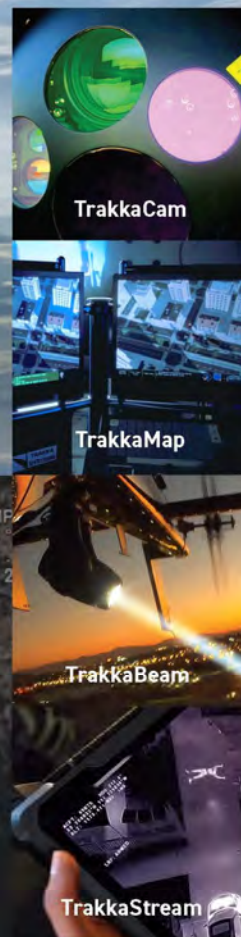


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AUSTRALIA

SOUTH AUSTRALIA: South Australia Police (SAPOL) has achieved its best-ever result in the national Lifeblood Emergency Services Blood Drive Challenge, climbing three places from last year to finish fourth nationally with 683 donations. SAPOL's contribution will help save 2049 lives.

In addition to its national success, SAPOL once again retained the top spot in South Australia, outperforming other emergency service organisations across the state.

The annual blood drive, run by Australian Red Cross Lifeblood from the start of June to the end of August, asked emergency services workers to compete and make the highest number of blood and plasma donations.

This year, SAPOL exceeded their goal of 600 donations, contributing a total of 683 donations placing it just behind Victoria Police, the NSW Police force, and the Victorian Country Fire Authority. [National Tribune]

CANADA

ONTARIO: The first of the two new H135s for Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) was registered on 29th August as C-FOPT, msn 2315. It is currently believed that it will be with Airbus at Fort Eric for some months getting kitted for OPP. Their second one should be registered and start the completion process early November.

DENMARK

HJEMMEVAERNET (HOMEGUARD): Following the successful delivery of two customised DHC-6-300 patrol aircraft at the beginning of this year the Danish Homeguard has now placed an order for third aircraft to the same specification. [Airborne Technologies]



SOUTH AFRICA

EASTERN CAPE POLICE: From time to time police aviation units fall on hard times and either downsize or disband. There have been plenty of examples over the years.

The police in South Africa were once held in very high regard (rightly or wrongly) but from numerous reports it is clear that they are struggling to provide the service they once did.

A recent report in The Herald newspaper has set out many of the problems faced by the police in Eastern Cape Province. Its capital is Bhisho, and its largest city is Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth). The region is the size of Uruguay, the second largest of South Africa's nine provinces, with a surface area of 168,966 square kilometres (65,238 square miles). It covers 13.8% of the country's total land area.

According to the Democratic Alliance Party the South African Police Service's aerial capacity in the Eastern Cape has collapsed, leaving the province with only one operational helicopter to serve millions of residents. One helicopter has been grounded for more than six years while awaiting repairs. The absence of aerial capacity means criminals can operate across vast rural and urban areas without fear of rapid response or effective pursuit.

COVER IMAGE: The Scottish Charity Air Ambulance has moved on in great strides in recent years. From humble beginnings with a pre-owned Bolkow BO105 in 2013 it has progressively upgraded its aircraft to a point where now it has taken delivery of a brand new state-of-the art Airbus H145D3 G-NSCA c/n 21364 to replace its 25-years old EC 135T2+ G-SCAA c/n 0151 as *Helimed 79* based at SCAA's Aberdeen International Airport base.

It is seen here over the M9 Motorway and The Kelpies, a pair of *monumental steel horse-heads* between the Scottish towns of Falkirk and Grangemouth. [SCAA]

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In recent years the province had been allocated four helicopters, but only one, based at the Bulembu airport, was operational. One helicopter has been grounded since July 2019, when it was taken out of service for its periodic 12-year inspection, and has yet to return to service six years later and there is still no contract in place to undertake the work. It has also been revealed that even if the helicopters are brought back into service, the SAPS would not have sufficient pilots to get them airborne. The response indicated that while eight helicopter pilots were required, only two were currently employed, one in Gqeberha and the other at Bulembu Airport. To compare with other nations the single helicopter and handful of drones cover an area a little under the size of the United Kingdom.

The province is allocated a fixed-wing aircraft, none was operational in the province and of the 77 drones supposed to be operational, only five had been deployed.

Despite the clear dearth of resources the province plans to open a new police air wing unit at the Mthatha Airport (formerly Umtata Airport).

With one helicopter awaiting maintenance since 2019 and another damaged following a previously unreported November 2020 hard landing. Covid-19 has been rolled out as a part cause of the problems, but money has its clear pressure points. The most recent grounding was of an R44 due to the manufacturer issuing a Safety Bulletin requiring all the type having to have new tail rotors. That was in July 2024. [The Herald SA]

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SPAIN

POLICIA: The Spanish Police (Policia) are to acquire a new Pilatus PC24 jet. Serial number 596 has recently been allocated a test reg HB-VSE at the factory in Switzerland and in due course became EC-ONT as marked here in an image from September 22. [Parapex/Stephan Widmer]

The Spanish order for new H135s for government use is now complete and all 36 H135s have been built and delivered over the last three years. The Navy took seven examples and the Air Force eleven.

The others included nine for the Policia -

EC-NZE	c/n 2186	Angel 01
EC-NZK	c/n 2195	Angel 02
EC-NZX	c/n 2201	Angel 03
EC-OCD	c/n 2208	Angel 04
EC-OEN	c/n 2233	Angel 05
EC-OEZ	c/n 2239	Angel 06
EC-OIC	c/n 2257	Angel 07
EC-OKF	c/n 2265	Angel 08
EC-OLD	c/n 2273	Angel 09

Nine others went to Guardia Civil - these have two codes:-

HU.26-28A	c/n 2185	09-314	10280
HU.26-29A	c/n 2187	09-315	10281
HU.26-30A	c/n 2202	09-316	10282
HU.26-31A	c/n 2207	09-317	10283
HU.26-36A	c/n 2229	09-318	10302
HU.26-37A	c/n 2235	09-319	10303
HU.26-40A	c/n 2256	09-320	10335
HU.26-43A	c/n 2263	09-321	10354
HU.26-45A	c/n 2271	09-322	10356

These are not all recent deliveries, the Guardia Civil 09*318 (below) appeared at the European Rotors show in Madrid in late 2023 [PAR]



UNITED KINGDOM

NATIONAL: On September 1, after the last edition of *Police Aviation News* had been published the National Police Air Service (NPAS) announced its participation in the Emergency Services Show at the NEC Birmingham on September 17-18.

NPAS announced their programme but unfortunately circumstances and their diaries worked against them on the intended format. The NPAS team were all present on day one with a representative BVLOS airframe. The new Chief Operating Officer, Chief Superintendent Fiona Gaffney, and David Walters, Head of Futures and Innovation were on hand to explain the ongoing project to anyone that was asking for details. The planned presentation marked Fiona's first public address in her new role, offering a behind-the-scenes look at how NPAS operates and its bold vision for the future. In the event the speaking part was a podcast format with an immediate audience of one. Along with all the other podcasts the words will be a podcast available on-line on the ESS website. <https://emergencyservicetimes.com/for-every-response> in a few weeks time.

The new Chief Operating Officer, Ch. Supt. Fiona Gaffney (centre) and her team on the stand at the Emergency Services Show. [NPAS]



The Scheibel 101 drone on site at the NEC was representative only. It was without an engine and the "MX-10" EO/IR turret was a dummy. The real sensor was inevitably held back by ITAR regulations. The operational airframes remain at the Avonmouth test site.

There are no real updates on last months text on the BVLOS trials, details like the usual problems with other aircraft flying into the test zone in contravention of the no fly edict were as expected. After all these years the military remain the prime offender in not switching on their IFF and making life difficult for the NPAS staff and even more so for local air traffic control at Bristol and Cardiff.



Older readers will recall that it was not so far from the test site that a secretive RAF Tucano with no IFF transmitting nearly took out the Avon and Somerset police helicopter in a collision over Wookey Hole in September 1997. The damage was light but there was an impact.

The news on 9/11/6977



It is fair to say that both the US FAA and the UK CAA are having 'problems' with drone technology. It is new to everyone and on both sides of the Atlantic confusion reigns. Almost everywhere 'the police' are a special case. In EASA territory (including the UK) the regulations recognise that police air vehicles can opt to be state aircraft or regulated by the civil regulations and even if they opt for civil they can pick and choose instances where they may want to temporarily become state aircraft and pretty much do as they like.

As can be appreciated this causes some nightmares for the regulatory authority, in this case the CAA. The situation is exacerbated by all sides not really having certainty in all areas of their knowledge most of the time. It is a steep learning curve for all.

Fitting into this grey world of the unknown is the latest move by the NPCC Drones team in London. They are undertaking Drones as First Responders (DFR) trials in the capital city. Superintendent Taryn Evans the strategic lead for the National Police Chiefs' Council Drones team has spoken of operations "elsewhere in England" but nothing specific about London.

As has been pointed out previously there are big question marks over single engine drones over built up areas. The quad copters being used may have four electric motors and they should be light enough to not kill any passing pedestrians but that is based on equally grey knowledge. They are being equipped with parachutes (see last month) and have not killed anyone yet but a similar scenario applied to hospital landing pads a year ago and that had to be fixed. Hopefully there will never be a shock day!

In wrapping up their presence at the NEC taking in the audiences of the Emergency Tech Show and the Emergency Services Show for a first appearance NPAS declared it was a valuable opportunity to show-



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case how NPAS is engaging with emerging technologies to support future air operations.

One of the highlights from Day Two was a conversation between Chief Superintendent Fiona Gaffney MSc and Sophie-Louise O'Sullivan Director for Future of Flight at the Civil Aviation Authority, discussing the potential of BVLOS (Beyond Visual Line of Sight) uncrewed aircraft in supporting missions (both pictured right).

On day one NPAS had been involved in recording a pod cast on their presence at the show and in the market in general. Both items are expected to feature on-line in due course.



NPAS expect to give a presentation on their unmanned operations at the Drone X event at ExCel on September 31 or October 1 [see page40 this edition].

Blue Light Commercial is collaborating with NPAS to explore a potential future tender opportunity for the provision of Emergency Services Network (ESN) aircraft design and installation services across both rotary and fixed wing aircraft.

A promotional poster for the 'ANNUAL SAFETY CONFERENCE' held in Copenhagen on November 12-13, 2025. The poster has a blue background with abstract shapes. At the top left is the 'DK 2025' logo. The main title 'ANNUAL SAFETY CONFERENCE' is in large white letters, followed by the tagline 'AVIATE-NAVIGATE-COMMUNICATE' and 'SAFETY TODAY | SAFETY CROSS-DOMAIN | SAFETY TOMORROW'. The dates 'NOVEMBER 12-13' and the year '2025' are prominently displayed in orange and white, with 'Copenhagen' below. Logos for EASA and Trafikstyrelsen are at the bottom left. On the right, there are three overlapping images: a commercial airplane in flight, a woman in a headset, and a person on a boat.

On August 29. A Request for Information (RFI) was issued to engage with market suppliers to seek to understand the capabilities available and formulate a procurement strategy. Meanwhile the actual operational roll out of ESN remains very much a mystery to all so time apparently remains on the side of the any would be contractor. The presence of ESN at the recent Emergency Services Show was very low profile.

THE TRUMP VISIT

Drones and marine units were part of the comprehensive security operation being prepared in Windsor for the second state visit by US President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump on September 17 and 18.

The late Queen Elizabeth II welcomed the Republican leader during his first term in office in 2019, and this is the first time the Republican leader will meet King Charles since he became monarch. Traditionally, second-term US Presidents are not offered another state visit, but Mr Trump was issued an 'unprecedented' and undoubtedly political motivated, invitation during discussions with Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer on a UK-US trade deal in February.

Thames Valley Police's Drone Unit was deployed, and support from the National Police Air Service, including the fixed wing aircraft, were active in the area to monitor and enforce the restricted airspace.

Talking about the 'significant security operation', Chief Inspector Matthew Wilkinson, of the Thames Valley Police Joint Operations Unit, said: "We will have resources available and tactics deployed to enforce these restrictions and deal with anybody who fails to adhere to them.

"There will be policing drone tactics that the public will see, as well as policing drone tactics that the public won't see. These are all in place to keep everyone safe.'

Sitting in the background though is an allegation that the cheap and useful Chinese light drones come with software that spies on the user. It may be an American paranoia but it does have more than a grain of truth about it and no doubt UK police will eventually have to comply and find something more user friendly. Replacing the cheap DJI's and their systems with 'clean' home produced electronics is not going to be cheap and may well bridge the favourable gap drones currently have over manned airframes.

UNITED STATES

NATIONAL: The gloves are off in the US war against drug trafficking by sea. On September 2 a vessel, which President Trump said was transporting illegal narcotics and heading to the U.S., was hit by a missile fired by the U.S. military in the southern Caribbean. The impact and explosion of the unidentified ordnance blew up the boat, its load and killed eleven persons.

This still image (right) from a video posted by President Trump shows the moment of impact.

Trump said in a subsequent press call that the dead are alleged to be members of the Venezuelan cartel Tren de Aragua. The strike occurred while the terrorists were at sea in International waters transporting illegal narcotics, heading to the United States. In the immediate aftermath of the event the US Government had not provided information on where exactly the strike took place, nor has it given any details on the evidence it used to determine that the boat's occupants were members of the Tren de Aragua gang.

Experts have argued that the attack was illegal, despite the terror designation. The US is not engaged in an armed conflict with Venezuela or the Tren de Aragua criminal organization. [MSN]



ARIZONA: The Pinal County Sheriff's Office (PCSO) has added a new Airbus H125 helicopter to its Aviation Unit. The aircraft, commonly referred to in the USA as an A-Star, enhances the agency's ability to conduct lifesaving and enforcement operations.

The H125 was obtained through funding provided by the Arizona Department of Emergency and Military Affairs (DEMA). DEMA is funding a lease through to October 2027, then the PCSO has the option to buy the helicopter for US\$1.

It is the county's second helicopter that is also equipped with a hoist system. The H125 is more fuel efficient and has lower operating costs than the current UH-1 Huey. PCSO will keep the Huey for its ability to operate in higher temperatures and elevations. The Huey also has a higher capacity for more crew, and rescue subjects can be carried inside the cabin.

The H125 is outfitted with a Trakka Systems EO/IR camera, Trakka mapping software and a Trakka searchlight.

FLORIDA: Broward County Sheriff's Office based in Fort Lauderdale, is to add a third H145 to its fleet to enhance the departments mission capabilities.

It will be the first law enforcement configured H145 to join the fleet. The department already operates two H145 configured to undertake the fire rescue role.



FLORIDA/NATIONAL: The US Coast Guard's Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron (HITRON) achieved a significant milestone in its counter-drug mission, completing its 1,000th interdiction of suspected narco-trafficking vessels on August 25.

Since October 1, 2024, HITRON has interdicted \$3.3 billion in illicit narcotics destined for the United States via maritime routes, a three-fold increase over its historic annual average of \$1 billion.

From its humble beginnings as a prototype programme based on the McDonnell Douglas MD900 and Agusta A109, it has evolved into a vital force in counter-narcotics efforts using the standard USCG helicopters, the MH-65 Dolphin. This milestone is a powerful reminder of the strategic value of this specialized unit in addressing the evolving complex maritime security challenges.

HITRON was founded in 1999 as a classified prototype concept to test the ability of Coast Guard aircraft to employ precision fire to disable narcotics smuggling vessels. With impressive early results, this team grew from the initial ten personnel to its current size of over 200 Active Duty, Reservists, and civilian members, including an exchange pilot from the United Kingdom's Royal Navy.

KENTUCKY: The State Police are expected to shortly take delivery of a Bell 429 N285SP c/n 57546. The aircraft is in completion at the Bell Facility in Piney Flats, Tennessee. [CS-Facebook]

LOUISIANA: DeSoto Parish Sheriff's Office, Louisiana, has confirmed an upgrade programme to its Bell OH-58 Kiowa helicopter.

Law enforcement equipment will include a Trakka mapping system and Aero Dynamix night vision goggles compatible interior, including a Garmin GTN 650Xi touchscreen flight navigator, a Macro-Blue 15.6in TFO cockpit display.

Louisiana continued:

Elsewhere in the state the State Police have reportedly bought a used Bell 429 outfitted as an executive transport for use by the State Governor. A second Bell 429 is early in the acquisition phase and it is currently assumed the pair will replace the long serving Bell 430 helicopters.

NEW YORK CITY: As the last edition of PAN went to press the depressing management problems at the NYPD air unit got worse as the *New York Post* of August 30 released more details. The New York Post was the first media to break the news and it has consistently followed up those initial revelations.

Three well-qualified NYPD pilots were claiming that they set aside by the now retired boss of the unit Winston Faison and that he had put his black cronies ahead of them. The Post quoted papers lodged with the court.

Pilots Joseph Medina, Vlad Ravich and David Ebrigt are suing former unit boss Faison, along with the city, in Manhattan Supreme Court for unspecified damages, alleging they were retaliated against for reporting safety issues and lost promotions and benefits because of the discrimination.

It is alleged that Army National Guardsman Medina, 39, returned from deployment in the Middle East from 2021-2023 to find that Faison had removed him from a promotions list and replaced him with a less experienced black pilot. Medina, is Hispanic, he transferred into the unit with multiple advanced pilot licenses in 2015 and was on the list to be promoted to detective when he was deployed to the Middle East in 2021. Although well qualified, on his return he had been removed from the training role on the grounds that he had not trained police pilots for a while. His National Guard duties had included pilot training.

Ebrigt, 44, who joined the unit in March 2024, accused Faison of hiding the damage to the Bell 407 training helicopter tail rotor. It is also stated that if the damage had not been highlighted prior to flight that it was damage likely to have led to a serious crash. Ebrigt flew the NYPD's so called 'spy plane' from Islip Airport on Long Island. It is a Cessna 208 used for transportation and surveillance. He was unexpectedly withdrawn from Islip and recalled to the main base at Floyd Bennett Field. His replacement was a black officer. Ebrigt decided to leave the unit after the July 4 damage to the Bell 407.

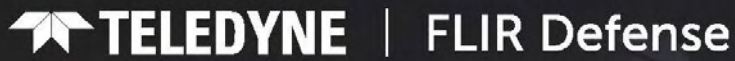
As if that was not enough trouble for the unit a later report from a podcast called The Sal Greco Show alleged that a Bell 429 was destroyed while being operated on August 13 and the unit was involved in a near miss on September 24. Salvatore "Sal" Greco is a Former 14 year New York Police Department (NYPD) veteran who was terminated in 2022, ostensibly for his political connections including the Trump camp. He has over 130 podcasts on-line that in the main probe and comment on corruption issues.



The truth about the "destruction" of the Bell 429 is unclear as the report later states that it was apparently confined to the \$500,000 main rotor blade. The second new incident is said to be during a recent visit by President Donald Trump to the UN on September 24 two NYPD helicopters narrowly avoided a collision in the air above the congested New York City area. Both incidents were initially kept out of the public view, no doubt overshadowed by other events including malfunctioning UN escalators and finger pointing in Presidential helicopters.

Faison was removed from the Aviation Unit in July after allegedly attempting to thwart the FAA attempts to investigate complaints, including one about the tail rotor. The unit is now under the leadership of Deputy Inspector Ronald Ramos and Chief Wilson Arambales – neither of whom are pilots. Clearly the NYPD air unit is an ongoing problem area.

The advertisement is for 'Smith Myers Artemis' technology. On the left is the 'smith myers' logo in white. In the center, the text reads 'TURNS ANY MOBILE PHONE INTO A LOCATION BEACON' in white, followed by 'DETECT - LOCATE - COMMUNICATE' and the website 'artemis.smithmyers.com'. On the right is a photograph of the Artemis device, which is a black, rectangular electronic unit with various ports and a small screen. To the far right is the 'ARTEMIS' logo, which features a stylized white 'A' inside a circle with radiating lines, set against a dark blue background.

The logo for Teledyne FLIR Defense, featuring a stylized white star icon to the left of the text "TELEDYNE | FLIR Defense" in a bold, white, sans-serif font.A close-up, high-angle view of the Star SAFIRE 380X-HDc sensor mounted on a helicopter. The sensor is a compact, boxy unit with several circular lenses and a complex internal structure. It is illuminated by a bright light source, possibly the sun, creating a strong glare and highlighting its metallic surfaces. The background is a dark, textured surface, likely the helicopter's fuselage or a night sky.

[COMPACT] GAME CHANGER

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AIR AMBULANCE AUSTRALIA

TASMANIA: Australian aviation provider StarFlight has placed an order for three Airbus H145 helicopters to provide emergency helicopter services for the Ambulance Tasmania and Tasmania Police. The H145 fleet is set to enter service in late 2027, with the aircraft performing missions across Tasmania, Australia's smallest and least populous state. The main island is roughly 200 miles by 200 miles and the population around half a million people.

The order follows StarFlight's recent selection to deliver emergency air services in the State, reinforcing the Tasmanian Government's commitment to modernising its airborne response capabilities. With this order, StarFlight becomes a new Airbus customer.

The fleet will be based in Hobart, delivering a versatile platform for aeromedical, SAR and aerial law enforcement missions. The aircraft's ability to rapidly reconfigure between mission types was a decisive factor in the Tasmanian Government's selection, offering for its operational needs.

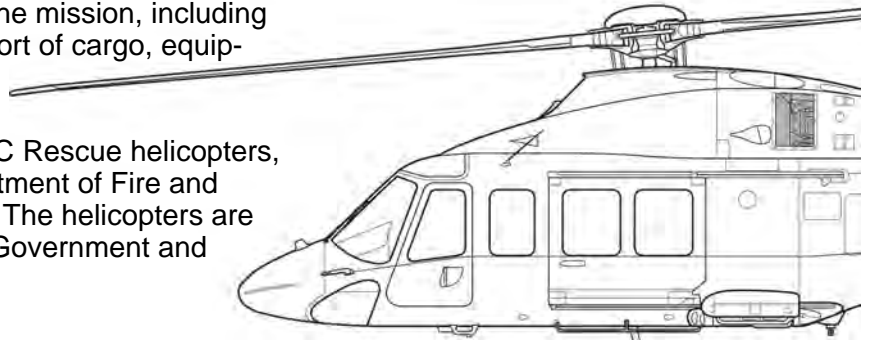
The new fleet is expected to fly approximately 1,500 hours annually over the next decade, providing essential lifesaving services across Tasmania. Airbus will provide parts support through its established local ecosystem, ensuring optimal performance and uptime. [Airbus]



WESTERN AUSTRALIA: The state government has launched a fleet of next generation RAC Rescue helicopters using three new Leonardo AW139 aircraft that offer an almost 40% increase in speed capability, increased range and to reach more people in remote places with improved equipment and capability. The \$26.7M commitment to bolster Western Australia's emergency response, known as RAC Rescue, feature some of the most advanced search and rescue technology and aeromedical equipment available.

The larger cabin can fit more stretchered patients and can be quickly reconfigured to suit the needs of the mission, including carrying up to 10 seated people or transport of cargo, equipment and humanitarian aid.

The new fleet replace the Bell 412EP RAC Rescue helicopters, which had been in service with the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) since 2003. The helicopters are managed by DFES, funded by the State Government and sponsored by RAC.



Launching from bases at Jandakot and Bunbury, the RAC Rescue helicopters are crewed 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and provide vital search and rescue and aeromedical capabilities.

Since the first flight on 11 August 2003, the Emergency Rescue Helicopter Service has completed more than 10,500 missions and flown over 2.25 million kilometres across WA. DFES delivers the Emergency Rescue Helicopter Service alongside its emergency services partners CHC Helicopters Australia, St John WA, the Australian Maritime and Safety Authority, WA Police Force and the Department of Health.

CANADA

NEWFOUNDLAND: The provincial ambulance programme provides emergency and routine medical transportation in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador and responds to over 110,000 requests for service every year. To meet the emergency care and medical transportation needs of the province, Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services (NLHS) operates a single integrated public ambulance service that includes 150 ambulances distributed over 83 operating bases as well as both fixed wing and rotary wing dedicated air ambulance aircraft.

Medavie Health NL Inc. (Medavie) is partnering with Provincial Aerospace (PAL Aerospace) as its sole air operator, which will sub-contract any other required aviation service providers, including Air Borealis. There will be dedicated medevac and schedevac services for coastal communities in Labrador, and the frequency of schedevac flights will be increased, with north and south coast flights available each day Monday to Friday, depending on demand.

MEDAVIE
HEALTH SERVICES

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Last month it was announced that the provincial government has signed a 10-year agreement with Medavie, to run the system and make key decisions, such as where road ambulances will be based. The \$561M contract does not include money needed to acquire capital assets such as aircraft.

Also last month PAL Aerospace confirmed it had entered a contract with Medavie to deliver fixed-wing air ambulance operations for Newfoundland and Labrador under the province's Integrated Emergency Health Services (IEHS) Programme. The 10-year agreement, with an option to renew for an additional five-year period, establishes a single, long-term provider responsible for modernizing and operating the province's fixed-wing air ambulance service.

The fleet will consist of four King Air 350 aircraft based in St. John's and Goose Bay with harmonized medical layouts and proven short-field performance, providing air clinical crew with a consistent, reliable platform while ensuring patients in both urban and remote communities can be transported quickly and safely to care. Each aircraft features dual LifePort systems, large cargo doors, and consistent medical equipment stowage – providing crew the equipment they need to provide a high level of care to patients.



PAL will operate and maintain the King Air fleet for the fixed-wing air ambulance service. Air Borealis, a PAL-partner company based in Goose Bay, will play a critical role in this agreement by providing patient transportation for coastal Labrador communities using two dedicated Twin Otter aircraft configured for scheduled and one Twin Otter configured for medevac. These aircraft will support daily scheduled medical flights on the North and South coasts, Monday through Friday, and provide essential medevac capability as required.



This programme ensures a stable long-term fixed-wing provider, standardized medical cabins for clinical teams, and reliable reach from bases at St. John's and Goose Bay and into remote communities with Air Borealis Twin Otter support. It also anchors stable, skilled jobs for pilots, aircraft maintenance engineers, and operations in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Health Minister Krista Lynn Howell sees St. Anthony, which is in her district, as the ideal location for a base. Given the distance between the airport and the hospital, she believes it would be better to station the helicopters in the community rather than the airport to reduce response time for transfers out of the community or off the Northern Peninsula. [palaerospace.com/air-ambulance/Stingray]

UNITED KINGDOM

AIR AMBULANCES UK: The national charity that seeks to support the lifesaving work of the UK's air ambulance charities has announced that Babcock International Group ("Babcock") reaffirmed its commitment to the air ambulance sector as a Commercial Supporter, while also becoming the Principal Sponsor of Air Ambulances UK's Annual Conference and Awards of Excellence 2025.

Babcock's sponsorship of the Annual Conference and Awards of Excellence highlights its dedication to supporting air ambulance charities. The conference and awards bring together sector leaders, clinicians, fundraisers, and industry experts to share learning, showcase innovation, and celebrate the outstanding achievements of air ambulance charities across the UK. This year the event is due to be held on December 3, 2025 at Telford International Centre. Attendance is via paid entry.

Each year hundreds of those involved in the air ambulance community come together for a chance to reconnect, network and share ideas and learning. Although Babcock are the primary sponsor there are several other companies who support the event including Airbus, Bucher, Survival Equipment Services and Zoll.

CORNWALL: The Air Ambulance has announced that it has won a prestigious national award. The charity took the top prize for Marketing Campaign of the Year at the 2025 Third Sector Awards.

After being shortlisted in two categories, the team were delighted to come away with a win for their 'Sing it Home' campaign, as part of the Heli2 Appeal. The charity album reached number 11 in the UK official album download charts – a first for an air ambulance charity – beating the likes of Coldplay and remaining in the top 20 for two weeks.

Over 500 local performers participated on the album, including one of the charity's own Critical Care Paramedics and a former patient. Local schools were challenged to create their own performances of the title track via a radio competition and the campaign exceeded one million interactions digitally in total, including through a music video and with the title track being used for the charity's Christmas animation. The annual awards, which celebrate the achievements of charities, voluntary organisations, social enterprises and corporate partners across the country, took place on September 12 in London.





2ndHeli
APPEAL

DORSET & SOMERSET: The air ambulance charity have launched an appeal to fund their second helicopter. It aims to raise the final £1M needed to purchase and fit out a second air ambulance helicopter for the people of Dorset and Somerset.

This ambitious step forward will build on 25 years of service provided by the charity. If the appeal reaches its goal, it will enable the air ambulance crew to reach more patients, strengthen operational resilience and ultimately save even more lives. As an air ambulance covering the southwest of England, Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance is tasked to nearly 3,000 missions a year. Their current Leonardo AW169 heli-

copter, named Pegasus or 'Peggy', is claimed to be flown more intensively than almost any other air ambulance of its kind in the UK. But with increasing demand and unavoidable downtime for maintenance, a single helicopter is no longer enough.

A Second Helicopter will strengthen resilience and operational availability, maintain air operations when one aircraft is offline, be fitted with a state-of-the-art medical interior, enabling clinicians to deliver the highest level of care, day and night provide the basis of an extension of operating hours in future.

Thanks to prudent financial planning and incredible supporter generosity, the charity has already secured most funds needed. The Air Ambulance is a local life-saving charity which receives no direct funding from the Government and relies on donations and fundraising. Their operational costs are over £10M a year, and the approximate average cost of one mission is £3,500, with access to the service free at the point of use.

The charity offices are based in Wellington, Somerset and the current operational air base is at Henstridge Airfield, Templecombe, some 45 miles away.

ESSEX & HERTS: EHAAT has announced the appointment of Mark Jarman-Howe as the charity's new Chief Executive Officer. Mark took up the position on September 15 as replacement for Jane Gurney who was the CEO for 21 years until she left for another post in June.

Mark joins EHAAT from St Helena Hospice in Colchester, where he has served as Chief Executive since 2013. Having spent much of his recent career in end-of-life care, Mark is now making the move from supporting patients in the final stages of life to saving lives in the critical first moments – bringing his deep understanding of patient needs, compassion, and strategic leadership to a new environment where rapid intervention can change outcomes in an instant.

During his time at St Helena, he led a team of approximately 500 staff and 900 volunteers, strengthening the charity's clinical services, income generation, and community engagement.

This appointment signals an exciting new chapter for the charity as it advances its innovative vision for the future – strengthening operational independence through achieving its own Air Operator's Certificate, pushing the boundaries of pre-hospital care via its Centre for Excellence, and developing new ways for the communities of Essex and Hertfordshire to support and donate vital funds.



EHAAT was recently featured in the Netflix documentary series *Critical: Between Life and Death*, highlighting the vital role air ambulance charities play in a patient's journey. With two AW169 helicopters and a fleet of rapid response vehicles, EHAAT's critical care crews treat an average of 1,900 patients every year. As it prepares to mark Air Ambulance Week (8–14 September), EHAAT remains focused on raising awareness of the many ways it makes a difference beyond emergency response - from tackling cardiac arrest survival rates and improving outcomes for patients with head injuries, to providing vital patient and family support.

EHAAT's vital work is only possible thanks to the incredible generosity of the people and businesses of Essex and Hertfordshire, visit ehaat.org to find out more.

Although the charity recently took delivery of a second AW169, G-EHAT, to join the 2017 G-HHEM they are currently operating a blue and white Leonardo A109E G-SHLS from their Earls Colne base near Colchester for a few months. The airframe belongs to Sloane Helicopters based at Sywell, Northampton. The reason for the prolonged absence of the older AW169 has not been stated but probably relates to lengthy upgrades.

MIDLANDS: The Charity has reached a major milestone by completing its 80,000th mission – more than any other air ambulance charity in the UK. Covering Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, the West Midlands, and Worcestershire, the charity operates three air ambulance helicopters and a fleet of critical care cars, providing rapid pre-hospital emergency care to those most in need across the six-county region.

The charity's 80,000th mission was to a male from the West Midlands, who had sustained a traumatic leg injury whilst at work. The patient was given advanced treatment on scene by Midlands Air Ambulance Charity's critical care crew before being taken by air ambulance to Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham.

With continued investment and unwavering support, Midland now operate 24/7 delivering hospital-level care directly at the scene of a traumatic or medical emergency. Crews administer advanced treatments and medicines that support in managing each patient's needs in the crucial period immediately after an incident.

SCOTLAND: Scotland's publicly funded charity has now received its first new helicopter in the form of a new Airbus Helicopters H145. Scotland's Charity Air Ambulance unveiled the newest helicopter air ambulance of its type in the UK in September.

The state-of-the art Airbus H145D3 G-NSCA c/n 21364 replaces the 25-years old EC 135T2+ G-SCAA c/n 0151 as *Helimed 79* based at SCAA's Aberdeen International Airport base.

When the new helicopter goes operational this month, it will be the most capable air ambulance of its kind in the UK, operating in the most challenging environment. When compared with the previous helicopter operated, the new helicopter offers greater range, endurance and capacity which significantly enhances the capacity of its life-saving service and the ability to meet the ever-growing demand on pre-hospital emergency response teams.

SCAA operates two charity-funded helicopter air ambulances (from bases at Aberdeen and Perth), with the Aberdeen aircraft providing flight and paramedic support for doctor-led ScotSTAR North EMRS (Emergency Medical Retrieval Service).

Scotland and the northern offshore islands are served by similar H145 helicopters and fixed wing Beechcraft King Air aircraft funded centrally by the Scottish government health service. Set up in 2013, the SCAA operation has tended to use older, cheaper, repurposed and updated airframes funded by charity donations from the public. Public support has been crucial in introducing SCAA's latest life-saving aircraft, with people responding in their thousands to the charity's 'Operation Skyward' – the call to raise an additional £2M a year (in addition to the £8M/year currently raised) to sustain the enhanced service. In both instances the HEMS aircraft are free at the point of service.



During September, supported by aviation partner Babcock, the instantly recognisable SCAA branded aircraft visited schools, key locations and operational destinations such as the rooftop helipad of one of the country's four Major Trauma Centres visited regularly by crews with patients. The 'show and tell' flights around the country were primarily to train and familiarise all SCAA crew with the new aircraft but they give the public a chance to see the helicopter their support has made possible, meet and chat with pilots, paramedics and charity staff, as well as giving us the chance to say 'thank you' to them.

UNITED STATES

FLORIDA: Monroe County Fire Rescue (MCFR) and the Monroe County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) has taken delivery of the first of three new Trauma Star air ambulances at the base hangar in Marathon.

Trauma Star is a partnership between the Monroe County Board of County Commissioners and MCSO. It provides flights to mainland hospitals for critical patients in need of specialized care. On average, Trauma Star provides nearly 1,400 flights annually, with three to four flights per day, it claims to be one of the top five busiest air ambulances in the United States.

The three new helicopters will replace the three helicopters in the fleet that are more than 20 years old and are no longer in production, making it difficult to find parts when needed.

The new helicopter's range also enables emergency rescues in the Dry Tortugas, allowing flights to Miami's critical care without needing to refuel en route. They allow for two adult patients to be flown in one helicopter at a time, which cannot be achieved with the current S76 aircraft. The funding comes from the infrastructure penny sales tax, approved by a referendum. The infrastructure sales tax is paid by Monroe County residents and visitors when buying items, not through property taxes. The second and third helicopters are expected to arrive in the coming weeks. The pilots and crew are continuing training, and the new helicopters are expected to be in service starting in October.

LIFEFLIGHT NETWORK: The next 407 for Life Flight Network arrived at Bell's completion centre in Tennessee on 18th September - reg is N458LF [Parapex]

SEARCH & RESCUE CANADA

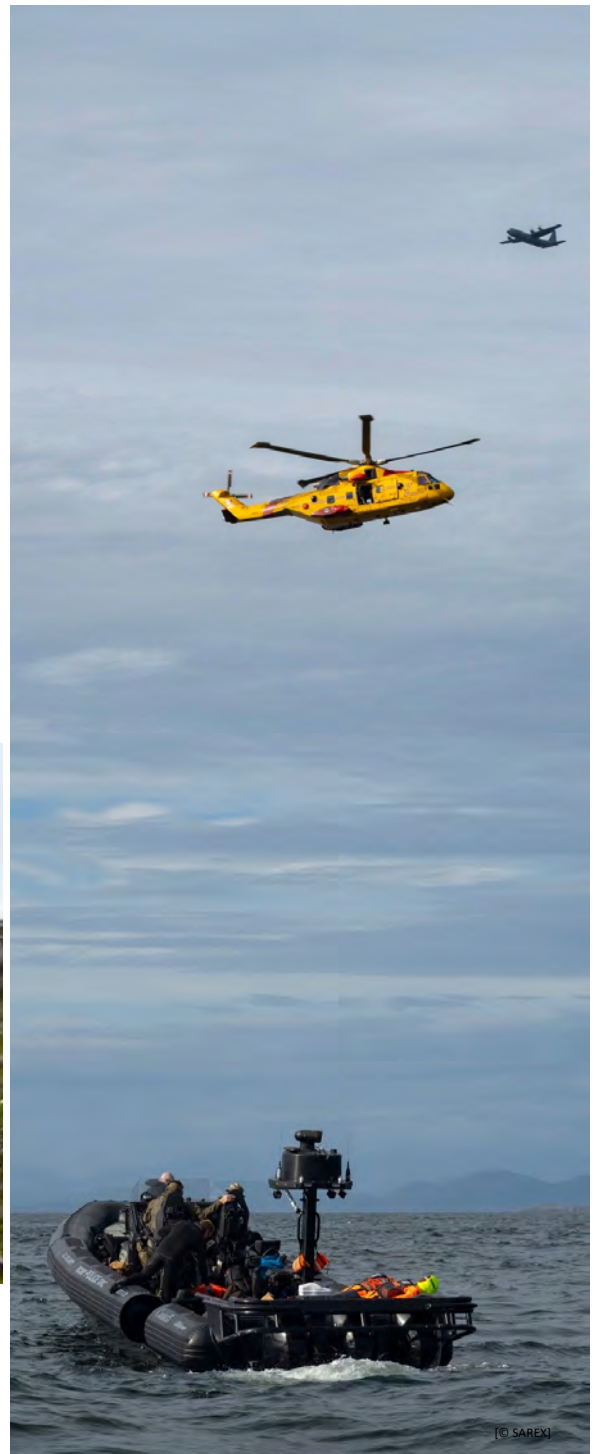
BRITISH COLUMBIA: The skies and waters around the Comox Valley in BC were busier than usual late last month as 19 Wing Comox hosted SAREX 2025, Canada's national search and rescue training exercise.

From September 22-26, 2025, SAR teams from 14 squadrons came together for a dynamic competition, flying 18 aircraft in over 100 simulated missions across land and sea at Comox, a town on the southern coast of the Comox Peninsula in the Strait of Georgia on the eastern coast of Vancouver Island.

This massive exercise brought together SAR crews from multiple regions, including Alaska and Washington State, to refine their skills and test interoperability in critical rescue scenarios. SAREX isn't just about rescue—it's about readiness. Crews faced challenges like locating lost hikers, responding to downed aircraft, and answering maritime mayday calls. Each mission lasts nearly 4 hours, with performance scored based on time to launch, ability to establish communications, and effectiveness in executing rescues, among other factors.



Beyond field missions, crews also compete in parachute accuracy, aircraft maintenance tasks, and advanced medical simulations.





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Ambulance

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About 100 aviators from across Canada, 60 personnel from the U.S., and observers from Spain and Brazil were participating. Canada invited every country operating the C-295 in a search-and-rescue role. It's about comparing techniques, learning from each other, and finding new ways to operate the aircraft.

SAREX 2025 marks the second consecutive year the exercise has been held in Comox. Before 2024, it had been nearly a decade since the Valley last hosted the event. Along with the new aircraft, Markon said the diverse local terrain and coastal environment make Comox an ideal training location.

Editor: SAREX is a well used title and they are held in several countries across the world under the same banner. Other recent iterations have been held in Poland (in May this year) and India (last November). SAREX is an acronym for Search and Rescue Exercise, and these events are conducted by various organizations, including the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) for international maritime cooperation.

IRELAND

COAST GUARD: The operation recently added its fixed wing component to its capabilities to undertake the 10-year contract.

Under the Bristow contract two Beechcraft B200 King Air aircraft provided by 2Exel Aircraft will be based at Shannon alongside the AW189 helicopter. Six AW189 are based at Waterford, Sligo, Dublin and Shannon. [Irish Post]

UNITED KINGDOM

IN PARLIAMENT: Angus MacDonald asked the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she plans to publish a list of community-owned helipads currently closed to Coastguard Search and rescue helicopters due to CAP1264 Version 3 compliance requirements.

In reply on September 5, the Department of Transport stated that HMCG SAR helicopter provider, Bristow Helicopters Limited conducted a review of all Hospital Helicopter Landing Sites (HHLS) against the revised safety guidance in CAP1264. BHL wrote to all impacted hospitals advising them that SAR helicopters will be unable to land on their HHLS until further safety assessments and assurances have been made. Bristow's and HMCG have continued to work with the NHS and other stakeholders to reopen sites where there is an operational need. [Hansard]



CHANNEL UPDATE

The ongoing crisis in the English Channel continues. When the weather is benign, with light winds and a calm sea, thousands of illegal migrants, mostly young men, some of them coming from as far afield as northern Africa, India, Pakistan, Turkey and Vietnam, stream across the Channel in large inflatable boats. In September the migrant crisis was dominated by two news headlines. First, the State visit to the United Kingdom by the US President, Donald Trump and, second, the new Anglo-French initiative of 'One in, one out', with the UK and France hoping to exchange migrants. The UK Prime Minister, Sir Keir Starmer also appointed a new Home Secretary (Minister of the Interior), Shabana Mahmood to replace Ms Yvette Cooper. At the time of writing, in late September, the new headline in the 'The i Paper', read, "BritCard" digital ID will be made law for all adults in bid to tackle small boats"

Just three weeks into her new job the Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood has pledged to 'fight' the Home Office to achieve her aims as she described her new department as 'not fully fit for purpose'.



The new Home Secretary, the Rt Hon Shabana Mahmood MP

Home Office

NEWS HEADLINES

On the 10 September, following a joint press conference, led by President Trump and Prime Minister Starmer, many of the UK's national newspapers carried the headline, 'Send in military to stop boats'. This followed President Trump's observation that, "It doesn't matter what means you use, illegal migration to Britain must stop." Also, regarding illegal migration, "It destroys countries from within." Ten days later, 20 September, the headline changed to, "So how is the one-in, one-out scheme going Keir?". Both the press and the public ridiculed the new Anglo-French scheme, which is supposed to deter illegal migrants from crossing the English Channel, by exchanging bad migrants for good migrants. In a week, just 4 migrants had been returned to France. In the same week, 1,157 illegal migrants were landed in the UK, at Dover, from 14 boats, an average of 83 migrants per boat!



UK national press, news headlines - a recommendation to send in the military, the Royal Navy and the Royal Marines, and ridiculing the Anglo-French scheme of exchanging migrants, one for one.

Then, on the 26 September, the UK Prime Minister, Sir Keir Starmer, announced yet another scheme to 'stop the boats' and to regain popularity for a government beset by problems including, the economy, energy security, immigration, healthcare, law and order and housing. The new, identity scheme would make it mandatory for all adults in Britain to have a digital identity. The backlash was immediate and predictable. Would it not be easier for every adult arriving in the UK to have a current, a verifiable form of identification, a National Insurance number, a passport, or a driving licence? Without identification entry into the UK would result in immediate detention, followed by, if required, deportation to the last place of residency, which, for many, would be a safe country, for example, France.

THE NUMBERS

As always, the real story lies in the numbers. Since the first 299 migrants crossed the English Channel in small boats in 2018 the numbers of illegal migrants have increased year on year. The record year was 2022 when 45,774 illegal migrants were landed in the UK, at Dover, by the UK Border Force and the volunteers of the UK lifeboat service, the Royal National Lifeboat Institution. This year, in the last week of September, the current annual total for 2025 stands at 32,190. The grand total, since 2018, when the first illegal migrants crossed the English Channel in small boats, is 183,351 (Channel Crossing Tracker).

In October 2024 the Government estimated that up to 750,000 illegal migrants are currently in the UK. One in 100 of the population, more than in any other European country (Hansard). The majority are those who arrived legally, with a visa, to work, to study, or to visit relatives, and then applied for asylum when their visa expired. The UK immigration service has in recent years been overwhelmed by those who arrive legally and then overstay their welcome, together with those who arrive illegally, via the irregular route, across the English Channel..

This problem has been compounded by the size of the inflatable boats, manufactured in China and imported into Europe via Turkey. These boats have steadily increased in size. Now up to 12 metres in length, each boat carrying up to 80 passengers. The record is 115 passengers in one boat! There are reports that the next generation of inflatable boats, those used to carry illegal migrants across the English Channel, will be up to 16 metres in length.

The UK's five Border Force rescue vessels, re-purposed crew transfer vessels, Defender, Hurricane, Ranger, Typhoon and Volunteer, all based at Ramsgate, carry around eight crew members per boat. These civilian crews are simply too small to offer any resistance to up to 80 migrants in an inflatable boat, mostly young men who are determined to reach the UK. As was pointed out by President Trump, *"It doesn't matter if you call out the military, it doesn't matter what means you use."*

The Royal Navy River-class offshore patrol vessels have a crew of 50, including 20 Royal Marines. They carry fast, semi-rigid inflatable boarding boats and can embark the Wildcat helicopter, or the larger Merlin helicopter.



MoD/RN

THE FRENCH CONNECTION

Although President of Macron of France is full of promises, to tackle illegal migration and to stop the small boats from leaving the beaches of northern France, there is little to show for the £698.8M that has been paid to France by the UK since 2018. Money paid for more police officers and for additional equipment, including 4x4 vehicles, together with drones to patrol the beaches. Moreover, there is very little evidence of a new French initiative; to turn back and to destroy inflatable boats that are still within 300 metres of the shore. There are far too many images of French police officers standing by whilst migrants wade into the sea to board the 'taxi boats'; those boats which cruise along the coast to collect their passengers off the beach.

In the week ending the 14 September, the Home Office reported that 862 illegal migrants had been landed at Dover from 12 boats. In the same week the French 'prevented' a Channel crossing by 397 migrants who, most likely, will make a further attempt the next day, or the next week. The Home Office refuses to list the number of inflatable boats destroyed by the French, a hard, indisputable fact. A boat that is destroyed cannot be used again, the next day, or the next week!

The recommendation to make regular, persistent air patrols with 'spotter planes', to 'deter and to detect' those migrants gathering on the beaches. Flying above the beaches of northern France, between Dunkirk and the Baie de Somme, some 80 miles, in good weather, the same good weather that favours crossing the Channel in a large, unseaworthy inflatable boat, has been ignored. Nevertheless, the French Police Aux Frontiere do fly the occasional air patrol above the northern beaches with a light aircraft, a Vulcanair P68 Observer based at Lille.



©Police Aux Frontiere

The French Police Aux Frontiere fly occasional air patrols above the beaches of northern France with a Vulcanair P68 Observer based at Lille

CONCLUSION

Since 2018, when Theresa May was the Prime Minister and Sajid Javid was the Home Secretary, when the first 299 illegal migrants crossed the English Channel in small boats, there have been a further four Prime Ministers and seven Home Secretaries, together with a change in government, from Conservative to Labour. Not one of these politicians has made any significant difference to illegal migration into the UK, despite the promises to 'stop the boats' and 'smash the gangs'.

Moreover, it has taken a State visit by the American President, Donald Trump, to point out that illegal migration, "*Destroys countries from within*" and that, "*Illegal migration to Britain must be stopped.*" Yes, it's time to call in the Royal Navy, together with the Royal Marines, to stop the boats, those carrying illegal migrants, before they reach mid-Channel, and then land their passengers at the nearest place of safety, in France. It's not for the French to decide who may cross the border from France into England. Every country has the right to defend and, if necessary, to close its borders. In this respect, UK has the right to follow the rules, to close the border between the UK and France, a border between two democratic, 'rules based' societies.

Meanwhile, in Calais, 'Daily Mail' reporter, Sue Reid reports that in 25 years of reporting from the French port she has never seen it more crowded with desperate migrants with only one destination in mind. On the last weekend in September, she reports that the ferry port is overwhelmed, a migration crisis is unfolding just 21 miles away, across the English Channel. When will the French agree that if, together with the British, they close the cross-Channel route for illegal migration then migrants will no longer travel across Europe to set up their squalid camps in northern France? Direct, positive action is required now, there's no time to play silly political games with bizarre schemes such as, 'one in and one out', and digital identification cards for UK citizens!



Late Update 29/9

On the weekend, Saturday and Sunday, 27-28 September, after an interval of 6 days, the result of strong winds in the English Channel, 1,298 illegal migrants were landed at Dover from 19 boats. This brings the annual total for 2025 to 33,488 and the grand total, 2018 - 2025, to 184,649. For the first time the criminals, the people traffickers, deployed one of their new, very large inflatable boats, dubbed by the media as a 'mega dinghy', with 125 illegal migrants crammed on board. These new, very large inflatable boats have a carrying capacity which is 50% greater than the recent norm of up to 80 migrants per boat and is well above the carrying capacity of the UK Border Force rescue vessels and the lifeboats of the RNLI.

With just seven migrants returned to France under the new, "One in, one out" scheme, agreed by President Macron and Prime Minister Starmer, a boat carrying 125 illegal migrants highlights the fact that this new scheme is not, and cannot ever be fit for purpose. Boats carrying illegal migrants must either be disabled as soon as they set sail, in shallow water, or stopped at the earliest opportunity, in French waters, with the migrants rescued before being returned to France. With the cooperation of the French, this is a job for the military, for the Royal Navy and the Royal Marines, together with the French Gendarmerie and the French Navy

Sadly, at the weekend, four migrants, two women and two young men, perished in three separate incidents on, or close to the beaches of northern France. The two women were crushed to death in an overloaded boat. The body of one of the young men was recovered from a beach and the other recovered from the canal at Gravelines. This is the canal from where the so called, 'taxi boats' often begin their journey before cruising along the coast to embark migrants who have waded into the sea.

James A Cowan MBE

Note: The author, a former member of the Royal Air Force, who captained maritime patrol aircraft, has also flown light aircraft as a police pilot and as an air ambulance pilot.



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INDUSTRY

On September 3, 2025, the **Turkish Ministry of National Defence** announced that the fourth T-70 utility helicopter was formally inducted into the Turkish Air Force during a ceremony at the base in Konya. The announcement indicated that the helicopter will be assigned to multipurpose missions such as search and rescue, wildfire response, and cargo or personnel transport.

This handover follows earlier deliveries, including the Air Force's third T-70 received in August 2024, and continues a sequence of staged acceptances that began in December 2022 with the first delivery to the Gendarmerie General Command. Officials noted that additional deliveries are planned to continue in September, consistent with the broader program timeline. [Global]

Vertical Aviation International (VAI) has opened the nomination period for its 2026 Salute to Excellence Awards, the annual honours the focusses on outstanding individuals and teams across the full spectrum of vertical flight. Nominees and nominators do not need to be VAI members to participate.

Nominations will be accepted at <https://verticalavi.org/salute-to-excellence> through until October 17, 2025. This deadline is firm and allows VAI to meet key deadlines ahead of the awards presentation next March at VERTICON 2026 in Atlanta, Georgia, USA. The chosen individuals and groups will be publicly announced late this year. There are eleven award categories covering exceptional performance in areas such as law enforcement, flight training, safety, and maintenance. verticalavi.org



Coincidental to last month's PAN introduction to the **Smith Myers ARTEMIS System**, in September Airbus helicopters announced it had contracted with the two main SAR phone detection equipment to offer the installation of either into their new production helicopters during manufacture.

The news was released at both APSCON Europe in Valencia and DSEi in London.

Under this Framework agreement, Smith Myers' ARTEMIS Mobile Phone Detection and Location Systems (MPDLS) - will be factory-fitted and offered as a retrofit option across Airbus Helicopters' fleet of aircraft.

In the same timescale Spanish company CENTUM and Airbus Helicopters signed an agreement to line fit the **CENTUM Lifeseeker** on Airbus Helicopters' platforms.

Lifeseeker, the airborne phone location system is designed to support search and rescue (SAR) operations by transforming phones into distress beacons, even in areas without mobile network coverage. Integrating Lifeseeker as a factory-installed solution ensures seamless compatibility with the helicopter's avionics and simplifies certification processes, providing operators with a ready-to-use SAR capability from delivery. The agreement strengthens CENTUM's role as a trusted provider of SAR solutions integrated directly into aircraft production lines, supporting faster and more effective missions. Lifeseeker is already in use by several rescue organizations worldwide and has contributed to numerous successful SAR missions.



As outlined last month the Smith Myers ARTEMIS suite of MPDLS has been saving lives worldwide. Recently selected for major UK, European, and North American SAR and Coast Guard operations, ARTEMIS is designed to accurately locate mobile telephones in challenging airborne environments using only two small antennas. The **ARTEMIS MPDLS** can detect a phone at extended ranges up to 35Km and provides unique capabilities such as mass-mapping and geofencing to minimize crew workload. The system is automated, quick, and accurate, leading to more rapid positive outcomes, even in low light/IMC conditions, and operates stand-alone with no requirement for the involvement of Mobile Network Operators.

A similar review of the CENTUM Lifeseeker system is awaiting information from the manufacturer.

The new lightweight phone detection systems look set to progressively replace earlier systems currently operated by police and SAR organisations.

If you discount EO/IR systems, the go to first call for finding people there is other equipment more focussed on detecting people hidden under snow or other inaccessible locations. Although the equipment dates to the 1990s it is still being introduced to new regions.

The latest new RECCO SAR Helicopter Detector placements are in New Zealand and cover the North and South Islands. RECCO, an international leader in advanced SAR technology based in Sweden, announced the continued expansion of its global RECCO SAR Helicopter Detector network with the first placements in New Zealand last month through Avalanche NZ Ltd., the local agent.

The system can help SAR teams find RECCO-equipped hikers and other outdoor users quickly and efficiently in the event they become lost. The latest version of the RECCO product was launched in 2016, expanding the system's existing applications from finding victims involved in avalanches to all-season search-and-rescue missions year-round.

The RECCO SAR helicopter detector can quickly search large areas, covering a square kilometre in six minutes. Along with helping reduce search times for missing people, the helicopter-based detector can reduce the time and risk exposure for rescue workers during missions.

Unlike the mobile telephone based Artemis and Lifeseeker systems the RECCO equipment requires the would be victim to carry a reflector that the system can see and the manufacturers have an expectation that the person carrying it will be a well equipped climber or adventurer also carrying a Personal Locator Beacon (PLB). The typical customer is not therefore someone simply overcome by events.

The unit on the North Island is placed at The Central North Island Emergency Management Centre at Waimarino.

The unit on the South Island is placed at the GCH Aviation's Christchurch Rescue Helicopter base, where



the Canterbury Westpac Rescue Helicopters are located.

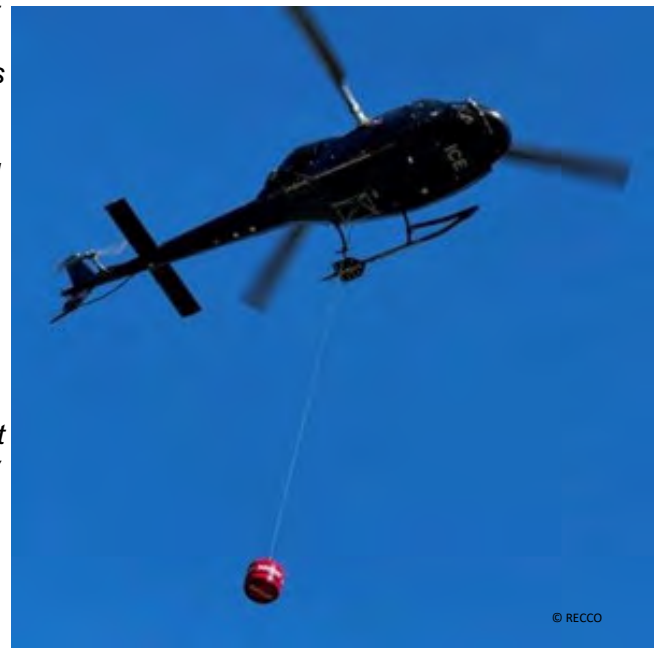
Editor: it will be interesting to see how the RECCO equipment fares in a market where one manufacturer, Airbus, has declared that it is fitting two forms of mobile phone equipment as original equipment options.

The RECCO airborne detector product is available in a smaller format, suited to ground based searchers but it is restricted as an airborne option, used by the police in Austria and elsewhere. It is a substantial slung load that requires the airframe to be prepared for a search. Similar systems are used in the USA to search for wandering senior citizens – they too are required to carry a detector chip to aid the search. They too are systems requiring would be customers to be known entities that have been signed up to the detection method.

By contrast, the Lifesearcher/Artemis options require the aircraft owner to fit the equipment at significant cost and then to carry it around 24/7 in the belief that one day it might be required. The only need is that the “victim” carries a cellular telephone, they therefore fit with a significantly larger section of the public. On the downside this discounts the 90 years old technophobe with an uncharged Nokia in their pocket for use ‘in emergencies’!

There is a historical precedent. Stolen vehicle tracking equipment was offered to the police in some areas of Europe and the USA as a gift paid for by the subscribers through the manufacturer (LoJack/Tracker). Although the kit was free the police had to usually pay for the fit and then carry the display, sensor and aerials 24/7. A difference is that there are substantially more stolen vehicles out there than avalanche victims – even so, some police operators turned down the fit and carry on the grounds that it added complication to the weight, balance and performance of the carrier aircraft.

With the widespread carrying of active cellular telephones there may be a shift towards their use as PRBs that will make the significant cost of their introduction worthwhile.



AIRPORT BUSINESS

The former £2M Rubb Hangar built for the NPAS fixed wing base when it was originally located at **Doncaster Sheffield (Robin Hood) Airport** (DSA) briefly returned to the public stage last month as the setting for a major development in the return of DSA to being an International Airport.

The four council leaders in South Yorkshire have approved funding of almost £160M to reopen Doncaster Sheffield Airport and bring passenger flights back to the region.

The agreement from South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority means freight operations should start in 2027 and a fully operational international passenger airport is planned for the of summer 2028.



NPAS no longer has a stake in DSA, they came to an undisclosed arrangement in 2022 when police and other operations flying ceased at the airfield. Meanwhile 2Excel Aviation remained headquartered on site

without aircraft. As the measures for bringing the airport back to life have moved forward the 2Excel aircraft have progressively returned to the former Avro Vulcan hangars for maintenance and operations.

Major global firms such as Boeing, Rolls-Royce, BAE Systems and McLaren Automotive have bases in the region and South Yorkshire has been named as a 'key cluster' for advanced manufacturing in the Government's industrial strategy. The location has plenty of land suitable for housing and industrial space close by and there are plans by the University of Sheffield for a 100-acre innovation district called Runway Park on the site of the former Sheffield City Airport – another airport arbitrarily abandoned by the Peel Group in the past.

It is not all sweetness and light in Doncaster though, there are dissenting voices and one of the local mayors lost a vote of confidence over the future of the reopening of the airport. It was not too serious though, the Mayor remains in post.

All this positive activity at DSA is good news for the **2Excel Group** and, more widely, for economic growth in the city and region, as well as the wider aviation industry, including the crucial supply chain.

The move bolsters 2Excel's ambitions to restart commercial flight operations from its Doncaster base, supporting high-value and highly skilled jobs and paving the way to further increase the work at the site.

Aviation services group 2Excel and simulation and training partner **JD2E** have announced plans to continue their successful partnership to pursue further contracts. The work builds on the duo's track record of delivering live flying training to Royal Air Force Weapons System Operators (WSOs).

Combining 2Excel's deep experience in live flying and aircraft operations and JD2E's expertise in training and simulation, the training has had an exemplary safety record during four years, with graduates superbly trained and ready for the next challenge when they arrive on their Operational Conversion Units (OCU) on frontline aircraft.

All pilots and instructors are accredited by the RAF Central Flying School, and in addition to 2Excel's civilian air safety assurances, JD2E has been assured by the RAF Air Safety team.

During this September's DSEI event in London, JD2E was exhibiting on the 2Excel Group stand (right) with the Deployable Mission Operator System (DMOS), the flagship simulation and training platform purpose-built for real-world, multi-domain ISR.

The equipment supports high-fidelity training for mission crews – from classroom instruction to mission rehearsal – reducing the burden on airborne platforms while increasing readiness. Already used to train hundreds of aircrew, DMOS is fast becoming a trusted asset for ISR capability generation.



Early in September, **Bell Textron Inc.**, announced that Global Medical Response (GMR) has signed a purchase agreement for seven Bell 429 with the option to purchase an additional eight, maintaining its spot as the world's largest Bell helicopter operator in the Helicopter Emergency Medical Service (HEMS) field. Global Medical Response, headquartered in Lewisville, Texas, has 381 operational bases across all 50 U.S. states and internationally, and provides life-saving care as the largest end-to-end provider of acute out-of-hospital patient care.

This announcement comes after Bell announced the delivery of Global Medical Response's first IFR-configured Bell 407GX, marking the first of 24 anticipated aircraft deliveries to the air medical service operator. In total, Global Medical Response and its affiliates currently use the Bell 407 and Bell 206L platforms to serve local communities in need of emergency care.

Airborne Technologies welcomed Governor Johanna Mikl-Leitner and Mayor Klaus Schneeberger to its headquarters in Wiener Neustadt, Austria last month.

In a relaxed and open atmosphere, they took the time to learn more about our current projects, talk with our employees, and gain insights into our international references in the field of airborne surveillance.

A big thank you to our guests for their time and interest!



Early last month **Elbit Systems Ltd.** introduced Frontier, its cutting-edge wide-area persistent surveillance system, designed to address the increasing complexity and intensity of border defence challenges. Presented for the first time at the DSEI 2025 exhibition, Frontier is built to autonomously detect, classify, and assess threats in real-time. Frontier leverages advanced artificial intelligence (AI) to optimize intelligence gathering and decision-making in land, air, and maritime domains.

Key features of Frontier include, an AI Based Adaptive Routine Learning: using cutting edge computing capabilities the system continuously learns and adapts to routine operations by analysing vast amounts of data to detect anomalies and deviations.

It also uses Autonomous Threat Classification: Again using AI, the system autonomously identifies and classifies threats in real-time, enabling fast and accurate responses to assess the risk of potential threats, providing operators with clear, actionable insights.

Frontier autonomously operates various types of sensors to visually confirm and classify threats, transmitting only the most relevant and analysed information to the appropriate forces.

Cal Meeker of **Meeker Aviation** in California and Canada has been travelling with Scott Herring to the Airbus Helicopters facility in Columbus, Mississippi to work on the H160 airframe. They have been scanning the airframe for payload mounts to meet future customer needs.





Governor Ron DeSantis was among the dignitaries who gathered on September 18 for a ribbon cutting celebrating the grand opening of **Leonardo USA's** 73,000- square-foot support facility located at the Whiting Field Aviation Park, Santa Rosa County, [Santa Rosa County's Whiting Field Aviation Park](#).

The centre's primary function will be to service and maintain the helicopter fleet of its next door neighbour, Naval Air Station Whiting Field.

The opening was toasted as a [unique collaboration between private business](#), government interests and the military.

"Today marks more than the unveiling of a new facility, this is a statement of our commitment to innovation, to operational excellence and to our customers," Clyde Woltman, the CEO of Leonardo USA, said.

"This facility reflects the vision, collaboration and the kind of teamwork that defines the very best of Leonardo and our customers."

The **Finnish Border Guard's** Air Patrol Squadron hosted the international ATLAS NAVAL HELO cooperation exercise on August 25-29.

This exercise is a part of the training operations of Europol's ATLAS network, where training expands throughout Europe. Law enforcement special intervention units of the EU Member States and associated countries participate in ATLAS operations. The police special intervention unit Karhu answers for Finland's membership in the network.

In addition to the Finnish Border Guard and the Special Intervention Unit Karhu, stationed in Helsinki Police Department, also flight crews, helicopters and observers from Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden participated in the exercise.



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BIRD Aerosystems, a global provider of innovative airborne defence solutions, has announced that it has achieved a significant milestone with the certification of a new Supplemental Type Certificate (STC) by the Israeli Civil Aviation Authority (CAAI) for the KING AIR 350C platform.

This STC enables comprehensive enhancements tailored to Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) and special mission operations, dramatically increasing the aircraft's versatility and mission readiness.

Key provisions of the certified configuration include centre fuselage hard points capable of supporting payloads of up to 390kg (860lbs), as well as front fuselage hard points supporting up to 100kg (220lbs). The certification also incorporates advanced mission provisions such as four separate GNSS antennas, an AIS/LOS data link antenna, and dedicated cabin wiring for intercom and crossover panels, enabling seamless power and data integration between onboard sensors and operator workstations. These features allow for the integration of a broad range of ISR payloads such as EO/IR sensors, multi-mode radars, and NATO-standard 30" pylons, transforming the KING AIR 350C into a highly adaptable, multi-role platform. This latest certification adds to BIRD Aerosystems' growing portfolio of certified airborne platforms and reflects the company's ability to deliver mission-ready solutions across a wide range of aircraft- light planes, turboprops, and jet- for defence and homeland security agencies worldwide.

Accidental activations of **emergency locator beacons** are increasing, costing thousands of dollars in wasted resources. Maritime NZ's Rescue Coordination Centre has surmised that the "inappropriate" disposal of locator beacons has resulted in call outs to landfills and transfer stations. That is affecting the core business of responding to genuine alerts.

Of 35 spurious alerts received so far in 2025, 33 were closed down fairly quickly without the need to deploy resources to landfills because the beacons were registered, and it was relatively easy to confirm that they had been disposed of inappropriately.

ACCIDENTS & INCIDENTS

13 August 2025 Bell 429 N. Law enforcement helicopter owned and operated by the New York Police Department. Reported as 'destroyed' but specific details may be that the \$500,000 main rotor was damaged in an incident not reported to the NYPD management. To date there are no on-line databases carrying details of this 'hidden' and unproven incident alleged in an on-line blog.

27 August 2025 Tekever AR5 G-TEKE Evolution Mark 2.3 c/n 513 G-TEKE On August 24 pictures emerged of a stricken Tekever AR5 on fire alongside a public road – the M20 Motorway between Junction 13 (Folkestone) and Junction 12 (Cheriton). This magazine reported the incident as a road incident. It has since been learned that this entry should rightly have been listed as an accident. Images have emerged of the drone down in the English Channel on an unknown date. Despite it being common knowledge that any battery being immersed in seawater is liable to be in danger of short circuit, fire or explosion the battery was not removed from the airframe prior to dismantling and road transport. It appears that it had caught alight while being transported in a vehicle. An AAIB spokesman stated that they would not list it or report on it unless there were circumstances of danger to life.

29 August 2025 Mil Mi-8MTV-1 EMERCOM of Russia. The helicopter made a hard landing on Iturup Island in the Sakhalin Region, Russia. There were no fatalities but two injuries reported. The incident involved an Mi-8 helicopter of the Khabarovsk Aviation Rescue Centre of the Russian EMERCOM. The Emergencies Ministry Mi-8 was transporting volcanologists to the Kudryavy volcano when it made a hard landing. The helicopter fell on its side under the volcano. [ASN]

29 August 2025 MD Helicopters MD530F 0204 of the Sulaymaniyah Traffic Directorate, Kurdistan. Was attending the wreck of a motor vehicle that had plunged off the side of a cliff after an road traffic to recover the corpse of the driver. The site was on a steep slope of Azmar Mountain, Sulamaniyah, Kurdistan and on closing with the wrecked vehicle the helicopter crashed under unknown circumstances alongside the vehicular wreck. Both pilots, Brigadier Hussein Faizullah, and his co-pilot, were injured and taken to a hospital and the helicopter, which had fallen on its left side was declared as destroyed. No fire. The mission is believed to have been the recovery of the corpse of the dead motorist at the request of the family who were at the site of the crash. [ASN]

3 September 2025 helicopter. Fire Fighting. British Colombia Wildfire Service, Canada. Stated that a helicopter had to carry out a “forced landing” close to Pemberton. B.C.’s Minister of Forests, Ravi Parmar, says the helicopter was carrying members of an initial attack crew of firefighters responding to an active blaze. Everyone on board survived. To date no further information has emerged. [City News]

7 September 2025 Air-Tractor AT-802A Fire Boss N376AS of Aero Spray Inc operating for the US Forest Service near Republic, Washington, USA. Operating from Omak Municipal Airport, WA on fire fighting operations when it struck trees with its wings. Continued flying and returned safely to Omak Municipal Airport, WA [ASN]

24 September 2025 Eurocopter EC135T2+ N955AL Air ambulance of Airlift Northwest was called to an injured party near Little Kachess Lake, Easton, Seattle, Washington. Local law enforcement of Kittitas County Sheriff’s Office and ground ambulance called in the helicopter and prepared a landing site in a gravel parking area off I-90 near exit 62 to Stampede Pass in the dark. The 2007 build helicopter arrived but ended up on its right side. The crew was uninjured, no fire. [Media]

24 September 2025 Bell helicopter v Bell helicopter. New York Police Department. Alleged unreported AirProx between two NYPD helicopters.

UNMANNED

[The Brazilian Helicopter Safety Team \(BHEST\)](#) has released a preliminary operational safety analysis warning regulators and industry about the challenges of introducing eVTOL aircraft into the country’s air-space.

The report maps out hazards and risks linked to both helicopter and eVTOL operations. It aims to provide regulators, operators and manufacturers with a baseline for safety rules, training programmes and infrastructure planning as urban air mobility develops.

Helicopters already face a higher accident rate per flight hour than fixed-wing aircraft, the report explains, because they operate short missions at low altitude in complex environments. These conditions mirror the operating profile of many eVTOLs, which are expected to carry passengers on trips of up to 100 km within cities and around 300 km regionally.

This overlap means that hazards already familiar to rotorcraft, such as collisions with power lines or fatigue-inducing vibration, are also relevant to eVTOLs.

Battery safety was singled out as one of the most pressing concerns. The risks are linked to “burning, charging, and potential damage to batteries, which can affect both air and ground operations.”

Range limitations in large cities were also highlighted, particularly where there are few safe landing alternatives and high concentrations of buildings, people and vehicle traffic.

The report underlines that Brazil’s existing heliport infrastructure cannot be repurposed without significant adaptation. New facilities will need to accommodate battery charging, emergency response systems and safe passenger processing.

Rules on low-altitude traffic management will also need to be updated to reflect growing volumes of drones and eVTOLs alongside traditional rotorcraft. Training is another key issue, both for pilots during the early years of operation and for ground staff supporting new infrastructure.

BHEST’s team used the FAA’s PAVE framework of Pilot, Aircraft, Environment and External factors to structure its assessment. Hazards identified ranged from inadequate pilot training and poor battery performance in extreme temperatures to cybersecurity threats and market pressure that could undermine safety standards.

Mitigation strategies include stricter training requirements, proactive infrastructure planning, operational limits for poor weather, and stronger cybersecurity protocols. [ZAG]

Schiebel two primary products: the CAMCOPTER® S-101 and CAMCOPTER® S-301 Unmanned Air Systems (UAS) represent refined new designs, dedicated for weaponisation and engineered to meet the rapidly evolving demands of modern military operations.

Building on the success of the CAMCOPTER® S-100 – a proven solution designed for the military domain (Navies and Armies), it has been extensively sold and deployed operationally around the globe, both on land and at sea. The armed S-101 and S-301 introduce a new era of innovation and precision strike capability for a tactical UAS. The platforms feature advanced performance, military-grade systems integration, embedded AI and robust architecture, purpose-built for the most demanding defence missions across multi-domain environments.

Both systems are engineered to ensure resilience in contested electromagnetic environments, guaranteeing operational effectiveness even under the most challenging conditions.

Development and production of the S-101 and S-301 are carried out by Schiebel Defence GmbH based in Wiener Neustadt, Austria, dedicated exclusively to armed UAS. [Helihub]

Meanwhile tests with 'civil' S-100 drones continue across the globe. Recent flights by the Belgian Coast Guard over the North Sea have proved a positive experience in that they have confirmed that a drowning person can be seen from more than a kilometre away.



The Coast Guard tests in cooperation with the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) have so far been positive. Next year, the Belgian's will be hoping to fund a similar drone trial themselves.

The S100 has been operating for EMSA since 2019 in more than 20 deployments. The recent activity has only been the second instance of the Belgians operating it.

Flylogix, a UK-based drone company, is preparing to launch a pioneering trial that will involve drones and helicopters sharing airspace above North Sea energy infrastructure. This initiative marks a significant step toward widespread BVLOS -Beyond Visual Line Of Sight- operations and integrated airspace management, potentially influencing upcoming FAA commercial drone regulations. The trial is expected to showcase the viability of autonomous drone technology for offshore inspections and contribute to regulatory developments in both the UK and globally.

Another S-100 operation is undertaken by the French Navy on their own behalf and recent activity has been directed at law enforcement operations. Late in September the Prefecture maritime et commandement en chef Atlantique operating CORYMBE is a quasi-permanent **operation** of the French armed forces



in the Gulf of Guinea. Intercepted a drug runner boat with the aid of its S-100

On 22 September 2025, two Marine-Nationale vessels intercepted an unflagged fishing vessel off the coast of West Africa. On board 9.6 tons of cocaine were discovered and seized, with an estimated market value of nearly 519M euros.

PEOPLE

Britten-Norman, manufacturer of the iconic Islander aircraft and a key player in aircraft support and modifications, has appointed Ben Smith as Head of Aftermarket to lead its global support strategy and drive aftermarket growth.

Ben joins with more than a decade of experience in technical sales, digital services, and aviation support, having previously led Garmin's UK and EMEA aviation sales efforts. During his time at Garmin, he worked closely with Britten-Norman, supporting avionics integration programmes – including the rollout of TXi and GTN Xi systems – while working with a wide portfolio of fleet operators, OEMs, MROs, and government clients.

As Head of Aftermarket, Ben will lead Britten-Norman's global strategy across spares, repairs, upgrades, and operator support. His priorities include modernising internal systems, boosting responsiveness, and delivering customer-focused solutions that maximise the lifetime value of the Islander fleet.



Ben is a licensed Private Pilot with a First-Class Honours degree in Aerospace Technology. He is also an alumnus of the RAF's University of London Air Squadron, where he gained early exposure to military aviation and leadership. With his engineering background, flying experience, and commercial knowledge, Ben understands the challenges operators face and is focused on delivering practical solutions that meet their needs.

POLICE AVIATION HISTORY

THE BRITTEN NORMAN ISLANDER IN POLICE SERVICE

Britten Norman BN2B-20 Islander, construction number 2260, was built in 1991 and was first registered by Britten Norman as G-BTVN. In 1996 it was re-registered as G-NESU and joined the North East Air Support Unit, an air support consortium in the North East of England, funded by the Home Office and three police forces, Cleveland, Durham and Northumbria.

BN2B-20 Islander, G-NESU belonging to the former North East Air Support Unit, based at Teesside Airport. (Author)



After 10 years, in 2006, the BN Islander was sold to the Shetland Islands Council where, today, 19 years later, now registered as G-SICB, it's still operating as an 'island hopper', flying high-frequency short-range flights between the islands, operating off short runways and rough landing strips. At a flying rate of approximately 800 hours per year in police service the total number of hours flown in 2006 would have been around 8,000.

The BN Islander is noted for being a multi-role, versatile workhorse, operating in harsh conditions, connecting remote communities. For example, the BN Islander is also operated by the Falkland Islands Government Air Service. But is this aircraft still a good choice for police air support operations?

In police service this all-weather aircraft proved to be a very reliable, if a bit noisy, air support aircraft. So reliable that it was operated at Teesside Airport without a support engineer. At the time, 1996-2006, it was equipped with a very early generation, LEO 400 electro-optical camera turret. Nevertheless, the 'hit rate' for the Islander aeroplane based at Teesside, for persons arrested following a vehicle pursuit, or a burglary in progress, for example, was as good, sometimes better than the police helicopter based at Newcastle! Moreover, the BN Islander, flying at around 5,000 feet, with a big, 15" EO camera turret and, if required, additional surveillance equipment, together with two, or more tactical flight officers, was ideally suited for persistent, covert surveillance operations.



NEW PROPELLERS

In 1999 G-NESU was used to trial the new Hartzell three-bladed scimitar shaped propeller, part of the NASA-sponsored AGATE/GAP programme to minimise the aircraft's noise footprint through enhanced propeller aerofoil efficiency and reduced tip speeds. Sadly, despite the success of the trial, these new, 'quiet' propellers were not fitted permanently, and they were replaced by the less efficient, noisy Hartzell two-bladed propellers.



The Hartzell three-bladed scimitar shaped propeller minimises the aircraft's noise footprint through greater efficiency and reduced tip speeds. (BN)



On reflection the police hierarchy were too quick to dispose of this very reliable, low-cost aeroplane in favour of a second helicopter, an EC-135. Within 2 years, the police air support consortium couldn't afford to run 2 helicopters, once the warranty for the new helicopter had expired. With just one helicopter, based at Newcastle, Cleveland Police served 12 months' notice, and the three force North East Air Support Unit disbanded. Cleveland Police then formed their own air support unit with their own EC-135 helicopter. For a small police force the costs must have been crippling. On reflection, an aeroplane, a BN Islander would have been a better choice for a small police force with an airport close by.

The North East Air Support Unit team, pilots and police observers, with the BN2B-20 Islander at Teesside Airport. The police hierarchy were too quick to dispose of this reliable and effective police aircraft.



NATIONAL POLICE AIR SERVICE

Then, in 2012 the National Police Air Service for England and Wales (NPAS) were formed and Cleveland Police could breathe a sigh of relief! However, in the North of England, there is now just one police helicopter unit north of Leeds, at Newcastle, and neither unit is 24/7. In other parts of the country, particularly in the east, there are no police air support units whatsoever. Reducing the costs by cutting numbers, both aircraft and bases, cannot, in any way, be construed as progress. In 2009, in England and Wales,

there were 31 police air support units with a total of 33 aircraft with some police forces sharing aircraft and sharing costs. Just 4 police forces, Cumbria, Kent, Lincolnshire and North Yorkshire had no formal arrangements for the provision of air support. Today, there are just 15 air support units, including the Metropolitan Police in London, with 18 helicopters and 4 aeroplanes.

The success of air support is based on several principles which include height, speed, reach and ubiquity. In England and Wales halving the number of police air support bases from 31 to 15 has resulted in an immediate impact on speed, reach and ubiquity. This may explain why some police forces are turning away from a national police air service and attempting to replace manned aircraft with drones, despite the obvious limitations regarding operations beyond visual line of sight. A senior member of NPAS recently highlighted the advantages of a manned aircraft, not least an EO camera turret accompanied by three pairs of eyes!

With forethought, with better planning, significant savings could be made by operating more aeroplanes and fewer helicopters. In the USA the majority of police air support units are fixed wing. One unit, in Richland County, South Carolina is operating 2 fixed-wing aircraft and a handful of drones. The older aircraft, a Cessna 172, has logged 16,000 flying hours and the second, a Cessna 206, which joined the department in 2014, has exceeded 4,500 hours.

In some parts of England and Wales there are no police air support units at all. Whilst, at East Midlands Airport, there are 4 police aeroplanes!



THE VULCANAIR P68R

The fact that in 2014 the hierarchy at NPAS recommended the Vulcanair P68R for police air support in the UK, when other more suitable, tried and tested, aircraft, including the BN Islander were also available, simply beggars' belief. The small, P68R carries a specification, from the manufacturer, for pilot training and private use. The MTOW is just 4,548 lbs and the landing weight is 4,321 lbs. There is no provision to dump fuel in the event of a mission being aborted shortly after take-off. By contrast, the BN2B-20 Islander has an identical maximum take-off and landing weight, a generous 6,600 lbs. Moreover, the diminutive P68R, with full fuel, is too small to carry a crew of more than two, the pilot and one tactical flight officer. The electro-optical camera turret is the smaller, lighter 10" turret.

The four diminutive Vulcanair P68R aeroplanes are based at East Midlands Airport - see map. The small 10" EO turret is underneath the rear fuselage.



When the contract was awarded by NPAS in 2014 the specification was for a high wing aeroplane with retractable landing gear. This specification immediately skewed the contract in favour of the Vulcanair P68R and excluded the BN Islander with its choice of piston, or turbine engines. The Diamond DA42, low wing with retractable landing gear, together with its very fuel efficient aero-diesel engines was also rejected by the NPAS hierarchy. Both of these aircraft carry the large 15" EO turret.

Using NPAS figures, the four P68R's, all based at East Midlands Airport, completed just 936 flying hours in the year 2024-25, an average of just 234 hours per aircraft. In the day, 20 years earlier, the NEASU BN Islander was averaging 800 flying hours per year, often arriving on task in Cleveland and County Durham within 20 minutes of take-off from its base at Teesside Airport. In the winter, at night, operating from the mouth of a hangar, with engines warmed every hour, the BN Islander crew could easily get airborne more quickly than their colleagues flying the helicopter based at Newcastle, parked on its 'heli-lift', inside its hangar.

CONCLUSION

Now, 2 decades later, if NEASU had given their BN Islander a mid-life update, with new, quiet propellers, with a new EO camera turret and with a new workstation in the rear cabin, would the North East police consortium have disbanded? With a strong, affordable, two aircraft regional air support unit with aircraft based just 30 miles apart, would others have followed the same regional model for police air support service in England and Wales? Would the proposed national police air service have been rejected out of hand?

Should the National Police Air Service have been formed in 2012? This is the police air support organisation which attempts but fails, to provide the same level of service that was available in England and Wales a decade previously. Now with just 14 bases plus London, with 18 'tired' Eurocopter helicopters (Police Aviation News, September 2025, Pages 9-10), together with 4 Vulcanair P68R aeroplanes, all based at East Midlands Airport, how can NPAS provide the same air support service that was available in the former 'golden age' of police aviation in England and Wales? It can't! Is it therefore possible that an aircraft which first flew 60 years ago, in 1965, the BN Islander, still holds the key for future police aviation in the UK? Is the BN Islander still a good choice for police air support operations? Absolutely, yes!

James A Cowan MBE

Note:

1. After retiring from the Royal Air Force, the author was the senior BN Islander pilot at Teesside Airport. He also flew the BN Islander with the Scottish Air Ambulance Service. Within a total of 11,000 flying hours, 1,532 hours were flown as a police and as an air ambulance pilot, flying the BN Islander. He has also flown the Vulcanair P68 with the Polizia di Stato in Rome and at the Vulcanair factory in Naples.

2. For further reading, the report, 'Planes, drones and helicopters', an independent study of police air support by HMI Matt Parr CB of HM Inspector of Constabulary, November 2017, is highly recommended..

RUMOUR

Is there any truth in a rumour I picked up in London last week that while they know the money supply situation is parlous NPAS are hoping that they can increase the current order for seven H135 helicopters to ten. Clearly they need that option and the current confused government is their best chance, but 'Good Luck with that.'



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LETTERS

Letters are rare in PAN so perhaps is time to borrow one from the good old *Yorkshire Post* last month. It seems there is a hankering for old times when police persons were to be seen wandering around the streets and green fields of Britain (if you assume that North Yorkshire is part of Britain and not some special Godly territory). Note that the letter comes from foreign parts.... Scotland no less. Well Trump likes it there too.....

From: William Loneskie, Justice Park, Oxton, Lauder, Berwickshire.

It's one of the most repeated British drama series of all time and no wonder. *Heartbeat* tapped into an epoch which reflected a reality, real or imagined, of a better time when things were simple, good triumphed over evil, there was a sense of community, and there was satisfaction at overcoming - with help from friends and family- the challenges which life throws at us.

Central to the original 18-year run was the role of the police in the community. There was a police station in every village and town; its telephone would be answered immediately; and help dispatched without delay, by Francis Barnett, BSA A65 Lightning, or humble Ford Anglia.

The various constables over the series were honest, decent and truthful and came from the various parts of the realm. Joe Mason and Sergeant Dennis Merton from Scotland (Joe McFadden and Duncan Bell), Nick Rowan from London (Nick Berry), and Yorkshireman Sergeant George Millar (John Duttine).



Derek Fowlds starring in *Heartbeat*. PIC: Photo by ITV/Shutterstock

All were white, clean shaven, with no tattoos and no facial hair, unlike today's officers some of whom have their arms covered in permanent ink and seem to relish scruffiness.

Editor: I did consider including a picture of myself in place of actor Derek Fowlds but remembered that I had a moustache and heavily scuffed boots at all times – both a blight on the core thread of the letter!!!!

And this next letter should rightly appear in next month's edition rather than now. It is the product of Tony Cowan having prior knowledge of some of the content of this edition (despite recently burning his toes in Zanzibar). May have to edit his knowledge if this gets to be a habit!

Dear Editor,

Your reference to finding stolen motor vehicles fitted with the location device called 'Tracker' reminds me that, in the day, we had a 'Tracker' receiver fitted to the BN Islander G-NESU, an aircraft belonging to the former police North East Air Support Unit based at Teesside Airport. We used the aircraft's 'Tracker' receiver on several occasions with great success!

One success followed a report of a high value piece of farming equipment, fitted with 'Tracker', that had been stolen from a farm in County Durham. The weather wasn't too clever, but, what the hell! We immediately climbed into cloud, continued the climb to safety altitude before following the direction from the 'Tracker' receiver. After arriving at the overhead, still in cloud, we completed several runs from different directions to pinpoint the target. The location was reported and the farm equipment, it may have been a combine harvester, was found hidden in a barn. We then flew back to Teesside Airport to complete an instrument approach to land - job done!

On another occasion we had a report of a luxury motor vehicle, also fitted with 'Tracker', that had been stolen in Middlesbrough, with a tip-off as to where it might be. Together with a traffic vehicle, also fitted with a 'Tracker' receiver, we searched for about 30 minutes, but without success. When we got back to Teesside I spoke to the control room with a request for more information; were we searching in the correct area? I was then given a 'reference number' which, you've guessed, was an OSGB grid reference! This 'smart' system, called 'Track Back', when activated reported its current location with a grid reference. Without getting airborne we converted the grid reference into a location with several lock-up garages, and the vehicle was recovered. That was some 20 years ago. Now, with GPS and smartphones, finding stolen motor vehicles has just got a whole lot easier!

Next, with a 'nudge' from *Police Aviation News*, I'm hopeful that finding a missing person, those with a mobile 'phone, one that is switched on, will, in the very near future, be just as simple as finding a stolen motor vehicle and other high value equipment that's fitted with a tracking device.

Yours sincerely,

James A Cowan MBE

MOVE ALONG THERE

Last month was the DSEi exhibition at ExCel London Docklands. The 'war weapons' event has long been a target for the looney left and all sorts of other activists who are against war in general. Unfortunately they do not think it productive to demonstrate their beliefs in Red Square. They usually turn up and loudly declare their opposition to buying war weapons designed to defend the UK and Europe from being walked over by Russia and China.

Surprisingly enough even though the government of the day and half the officials, courts, law enforcement and other hangers on are have the same leftish views, they still turned up to protest.

Adding to their strident voices was that of the Mayor of London. Sadiq Khan said he was appalled that one of the world's biggest arms and defence trade shows was being held in London - a city home to many who have fled conflict. That of course includes many Ukrainians who were at the event to inspect and potentially buy weapons of defence for their beleaguered homeland.

Khan urged bosses at the ExCel to think twice before staging the event again – a position he has expressed for many years without any effect upon the running of the show. Khan's comments have been slated as "naive" and described him as a "stuck record". It is two years after the last show; he said pretty much the same thing last time.

Who says politicians do not play games. Mayor Khan has control of the main constituents of transport in London and that entity was indeed on strike. It was difficult to get to ExCel this year. The DSEi event in London Docklands relies heavily on the Underground and Docklands Light Railway to feed in its audience.

Although some lines were unaffected strikes by tube staff declined to work from September 5 were sched-

uled to shut down London Underground entirely for four days from September 8 - 11. Londoners were urged to check before travel, with virtually no tube services expected to run and other transport in the capital likely to be affected by crowding and congestion.

Fortunately, some elements of the transport system including the Elizabeth line, London Overground, and national rail services continued to operate.

Any police personnel visiting the range of police information fairs and conferences may have looked at the companies offering major new IT systems that promise to transform future policing with a negative opinion. Unfortunately, someone at HQ will eventually send an officer along to buy into the promises even if the emissary has little or no idea what they mean. At its basic police training is about street fighting and detecting and few have a first class honours degree in computer science. You can learn but generally the sales staff will be streets ahead of you and who knows what you will buy? The same applies to buying helicopters, we all know the tale of the five seat helicopter that will carry full police role equipment, five passengers and fly for five hours don't we?

All of which leads to another IT blunder for the **Metropolitan Police** in London

Back in 2014, the London Metropolitan Police signed a £90M contract with Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman to replace its ageing command-and-control (CAD) system, the backbone for 999 calls and officer deployment. The project was working with Capita and KPMG.

By late 2015 the project appeared to have cracks appearing and it was reported that the police had been obliged to sign a three year extension to their existing contract with its current provider Unisys. That system was already 30-years old.

By 2016, the whole project collapsed with around £65M already spent before the plug was pulled. Only £15M was recovered many years later and another £3M was expended in exit fees.

The net loss on the contract was assessed at £53M – the equivalent of 750 fully funded police officers for a year. A reason given for ending the project was cited as "termination for convenience" by the Mayors Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) which managed the project. At the time the Mayor of London was Boris Johnson (2008-16).

At a time when the Met were closing police stations and cutting front line officer numbers it is still not clear who signed off on this deal and whether anyone was held to account when it went wrong. It was an enormous loss, one that has been quietly buried from view. London was left with the same decades old CAD system and less officers on the street.

Unfortunately history is repeating itself.

The CONNECT system, billed as the Met's future, is already tens of millions over budget, riddled with problems and grinding front line officers down.

The 2018 CONNECT programme, formerly known as Met Integrated Policing Solution (MiPs), was designed to deliver a core policing IT solution replacing legacy systems for £150M. The system replaced eight core operational systems with a single integrated solution and was supposed to transform ways of working for 40,000+ officers and staff. It appears it does not do that.

Since Contract Award, the programme has experienced delays in implementation and cost, some of that delay can be placed with Covid-19 and other issues but it was finally launched into use in late 2022 with the promise of a full roll out in 2023. In 2023 officers on the street were reporting it to be a shambles. The system was tens of millions over budget (£64M) and had generated more than 25,000 support requests in its first year and yet it was unable to handle the information it was being asked to without regular crashing. It reflects problems already experienced with the Post Office computers.

Different contract, same story: IT blunders that waste millions while the frontline pays the price. [David McKelvey]



RECENT EVENTS

EMERGENCY SERVICES SHOW

THE EMERGENCY TECH SHOW

I have been attending the Emergency Services Show for more years than I care to remember. I saw its small and rustic beginnings, growth and its move to the current larger location. This year I fear I have noted a hiccup in the expansion of what is probably one of the most relevant shows aimed at the blue light sector in Britain.



The Windracers Ultra drone at this years ESS ©Windracers

The 2025 show was smaller than in recent years, with areas normally bustling with exhibitors cordoned off and silent. The Tech show could easily have filled the gaps in Hall 5 rather than taking up the adjoining Hall 4 space.

I do not see it as a disaster, simply a reflection of current market pressures. When the organisers planned the co-located events, a different government was in place and times they are now significantly harder. Fortunately, aside from size, the show held its own although there were display elements missing it delivered on what was there.

Aviation content was restricted to a few drones; fewer than usual it was true but a good selection with the arrival of NPAS on scene with a representative rotary wing Scheibel 101 drone being a highlight that they appeared to relish and that certainly welcomed by visitors. Also in the halls prominently was an example of the fixed wing Windracers ULTRA drone used on a range of NHS trials and more recently operating with the British Antarctic Survey. Last year there were intriguing and timely elements including Drones as First Responders (DFR) category base stations. They were prominent last year but far less visible this year.

The NPAS stand in the depths of the Emergency Tech Show was dominated by a S-100 drone representing the similar examples currently flying over the Severn Estuary and Bristol. It may have been short on content (the engine and sensor optics) but it was a welcome first footing by NPAS into the public arena. [PAR]



Other apparent absences were in the number of vehicles in the ESS hall and in the outside park, it was not deserted but the lack of crush was noticeable.

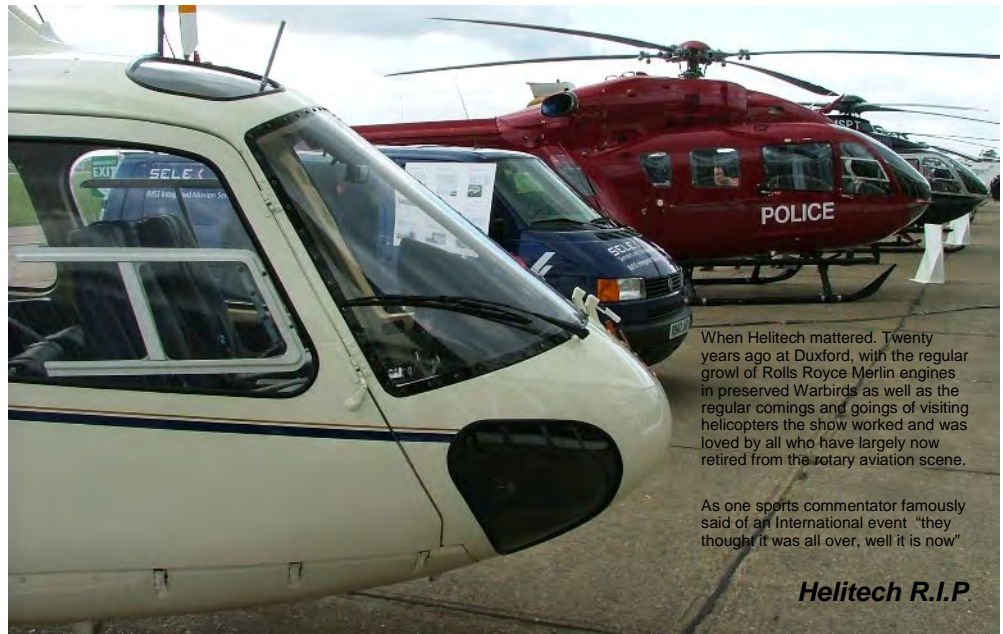
DRONE X AT EXCEL

Finally, on the last day of last month, I turned up at ExCel in London Docklands to sit in on two presentations, one from FRONTEX on its use of drones on border surveillance and a presentation that included the presence of David Walters from NPAS. Also present Mark Balsdon, NATS and Simon Meakins Bristow.

The trio thought out loud on the progress of drone technology to a 'standing room only' audience in the Keynote Speakers Theatre. It was a sharp largely unhearsed presentation and interaction on the subject and well worth the journey to ExCel. I am unsure whether there was anything else gripping enough to see.



Normally I would attend this event co-badged as 'Helitech' an event we know and have loved in the past before it lost a grip on reality and moved into the London Docklands and ExCel from the green fields of Duxford. This year there is a website offering visitors attendance at 'Helitech' to see 300 exhibitors and join thousands of visitors but that is where it ends. There were no 300 exhibitors but the number attending was good enough for the drone event that has swamped the helicopter show for many years now.



When Helitech mattered. Twenty years ago at Duxford, with the regular growl of Rolls Royce Merlin engines in preserved Warbirds as well as the regular comings and goings of visiting helicopters the show worked and was loved by all who have largely now retired from the rotary aviation scene.

As one sports commentator famously said of an international event "they thought it was all over, well it is now"

Helitech R.I.P

On site there is no sign of Helitech badging and many of the 'Helitech' exhibitors were either just part of the drone event or totally absent (no change there then).

As far as the format we thought it ought to be goes, I think we can safely say that Helitech is finally dead. ExCel no longer has an area where an outside static could be held anyway, they just built on the outside car park. I know that European Rotors will be breathing a sigh of relief over the demise of their one time partner. It was though just an annoyance from their past that kept on reappearing.

UPCOMING EVENTS

8 October 2025 APSA Safety Stand-To, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, USA October 8, APSA partners with the Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General Aviation Unit for a Safety Stand-to in Harrisburg, PA. Class topics include mission equipment, spatial disorientation, covert surveillance operations, safety, multi-agency operations, and more. You can [register for one or both via our web-site](https://www.publicsafetyaviation.org) now. www.publicsafetyaviation.org

20-22 October 2025 The National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) Innovation and Digital Summit will be taking place between 20 to 22 October 2025 in Liverpool.

The Summit aims to harness digital capability and technology to deliver public safety and confidence in policing.

The Digital Awards 2025 will be taking place during the summit on evening of 21 October, where policing will be recognising the outstanding contributions by police staff and teams across UK law enforcement agencies.

Nominations closed in July 2025 and judging took place following the closing date. Only UK based law enforcement agencies, or their team are eligible to be nominated to receive an award but nominations can be made by policing, partners or suppliers.

11-12 November 2025 9th Edition of OFSEC - Oman Fire, Safety and Security Event Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman. Designed to meet the needs of the local, regional and international markets by linking practitioners, suppliers, distributors and manufacturers from the fire, safety, HSE and security industry, with key decision makers from the government and private sectors, making it a definitive networking platform, where new projects and partnerships are initiated and visionary objectives are implemented. This event also aims to create synergy and strengthen the collaboration between the authorities and the industries. The 2-day Expo will attract participation from a large number of exhibitors and representation from over 20 countries, with a slew of product and service launches, to the trade visitors and potential buyers from the region and beyond. Email: nk@muscat-expo.com Muscat Expo LLC P O Box 1406 PC 133 Al Khuwair, Sultanate of Oman www.ofsecevent.com