

Police Aviation News



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Issue 355

November 2025



SAPS fleet woes
UK Drone Trials
Yorkshire AA Dig In
PAvCon Latest

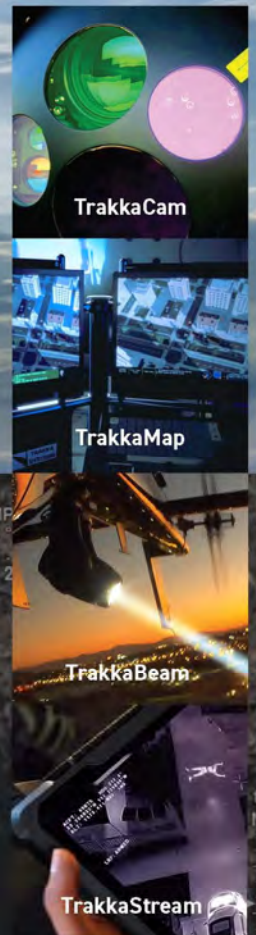


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LAW ENFORCEMENT

AUSTRALIA

VICTORIA: Late in October a media furore was created when Victoria Police Chief Commissioner Mike Bush was flown to Tasmania in a police helicopter for a conference. He is later reported to have admitted that the decision to use the Leonardo AW139 helicopter was wrong and created a poor impression.

Chief Commissioner Mike Bush travelled to Hobart on last month using one of the Victoria Police Air Wing helicopters. The annual conference he was attending was with chief commissioners from Australia and New Zealand.

Editor: This is not the first time a senior police officer has raised the interest of the media in their choice of travel. It depends which country you are in and what local expectations are. If this had taken place in the Philippines or Germany no-one would have seen fault, they operate part of their fleet as transport for senior officers and politicians as a matter of course. In Victoria different values prevail and when nudged into comment Victoria Police said the flight did not create an additional cost for taxpayers. The flight has been estimated as 1,300km, about 4 hrs flying time, perhaps \$40,000 of the budget, a not inconsiderable amount that does not fit in with the dismissive statement. that the state has paid to get him to the business meeting.

GERMANY



BAVARIA: Late September saw the customary gathering of police training helicopters as the ongoing pilot course at the Federal Police flight school entered its final stages.

Tradition is that the final stages include a week of flying through northern and central Germany. This year 13 helicopters were attracted to the airfield at Bautzen for lunch.

The aircraft included the new Airbus Helicopters H145 of the Bavarian and Rhineland-Palatinate State Police. From the Federal fleet came the 'new' EC135T2+ D-HLFS. It was originally a Hermes Edition VIP aircraft that had seen little use by its owner and had only logged 500 hours.



COVER IMAGE: The Airbus CC-295 Kingfisher is derived from the CASA 295 transport produced in Spain. The Royal Canadian Air Force use them in a Search and Rescue role as a replacement for the de Havilland Canada Buffalo aircraft.

The aircraft is equipped with integrated sensors that allow crews to locate persons or objects from more than 40 kilometres away, even in low-light conditions.

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The EC135 taken on by the Federal Police for training use and retains its unique ski landing gear design. It does not have a complete police role fit, just a tactical radio.

As in previous years the training element of the gathering was flown from Fussen, Bavaria. [images by Johannes Herrman and Tom Zeigler]

SOUTH AFRICA

POLICE SERVICE AIR WING: Further to the recent report in PAN about one area of the South African Police Service (Eastern Cape) it has now been reported that some 71% of the aircraft owned by the air wing are no longer operational. This amounts to twenty-seven of the thirty eight aircraft, twelve fixed wing and 26 helicopters. One aeroplane and one helicopter are damaged beyond economic repair.

This was revealed by the acting Minister of Police, Firoz Cachalia, in a written response to questions posed to him by MP Makashule Gana.

The Minister said that the department intends to increase the current total number of aircraft by acquiring an additional 15 helicopters but that the projected budget of R1.1 billion will mean that procurement will take place as and when funding becomes available.

On a more positive note, early in October the National Police Commissioner General Fannie Masemola announced the addition of two new Airbus H125 helicopters – ZT-REC and ZS-HGA. The pair were formally handed over during a ceremony at the SAPS Training College in Pretoria. The event was attended by senior police leadership, including Acting Police Minister Firoz Cachalia, National Police Commissioner Fannie Masemola, Deputy Minister of Police Shela Boshie, and Deputy National Commissioner Cassel Mathale. Minister Cachalia noted that one of the helicopters will be stationed in Umtata and the other in Gauteng.



For its helicopter forces the SAPS now concentrates on the AS350 series and has operated it for some 25 years now. The last delivery prior to the new aircraft was for two that were delivered in late 2023.

The current fleet is made up of single examples of the Beech King Air C90A, Cessna Citation Sovereign CE680, Pilatus PC-12 and an aged MBB BK117 helicopter alongside nine Pilatus PC-6B Porter, seventeen Airbus AS350B3, two MD500E and six Robinson R44 helicopters. [Newsday]

UNITED KINGDOM

NATIONAL: The trial of the Scheibel helicopter based in Avonmouth has now been approved for moving into daylight operations.

NPAS has received approval from the CAA to advance its uncrewed aircraft trials into a Temporary Reserved Airspace (TRA) within Class G (uncontrolled) airspace, enabling daytime trial flights for the first time, while allowing equipped general aviation operators to safely share the same airspace.

This milestone comes after careful consideration of a detailed safety case, presented to the UK regulator by the NPAS Futures and Innovation Team.



It marks an important step in the development of the trials of Beyond Visual Line of Sight (BVLOS) uncrewed aircraft, which are already showing promising results for the future of policing from the air.

Since July 2025, trials of uncrewed aircraft have only been able to operate from Avonmouth Port under the restrictions of a Temporary Danger Airspace (TDA), which prevented other operators from entering the airspace and restricted flying from 10pm to 3am.

The approval of a TRA, supported by a Transponder Mandatory Zone (TMZ) in Class G airspace, further opens the airspace and permits daytime flying – allowing NPAS to significantly expand the testing and development of its ‘detect and avoid’ capabilities, vital for the safety of others and for integration into existing airspace. The TRA will become ‘active’ from Monday 27 October 2025.

NPAS is the first organisation to successfully deploy a TRA in Class G, uncontrolled, airspace - seen as a significant achievement in the safe integration of uncrewed aircraft into UK airspace.

Over the course of the trial, NPAS has logged over 90 hours of flight time, with the longest single flight reaching 4.5 hours and covering a distance of 297km.

The capabilities were tested in a real-life scenario on Wednesday 24 September 2025, when the trials team, flying over the Severn Bridge, picked up a ‘Man Overboard’ Alert. Diverting from the trial, the crew immediately liaised with HM Coastguard and emergency services partners and directed its camera focus to the location of the bridge, from which the alert was activated.

Whilst it was quickly determined it was a false alarm, the crew was successful in its immediate and effective response to a real-life situation, providing valuable additional exercise experience.

Trial highlights have included:

- Radar & ADS-B integration: Successful detection and tracking of cooperative and non-cooperative airspace users.
- Payload testing: Thermal identification of people at 3km away, tree canopy penetration and temperature-obscured missing person searches, with live video downlink being shared directly to the NPAS Operations Centre in Wakefield.
- Surveillance: Onboard radar effectively tracked an NPAS fixed-wing aircraft.

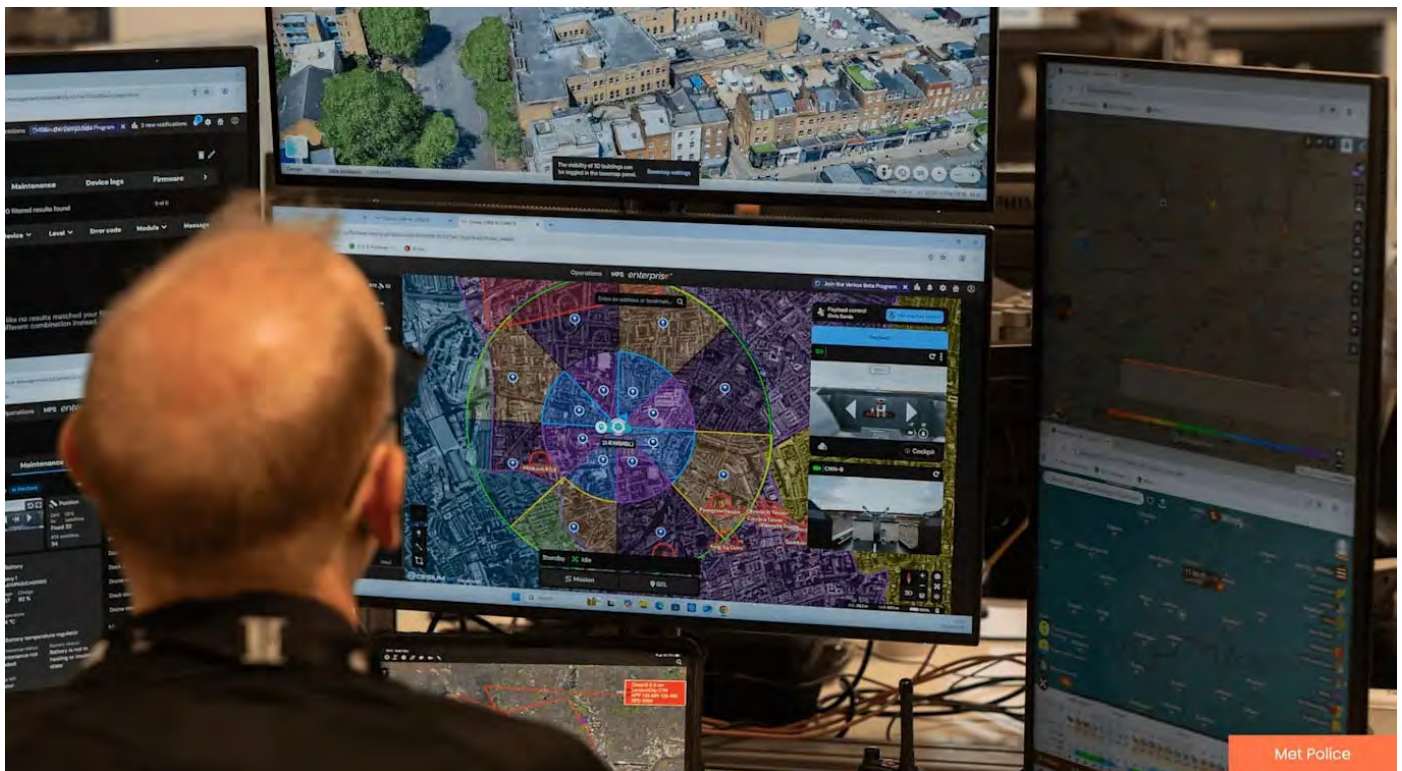
The trials team has delivered demonstrations to a wide array of stakeholders, including representatives

from the Home Office, police drone teams, aviation industry leaders, Civil Aviation Authority and National Air Traffic Control Service. Further visits are planned for senior police and police and crime commissioners and overseas police teams.

The NPAS trials are due to operate within the TRA from Avonmouth Port until the end of 2025, at which time all the data gathered will be collated, analysed and presented to industry operators and users to inform a future vision of unmanned craft in UK police air support.

LONDON: As revealed last month, the Metropolitan Police have set up a Drones as First Responders (DFR) trial operation under the aegis of the wider NPCC plans involving other police areas. Some disquiet has been expressed on the trial in that it is assumed to be using fairly standard Chinese manufactured quad drones rather than a type specially developed for use over a built up area.

The initial selected area for the trial is Islington in north London and this was confirmed when the SUAS website posted notice of a NOTAM covering October 2-6. This takes in an area from Finsbury Park to the City of London and closed 10.86 sq. NM of airspace for four days in London. By chance those few days coincided with the arrival of a tropical storm (called Amy locally) from the Americas. As a result the weather was inclement most of the time with constant rain and high winds the first two days, not conducive to drone flying. It is alleged that the NOTAM/Temporary Danger Area [TDA] was put in place by the CAA on behalf of Police, but it is believed the police never specifically asked for it, potentially making use of their trial under a 'State Aircraft' provision.



The Notam caught out many drone operators and they were not well pleased. The speed at which it arrived out of nowhere meant that commercial contracts were stopped in their tracks for no discernible reason. The Trade Association for the drone industry ARPAS-UK was quickly on the case. Whether the police or CAA are to blame will be an argument for weeks to come.

Regardless of the initial weather and the dating of the original Notam document the trial continued through October. We may suppose that the police did not seek a Notam on the grounds that you could not put one in place to cover the rest of what is expected to be a long trial period. So it's a blame game.

Most news relating to the trials centred around criticism of the event and led to at least one Freedom of Information [FOI] request for further information. The Civil Aviation Authority [CAA] have been asked to provide a summary of their knowledge of the of the operation including what platform (make/model) and reason for the flight that is happening over Islington, and copies of all communications between the CAA and Laurence Taylor, Deputy Assistant Commissioner (DAC), of the Metropolitan Police. Taylor is an accredited and experienced Gold Public Order Commander and Gold CBRN (Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear) Commander. He is the NPCC Events Policing Lead and NPCC Lead for Drones. He



also leads for the MPS and London region on police aviation and is the CPOSA (Chief Police Officers Staff Association) rep for the London region.

Later in October the DFR operation was given full media attention including TV coverage duly fronted by the main people involved in the project, Laurence Taylor and Superintendent Taryn Evans - strategic lead for the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) Drones Team.

Supt Evans was quoted as describing the operations as "safe, effective, and efficient."

Editor: As is the case with the S100 drone trial in Avon this should be seen as a proof of concept trial rather than the final solution. The equipment operating over Islington and soon to expand to other areas of London is a dedicated DFR system provided by DJI of China.

However much we are to believe that products from China are from the 'devil incarnate' – the potential enemy – there are clear doubts held by the security authorities that these machines are part of spying capabilities enjoyed by the Chinese Government. As a result at some point in their development they will need to be changed to (hopefully) more secure Western technology. That is going to cost more than the cheaper Asian options now being flown.

In Shenzhen, China, DJI advertise that every streetlamp is a stage for technology! DJI DFR drones have become "AI Guardians in the Sky", enhancing urban surveillance and innovation. Arguably the Big Brother surveillance focus of the Chinese on their own people was one of the driving forces in the growth of DFR in the Western World. Unlike the majority of UK CCTV the DFR equipment is joined to a wireless network that can beam its information literally anywhere in the world and who is to say that the secure link to police HQ is not mirrored by a second hidden secure link to China. The Chinese communications firm Huawei, and its equipment were removed from the vitally important Airwave replacement system, ESN, over fears relating to its links with the Chinese Government.

Additionally in the background remains the question of when the authorities will require certification of parts used in the construction and maintenance of drones.

We have all seen them, the drone prototypes made on the back yard factories and in the local university. Components that come out of waste bins and screws from the local hardware store – I do not think that Styrofoam has ever been certified by the EASA, CAA or FAA, and there is little chance of it changing soon.

While it may be acceptable for disposable munitions drones (as used in their thousands in Ukraine) to be made out of 'ticky tacky' components, the parts used in drones designed for human carriage or flight over humans will becoming increasingly regulated. The two engines over built up areas is just a part of this oversight.

WILTSHIRE: Philip Wilkinson OBE, a former army officer, was re-elected as Wiltshire's Police and Crime Commissioner in May 2024 for a second term. In recent weeks he has been expressing his opinion that he feels that the service being offered by NPAS to the people of Wiltshire has been sub-standard. His belief was that drones operated by local officers could provide an adequate service.

Mr Wilkinson said he wanted Wiltshire Police to leave its £700,000 a year contract with NPAS, and invest in a fleet of drones instead. The NPAS contract gives the county access to a helicopter and fixed wing aircraft, but the force had to pay for them whether they were used or not. The force is tied into an indefinite contract government contract with no end date - and they only person who can release them is the new Home Secretary, Shabana Mahmood.

Mr Wilkinson is on the board of the National Police Air Service, where he represents all five PCCs in the South West - Wiltshire, Devon & Cornwall, Avon & Somerset, Dorset, and Gloucestershire. Half of the forces, he said, want to be released from the contract.

Prior to the creation of NPAS Wiltshire Police shared their aircraft and its cost with an air ambulance charity operation based at police headquarters in Devizes. Now the usual response helicopter is based 50 miles south at Hurn Airport, Bournemouth, and the fixed-wing aircraft over 100 miles north at the East Midlands Airport. The best response from those aircraft would be 30 minutes although there is a nearer helicopter based in Bristol. The result is that they are sometimes scrambled to an incident which is over before they arrive.. He believes that the police can deliver most air support missions using its own drones, which are launched from mobile police cars.

In early September he told an oversight meeting of councillors from Swindon and Wiltshire: "We pay, regionally, £176,000 an hour for a fixed wing aircraft, and we've used it for two hours in the last year."

Responding, chief superintendent Fiona Gaffney, the new chief operating officer at the National Police Air Service, said: "NPAS provides vital air support to police forces across England and Wales, including Wiltshire and its neighbouring counties.

She added: "It is important to note that drones are not a direct replacement for crewed aircraft. Frequently, it is the eyes of the three crew members on board an aircraft that makes the difference.

"The value of the human eye cannot be underestimated, and only with crewed aircraft can you get the full benefit of air support.

"Helicopters and aeroplanes offer endurance, speed and operational flexibility that remain essential – particularly in rural and geographically diverse regions."

And she said NPAS was looking at ways of incorporating drone technology into its activities.

"We recognise the growing role of drones in policing and are actively exploring how they can complement our existing fleet," she said.

"Our Beyond Visual Line of Sight uncrewed aircraft trials, funded by the Home Office, are testing long-endurance aircraft with advanced mission systems.

"These trials are helping shape the future of police aviation – including how uncrewed aircraft might be integrated into a national service.

"The trials are also helping inform the Civil Aviation Authority on how all future BVLOS drone operations might be safely integrated into UK airspace."

Editor: There is a definite shift in NPAS defensive tactics in recent weeks. They are fighting their corner from a newly found position of strength that promotes the availability of the super efficient eyes of the crew into the equation. It would seem that their efforts do not extend to convincing the attendees at the National Strategic Board.

There are a number of, admittedly unconfirmed, instances of over reliance on drones that may have led to the unnecessary death of persons lost or injured in remote areas.

The promoter of a £1M EO/IR camera system will understandably never promote the lack of spatial awareness offered by cameras. Whatever they see or enhance is not equal to a well trained human eye let alone six of them. Cameras are like looking through a cardboard tube at a view.

Despite the clear limitations of their viewpoint drones will find a space in Airborne Law Enforcement but at the present time there are hundreds of groups and organisations trying to pin down where that best fit space is.



UNITED STATES

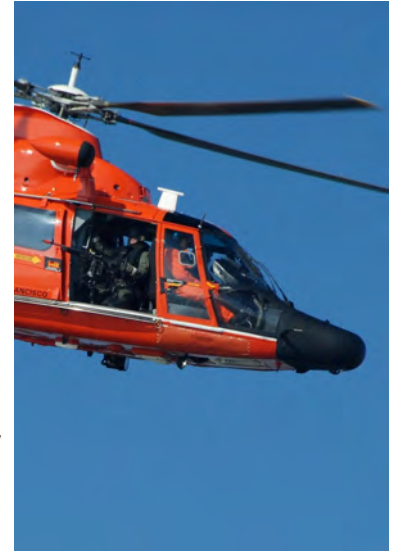
FEDERAL: The US Coast Guard (USCG) is investing in new aircraft engines and radars ahead of a planned expansion of its fixed- and rotary-wing fleets.

It has finalised a \$14M contract for 13 GE Aerospace T700 turboshafts, which power Sikorsky MH-60T Jayhawk medium-range SAR helicopters. In addition it has signed a \$14M contract with L3Harris covering three AN/APY-11 multi-mode radars, which will be installed on six new-build Lockheed Martin HC-130J fixed-wing SAR.

The cost of these contracts is being extracted from a \$3.3 billion fund set up to modernise and expand US Coast Guard aviation under a package set up by the Trump government in the summer.

Some \$2.3 billion has been set aside for producing and fielding new MH-60T helicopters and flight training simulators. Long lead items are being purchased to bring about the production of new Sikorsky MH-60T SAR helicopters, which will replace its Airbus Helicopters MH-65D/Es and downsize the overall USCG fleet from 146 aircraft to just 127, a 13% reduction.

In the process, all 94 of the USCG's MH-65s are to be retired, while its existing fleet of 49 MH-60Ts will be expanded, albeit by a lesser amount. Sikorsky is still working on a service life extension on some of the existing MH-60Ts, adding 10,000h of life to each aircraft, all of which are more than 30 years



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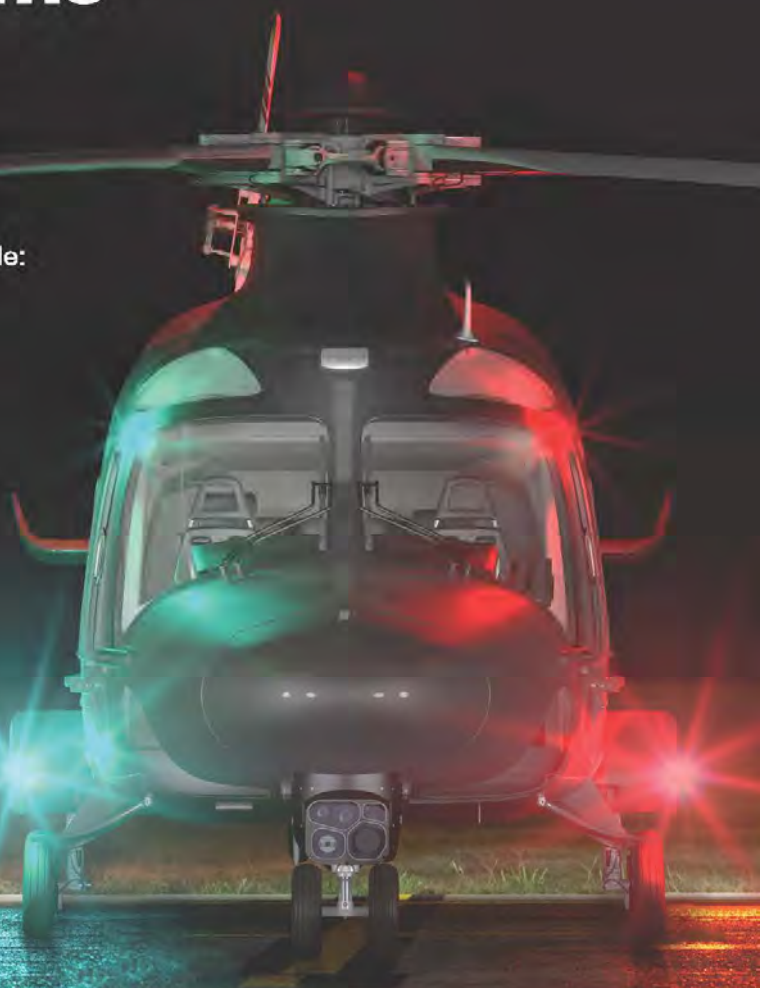
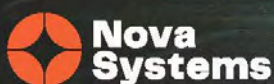
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old. The MH-65D/E retirement plan has been criticised by government auditors for leaving the service with fewer aircraft and without capabilities offered by the smaller MH-65s.

USCG fixed-wing aircraft have been diverted from the SAR role to support Washington's activities designed to deport migrant workers from the USA. Aircraft affected include Lockheed HC-130J transports, which are set to receive significant upgrades under the recent USCG appropriation.

The US Coast Guard plans to buy six new HC-130J fixed-wing transports for more than \$1 billion. Approximately \$1 billion from the \$3 billion aviation modernisation fund is earmarked for purchasing and missionising six HC-130Js and one HC-130J simulator, the USCG's first.

Its existing HC-130Js are also being upgraded with a new Minotaur Mission System avionics package, which the USCG says enables collection and correlation of sensor and track data. The Minotaur system was developed for the US Navy, allowing aircrews to gather and process surveillance information that can be transmitted to other platforms and operators mid-flight.

The capability will support a range of USCG missions, the service says, including maritime interdiction and search and rescue. [Flight International]



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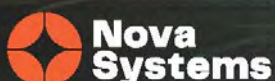
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CALIFORNIA: On the east side of San Francisco Bay the East Bay Regional Park Authority Police Department operates two helicopters over 73 Regional Parks in Alameda and Contra Costa counties which host 30 million visits a year. Although the 'Authority only has 75 sworn officers it has contracts with others to provide law enforcement services to others in the East Bay area making up 1,745 square miles of territory.

The current aircraft are two examples of the Airbus Helicopters H125/AS350 but there are still plans to purchase a larger helicopter to meet an ongoing fire fighting role. The latest H125 is the fourth AStar they have operated. The previous airframe N708PD c/n 4390 was acquired in late 2008 and it has now been repainted in the same colour scheme as the new aircraft N821PD c/n 8914 delivered four years ago.

At the time of the last change of aircraft a business case was put forward to acquire a larger twin to undertake the wildfire fighting role. The submission was for an Airbus Helicopters H145 but in the event the chief at the time set that aside, suggested a Bell option and N821PD was purchased. Since that time the management has changed and it looks likely that an H145 fitted with a belly tank will be the next replacement aircraft. [Goldin/PAR]

Editor: Pressure to make the fire aircraft purchase is rising locally. The widespread wildfires across the USA are placing many areas of the USA in the 'uninsurable' category. Thousands of residents forced to flee the area have returned to devastated smouldering homes which no insurer will cover. East Bay may be a relatively small service but the fire fighting money is available to try and ensure that wildfires do not take out complete communities. In this instance the safety of law enforcement personnel becomes secondary to the goods and chattels of the population at large.

Further east in the state the Stanislaus County Sheriff's Office (SCSO) serves over half million residents living in 1,515 square miles, of which 20 square miles is covered by water. To police this slightly smaller area the Sheriff's Office employs over 800 individuals., not all of whom are sworn. Full time air support has only come into being in recent years.

The SCSO has repainted their Bell 206L to match their newer Bell 407. They have hopes of replacing the 206L with another 407 in coming years. [Goldin]

Editor: These two examples from the San Francisco area tend to show that you cannot generalise on 'size' being a major part of which of the 17,000 or so law enforcement agencies has air support. There are other major factors in play (including political clout). Over the last few decades there have been numerous instances of tiny operations with perhaps three sworn officers having their own helicopter or aeroplane – that was invariably a distortion caused by the ready and free availability of DoD surplus airframes and pilot owned donations of aircraft flight time (even if they spent most of their time in the back of some barn rather than operating). As the years have gone by these free airframes have become less of a good deal as spares simply became unavailable or very expensive.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA: An incident on October 10 raises issues relating to the FAA's defensive manoeuvres to protect airline traffic using Fairfax Reagan National Airport (DCA) International.

In January there was a fatal collision between a US Army Blackhawk helicopter and an American Eagle commuter airliner in which 67 died. As a result the rules allowing helicopters to cross DCA flight paths were changed. In the recent incident ATC at DCA denied a request by the duty Fairfax County Police helicopter to fly to an area not far from the flight path of arriving airliners and the Potomac River.

After the collision the rules were changed to deny all helicopters from flying over the Potomac River but exclusions were made for active defence, HEMS and law enforcement helicopter operations. In August the Washington Post noted that there was a memo that told ATC controllers to no longer allow law enforcement to have priority over scheduled air traffic. Whenever a helicopter is allowed to fly over the Potomac near DCA air traffic is halted to ensure safety

In this instance it appears from a Radion traffic from Open MHz and ADSS-B Exchange posted to X indicates ATC did not ask what the purpose of the police flight was before the denial.

In the event the police flight turned out to be low priority but it has highlighted the ongoing problems in the wake of the fatal flight. The collision is still under investigation so not final decision on the best course of action in future has been made. [WJLA]

FLORIDA: The latest reequipment of helicopters for the Miami Dade Sheriff's Office (MDSO) was completed last month. Airbus Helicopters AStar N309MP c/n 9597 for the MDSO completed test flying and was delivered late last month. It overnighted October 23/24 on the west coast of Florida between Gainesville and Tampa.

The four new AStar's replace an earlier fleet acquired circa 2010.

Tail number	Type	msn/c/n	Delivered
N306MP	H125	c/n 9526	[7/2025-]
N307MP	H125	c/n 9531	[7/2025-]
N308MP	H125	c/n 9574	[9/2025-]
N309MP	H125	c/n 9597	[10/2025-]

IDAHO: Caldwell PD in Canyon County in the west of Idaho have announced that they are to be the first agency in Idaho who will launch a Drone as a First Responder (DFR) scheme in cooperation with commercial partners Skydio . DFR is seen locally as a force multiplier — providing instant eyes in the sky, enhancing officer safety, reducing response times, and delivering real-time situational awareness to the community. In 2024 the PD attended over 45,000 calls for service attended to by around 100 staff. In the year drones were deployed 105 times and flew 142 hours.

Caldwell make use of the technical support provided by Skydio, Axon, and Peregrine.

Editor: Recently it was reported by a source in the UK that existing US DFR operations had faced significant problems but I have been unable to confirm any of this from US sources.

TEXAS: The Department of Public Safety Aircraft Operations Division (AOD) has taken delivery from Metro Aviation of a Cessna 208 N968TX c/n 000713 to be stationed at McKinney Airport in North Texas.

The Cessna is outfitted with satellite connectivity and advanced EO/IR surveillance systems to strengthen statewide law enforcement operations and represents a significant upgrade for law enforcement operations across North Texas.



The aircraft is dedicated in honour of Lieutenant Pilot Jerry Ray Ragan Badge number 10429. Ragan died in 2020 after battling brain cancer. He served DPS for 19 years, including a decade as an Aircraft Operations Division pilot.



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AIR AMBULANCE

ABU DHABI

Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi announced plans to develop the UAE's first hospital-based vertiport under the General Civil Aviation Authority's (GCAA) new hybrid conversion framework. The vertiport is planned to provide electric air taxi access to Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi.

The companies will explore both non-emergency passenger use cases and time-critical organ transport. The location expands Archer's planned network following the recent hybrid vertiport approval at Abu Dhabi Cruise Terminal, marking another step forward in plans to unlock operations across the capital.

The two companies are exploring both non-emergency passenger use cases and time-critical organ transport. The operations would utilize electric aircraft designed to carry up to four passengers while producing less noise and emissions than a traditional helicopter and would use the planned passenger carrying cabin configuration for both purposes.

Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi, part of the M42 group, is a multispecialty hospital located on Al Maryah Island in Abu Dhabi, UAE. As an extension of Cleveland Clinic in the U.S., it is uniquely designed to address the complex and critical care needs of the UAE and the broader region.

Celebrating its 10th anniversary in 2025, Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi is a 405-bed hospital, including 321 acute care beds, 84 critical care beds, four royal suites, and 26 operating rooms. Its state-of-the-art facilities provide patients in the region with direct access to world-class healthcare providers and Cleveland Clinic's renowned model of care. www.archer.com.

PERU

The local response capabilities have been boosted by the addition of a second Beechcraft King Air 360C air ambulance equipped to provide advanced medical care and specialised cold chain systems for organ transport.

For the last 12 months, the Peruvian Air Force has carried out more than 100 aeromedical missions, airlifting over 145 patients from remote areas.

UNITED KINGDOM

EAST ANGLIA: During a recent call out, the crew of the HEMS helicopter landed in scrubland behind a residential area.

A local resident saw them arrive and, without hesitation, grabbed her lawnmower and cleared a path to help them reach their patient more easily.

Editor: People love their air ambulances!



WALES: In the wake of the 'final legal appeal' the air ambulance bases at Caernarfon and Welshpool are to close early next year. The Court of Appeal decided that the appeals against closure would not stand.

In a statement the Wales Air Ambulance charity confirmed that on October 15 Lady Justice Andrews refused the application made to the Court of Appeal in relation to the planned air ambulance service improvement. The ruling brings an end to the legal challenge to the decision by NHS Wales' Joint Commissioning committee (JCC) to close the Welshpool and Caernarfon bases and redeploy the teams at a new North Wales site.

The plans were met with fierce resistance in Powys with thousands of residents signing petitions and attending public meetings to voice their opposition. Mr Justice Turner ruled against campaigners who brought the case to the court and in his ruling said: "I understand and readily appreciate the depth of feeling involved and the disappointment that this decision will bring to many people in mid and north Wales.

"However, it is not the function of this court to usurp the decision making function of those to whom parliament has delegated the responsibility. In the absence of valid public law grounds of challenge, the decision of the JCC must stand."

There appears to be no further legal avenue to challenge the decision. [Pioneer]

YORKSHIRE: Work has started on the new, £9M, base facility designed to replace the current air ambulance base alongside the control tower at RAF Topcliffe. The new base is being built on land which was used by the RAF during World War Two but has been vacant since 1950. It was part of a satellite station for RAF Leeming, but was abandoned after the war and the land reverted to agricultural use.

"The Canadians flew here with Halifax bombers, and the site that we are building on is the medical centre for the old RAF Skipton-on-Swale," said a YAA source.



Launched by Yorkshire Air Ambulance (YAA), it will be built at Skipton Bridge on the outskirts of the village of Skipton on Swale near Thirsk and will house one of the charity's three Airbus Helicopters H145 helicopters. The purpose-built facility will mirror the charity's southern base in Nostell, near Wakefield, and is designed to support long-term operations in the northern region.

The site will include a clinical planning room, advanced training and simulation suite, crew accommodation, wellbeing zones and ample meeting spaces. Planning permission was granted by North Yorkshire Council in July.

Ripley based Hacs Construction has been appointed as the lead contractor for the build after a thorough tender process, which was managed by RLB's Leeds office, who have acted as the client project manager. The unique building has been designed by Leeds based architect's Group Ginger.

The build programme is expected to take approximately 45 weeks to complete before the internal fit out begins. The charity hopes to be operational from the new airbase in early Autumn 2026.

UNITED STATES

NEBRASKA: The Air Medical Transport Conference (AMTC) 2025 was held on October 27, 2025, at the CHI Health Convention Center in Omaha, Nebraska.

The Annual meeting point for the US airmedical industry the event offers a range of educational opportunities for professionals as well as providing a showcase for the aircraft and medical industries.

Metro Aviation, a long-standing leader in air medical transport and aircraft completions, was a prime player at the event with an Airbus Helicopters N824EH c/n 9884 which arrived in Omaha on October 23. It is normally supporting the GundersenAIR operation in La Crosse, Wisconsin.



Visitors to AMTC were invited to explore the aircraft's state-of-the-art EMS interior, completed at Metro's Shreveport facility. The aircraft highlights the company's expertise in designing custom, mission-ready solutions for operators nationwide.

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[COMPACT] GAME CHANGER

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[FLIR.COM/380X](https://flir.com/380X)

Metro Aviation, Inc., based in Shreveport, Louisiana, United States is a worldwide provider of completion services for all missions and types of helicopters and specializes in air-medical completions with several Supplemental Type Certificates (STC) developed by the company for a wide variety of helicopters. Metro is an FAA approved repair station, approved Airbus (Eurocopter) Service Center and FAR Part 135 air medical operations provider at several locations across the United States. The company is privately held and the largest traditional air medical provider in the country.

FIRE UNITED STATES

CALIFORNIA: The County of Los Angeles Fire Department has signed a contract with Sikorsky for two S-70i FIREHAWK aircraft. The LAFD has been using FIREHAWK helicopters since the early 2000s to fight wildfires, conduct medical evacuations, search and rescue, and disaster relief missions.

The S-70i FIREHAWK features a 1,000-gallon water tank with a retractable snorkel, twin turbine engines capable of up to 155 knots and 10,000 feet, night vision compatible flight controls, and multi-mission flexibility with quick reconfiguration for hoist rescues, air medical transport, crew haul, or aerial reconnaissance.

The FIREHAWK is also used by six other agencies in California: the Department of Forestry, Kern County Fire, Orange County Fire, San Diego Fire-Rescue, Santa Barbara County Fire, and Ventura County Fire Departments.

MINNESOTA: Wipaire has celebrated the delivery of the 200th Fire Boss Delivery on September 23.



©Wipaire

The Fire Boss is a specialized amphibious scooping system installed on the Air Tractor AT-802, transforming the aircraft into a powerful tool for aerial wildfire suppression. With the ability to scoop up to 820 gallons of water at a time from nearby sources it can deliver tens of thousands of gallons during its three hours on station time providing incident command teams rapid initial response in challenging environments. The Fire Boss is a trusted asset for firefighting agencies across North America, South America, Asia, Europe, and Australia.

The Fire Boss was certified in the USA in 2003. Certification in Europe followed in 2005 and Australia 2009. The 100th Fire Boss was produced in 2019, just 6 years ago.

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The accommodation building will be used for helicopter crews, it will offer more than enough room to cater for its three crews, who man the chopper 24/7. It includes six bedrooms, laundry, living room and an open plan kitchen and would be used for relief crews along with visiting engineers or other staff overnight. [WJ/The Post/Stuff]

SWEDEN

COAST GUARD: As if to confirm that law enforcement is not all about death and destruction the Swedish Coast Guard made a point of reporting that their surveillance efforts detected a crewmember on a vessel dumping rubbish into the Baltic. While a fairly minor offence, officials said it demonstrates the level of monitoring now underway and, after all, "the sea should be free of trash."

A Coast Guard aircraft on a routine patrol detected the offense. When asked how much, a spokesperson said it was enough that they could see it from the air. It was described as ordinary household waste, with the Coast Guard emphasizing it was not a discharge from the ship.



The incident took place on October 20, with the ship only being described as a Liberian-flagged bulk carrier. Media reports said it had paused off Sweden, dropping anchor near Faro, an island in the Baltic, while it was on a trip from Russia to India. The Swedish Coast Guard permitted the ship to proceed because it was heading toward Gothenburg.

The crew had been notified of the suspected crime, and when the ship anchored off Gothenburg, the Coast Guard boarded the ship and began interviews. Media reports said the offending crewmember confessed to dumping the material overboard.

The reports said he was fined "50 daily fines," but did not specify an amount. Under Swedish law, fines are commensurate with the person's income. Typically, a daily fine for minor infractions ranges between SEK 50 and 1,000 (approximately \$5 to \$100), which would be multiplied by 50 in this case.

Swedish law also holds the individual who committed the act liable. In this case, neither the ship nor its master was liable.

It is "relatively unusual" for the Coast Guard to discover this crime, typically they are dealing with discharges from the vessels, which cause more pollution.

The Swedish Coast Guard had reported earlier this year that it was increasing its monitoring efforts based on concerns about shadow fleet vessels transiting the region. They are conducting regular surveillance flights and other efforts along the coast and over the Baltic. Starting in July, the Coast Guard was also tasked with collecting insurance information from ships that pass through Swedish territorial waters or the economic zone, regardless of whether they are scheduled to make a port call in Sweden.

UNITED KINGDOM

DURHAM: The subject of the feature in the September 2025 edition of Police Aviation News – the death of Jenny Hall, aged 23, in Durham has been causing some angst locally.

The cause of death of the County Durham runner who went missing and was later found dead by a police helicopter earlier this year is still under investigation, almost eight months on.

On October 16 the Durham and Darlington Coroners Service confirmed that Jenny's cause of death is still being reviewed by officials. An inquest into her death, is yet to be opened.

So far the investigation has involved the deceased's car - a red Ford Focus found parked on the B6278 during the search for her, in addition officers have checked her mobile phone pings, smartwatch and running apps. So far there have been no conclusive leads.

LANCASHIRE: From time to time there are media reports of lasers being shone at airborne emergency services aircraft. They are generally seen as a nuisance but the numbers having a major affect on operations are thankfully few.

A search for a person in the sea was called off after a laser was shone at the rescue helicopter operating off Blackpool, Lancashire on October 10.

Blackpool RNLI volunteers were paged to assist HM Coastguard and Lancashire Police after someone was seen entering the sea close to Manchester Square, Blackpool, just after 23:00hrs.

When they arrived on scene, the helicopter crew were "targeted by a laser attack from land" and were forced to stand down for 40 minutes while Blackpool Police and ground coastguard patrols investigated, the RNLI said.

Steve Fitzgerald, Blackpool RNLI chair, said "it beggars belief" that anyone would "target a rescue helicopter to prevent them doing their life-saving task".

The Blackpool RNLI volunteer crews continued their search but nobody was found and they were stood down at 02:45, with additional crews from Lytham St Annes RNLI volunteers stood down at 04:15. Blackpool Police was still investigating the missing person report and the laser attack on the helicopter, the RNLI said. [BBC]

Editor: Steve Fitzgerald, the RNLI Press Officer quoted by the BBC is a former police officer and also the former UEO of Lancashire Police ASU and the Cayman Islands ASU. Since returning to the UK he volunteers for the NW RNLI and works with drone technology.

MIGRANT TRAFFIC: It seems that the problem with migrants is spreading but perhaps it is just paper talk. The headline story was that a "Coastal force gets Home Office funding for new boat to combat people smugglers" but when it identified the force it turned out to be a new police boat being deployed in Devon and Cornwall in the far west of England only partly because of an anticipated surge in illegal immigration.

Where the usual illegal immigrant crossing area in a gap of 21 miles from Calais to Dover the distance from Devon to France is around 200 miles and opens up a massive increase in small boat launch coastline in France for the Gendarmerie to police. The area of the French coast under the microscope until now has been large enough but the distance from Calais to Brest is 538 km. This direct line of sight distance is equal to 334 miles, the actual coastal path distance is significantly more.

The Home Office have not released details of actual or estimated numbers of boats that have evaded the police in France and the Border Force and RNLI boats in the English Channel to land in southern England, but there are anecdotal reports of landings all around the coast. It is clear from flight tracking that regular aerial surveillance of the English Channel extends far beyond the narrows off Dover and Calais. With nearly 37,000 known migrants crossing the narrows any supplemental numbers of evaders will not be greatly welcomed by the British people.



The new twin-hull craft, Neptune, delivered to Devon & Cornwall Police cost £350,000 and replaces non-rigid craft previously used. The 36ft (11m) vessel, which was paid for by the Home Office, is equipped with a long-range infrared camera and an underwater drone. The vessel will also be used to deter illegal diving around historic wrecks.

Part of the Home Office's programme to tackle serious organised crime, the Neptune will enhance the Force's response to maritime threats including drugs smuggling and organised immigration crime, while

also boosting coastal safety. It will be operated by the Force's team of specially trained marine police officers, who are responsible for responding to incidents on the water, as well as using their expert knowledge to investigate marine-related crimes.

Neptune was built and fitted out by Cheetah Marine of Ventnor on the Isle of Wight. This delivery marks the fourth vessel they have supplied to UK police forces, previous deliveries include to the Yorkshire and The Humber (YATH) Police Regional Underwater Search and Marine Unit last year.

SCOTLAND: Ground has been broken on the latest SAR base in Scotland. The new site, one of two seasonal bases planned, is at Oban Airport and was officially started in the second week of October.

When completed the base will house specialist teams and a SAR configured Leonardo AW189 ready to react to emergency tasking during the peak summer months.

INDUSTRY

Vislink Technologies, Inc., a global leader in real-time video communications for the defence, public safety, and broadcast markets, announced it has been awarded a significant contract by Precision Technician Defence A/S to supply advanced airborne video downlink systems for deployment on Royal Danish Airforce (RDAF) Airbus AS550 Fennec Helicopters. Denmark relies upon RDAF helicopters and other fixed wing assets to provide air support to its police.

The seven-figure contract represents a key milestone in Vislink's growing footprint within global defence markets. Under the agreement, Vislink will provide RDAF with a range of its industry-leading air-to-anywhere solutions, including the AeroLink airborne live video transmitter, Vislink Antenna Actuators, Quantum ground receivers, and Mobile Commander hand-held monitor units. Together, these technologies will deliver ultra-low latency, UHD live video transmission capability from helicopters, enabling superior situational awareness and decision-making during homeland security missions such as surveillance, border protection and emergency response.



One of the Danish fleet at Middle Wallop ©PAR File

The initial system, delivered earlier this year for the prototype aircraft, has been successfully installed, ground tested, validated and test flown during the rigorous development phase with impressive results, particularly concerning video quality and operational range. Full delivery of the new award is scheduled for 2025, with installation and operational rollout planned for 2026.

The RDAF will get a modern digital video downlink system, that streams HD quality video to ground units from a state-of-the art stabilised HD gimbal camera system, Star SAFIRE 380X-HDc from Teledyne FLIR.



©PAR File

Early in October it was revealed that **Marshall Aerospace** has cancelled a planned switch of operations to Cranfield in Bedfordshire as it is no longer affordable.

The move away from Cambridge and the airport closure will remain a plan but now the timeline is naturally stretched. This reduces the pressure on East Anglia Air Ambulance to also move its operations to a new site.

The Luxembourg Air Ambulance SA fleet of aircraft has been updated on the register from Luxembourg Air Ambulance SA to Luxembourg Air Services SA. [Parapex Media]



Tactical Flying are offering surplus law enforcement aircraft equipment to prospective operators. They have three AeroComputers UC-6000 moving maps and three MacroBlue MA-10-N monitors on offer each with a with a \$2,500 reserve. All items are minimally operation and sold as is. Check on availability with info@tacticalflying.com before November 10.



ACCIDENTS & INCIDENTS

3 October 2025 Mil Mi-171 Air ambulance of Iranian Red Crescent Air Rescue. The helicopter was dispatched to search and rescue a woman who went missing at an altitude of 4,000 metres in the Oshtorankukh mountain region. The helicopter, with eight people in the cabin, crashed at an altitude of 2,800 meters. There were at least two fatalities.

5 October 2025 CASA HC-144B Ocean Sentry 2309 United States Coast Guard. Operating out of Cape Cod Coastguard Air Station, Massachusetts. Suffered an engine failure when 20 miles from departure airport and declared an emergency. Returned safely to departure airfield and landed. Six crew no injuries and no damage. [ASN]

6 October 2025 Airbus Helicopters EC130 N414RX. Air ambulance of REACH Air Medical Services crashed about one mile after leaving the US Davis Medical Centre. Three people, two women and a man, were extricated in critical condition after a medical helicopter crashed onto a busy highway in Sacramento, California USA. The crash occurred at around 7 p.m. in eastbound lanes of Highway 50 in East Sacramento near 59th Street exit. Video footage shows the aircraft slamming into the roadway, sending smoke and debris across all lanes of traffic. No vehicles were hit and there was no fire. The pilot, Chad Milward a retired CHP officer/pilot, Paramedic Margaret "DeDe" Davis and Flight Nurse Susan "Suzie" Smith were aboard the helicopter when it went down, ending up total wrecked and on its left side. All three were rushed to the hospital in critical condition by medical personnel with the Sacramento Fire Department. Susan Smith subsequently died. A group of around ten people who witnessed the crash worked to lift the helicopter which was one on top of one of the female victims. [Media/ASN]

14 October 2025 Bell 407 N911CN Air Ambulance owned by Air Methods made an emergency landing at Paradise Valley Skate Park, 40th Street and Grovers Avenue, Phoenix, Arizona USA. No damage and no injuries. The on-board patient needed to be transported by ground ambulance to a nearby hospital. [abc]

24 October 2025 MBB BK117C-2 (EC145) PNP-130 Policía Nacional del Perú (PNP) caused damage when landing in the community of Los Licenciados in the Ventanilla district of Callao. Structural damage was found in at least two houses. The helicopter was flying low, causing a section of a wall on the third floor to collapse, landing on the ground floor where a young man was sitting near a store. A piece of loose material fell directly on his head, causing serious injuries. [ASN]

29 October 2025 Eurocopter AS350B3e Ecureuil (Airbus H125) 9N-AMS. Helicopter operated by Altitude Air Pvt Ltd sent from Tenjing Hillary Airport, Lukla, Nepal to Lobuche Helipad, Solukhumba to rescue foreign tourists toppled over onto its left side in the snow and received substantial damage. [ASN]



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FLIGHT SAFETY

Aviators have long worried about collisions between aircraft but hitherto that has assumed a meeting in the more crowded lower flight levels.

A recent incident has resulted in some changes in perception after a Boeing 737 of United Airlines was involved in an impact with an as yet unidentified object at FL360. The impact was with the flight crew cockpit area but the triple glazed area held fast and there were no major injuries or penetration of the pressurisation.

It remains something of a mystery with current theories seeking to blame either an item of falling space debris or a drone (neither of which would have TCAS equipment to alert the aircraft or ATC).

On October 16 a Boeing 737 Max 8 N17327 departed Denver Colorado en-route for Los Angeles. Impacted something 180 nm from Salt Lake City, Utah. The crew heard a loud bang. Subsequently, a shattering crack was observed in the right-side windshield, originating from its upper inner corner. Fragments and glass dust entered the flight deck, resulting in multiple lacerations to the captain's bare right arm. The aircraft diverted to Salt Lake City.



UNMANNED

On September 26 the UK Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) approved Windracers, a British civil and defence drone manufacturer, to conduct the UK's first civil unmanned aerial system (UAS) international operation. Windracers has been given approval by the CAA and Luftfahrtstilsynet (Civil Aviation Authority Norway) to fly its dual-use heavy-lift drone, the Windracers ULTRA, BVLOS from Tingwall Airport in the Shetlands to Haugesund Airport in Norway.

This is the first time a long-distance drone has been approved to fly for civil purposes between UK airspace and the adjoining airspace of another state. The approval was enabled by the creation of TDA, providing a corridor to enable the safety of the flight.

The airspace will cover a distance of 235 miles (378km) from Shetland, over the North Sea, and across the Scottish/Polaris Flight Information Region (FIR) boundary into Norwegian airspace.

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At the heart of this milestone is a dual-use drone capable of transporting a useful load of up to 150 kg with a range of up to 1,000km. Windracers ULTRA is multi-mission and offers an optional 3-door drop bay floor to safely and accurately parachute aid and supplies if required.

In a later announcement the UK Government highlighted the delivery of 85,000 Windracers to the Ukraine in the past six months and the investment of £600M into the capability and supply the fixed wing light freight craft. [Windracers/UKG]



Although it is not directly associated with law enforcement drone activity, interest is being shown in the crash of two Amazon delivery drones in Arizona USA.

Amazon is facing federal probes after two of its MK30 Prime Air delivery drones collided with a crane in Tolleson, Arizona, prompting the company to temporarily pause drone service in the area. Near 96th Avenue and Roosevelt Street in Tolleson, about 2 miles from where the Amazon delivery drones are launched.

The incident occurred in daylight in the city located west of Phoenix, AZ, when both drones struck a stationary crane operating in a commercial area just a few miles away from an Amazon warehouse. The only person affected was one person suffering from the inhalation of fumes.

Both of the 80 pound (36 kg) drones sustained “substantial” damage from the collision on Wednesday, which occurred when the aircraft were mid-route, according to preliminary FAA crash reports. The drones landed in the backyard of a nearby building, and were totally wrecked.

The new probe come just a few months after Amazon, halted drone deliveries in Tolleson and College Station, Texas, following two crashes at its Pendleton, Oregon, test site. Those crashes also prompted investigations by the FAA and NTSB. The company resumed deliveries in March.

The Amazon machines are equipped with a sense and avoid system designed to enable them to go around unexpected hazards. Reports from this incident suggest that the two craft hit either the slim jib or the cable – these may not have registered on the airborne system. The crane was working on a building at the time with the jib inclined upwards.

One comment from one of those at the scene of the incident was

“People should not be worried all the time is not what we should be doing”

The advertisement for Smith Myers Artemis features a dark background. On the left is the Smith Myers logo, consisting of a stylized 'S' and 'M' above the text 'smith myers'. To the right of the logo, the text 'TURNS ANY MOBILE PHONE INTO A LOCATION BEACON' is displayed in a bold, sans-serif font. Below this, the phrase 'DETECT - LOCATE - COMMUNICATE' is written in a smaller font, followed by the website 'artemis.smithmyers.com'. On the right side of the ad, there are images of the Artemis hardware components, including a black rectangular unit and a smaller module. To the far right is the Artemis logo, which is a stylized compass rose with a large 'A' in the center and the word 'ARTEMIS' below it.

An enquiry set off Stateside after the truth about difficulties arising during operations of Drones as First Responder (DFR) led to some mystification. Such reports are not circulating widely in the USA (which does not mean they are not happening).

It has been learned that the drone operation of the NYPD faced an issue in May this year with their US made Skydio X-10 quad rotor drone. . That was a battery connection issue that led to a drone crashing. There was some chatter the beginning of August about Skydio's drones having issues with police radio transmissions. Apparently they did not put enough shielding in their controllers, causing lost links and video signal but it is seen as a local issue.

BOOK

A new book with some minor police aviation content has arrived on bookshelves in the UK. Coinciding with that a TV production company are researching a feature length documentary on the same subject.

Firstly the book

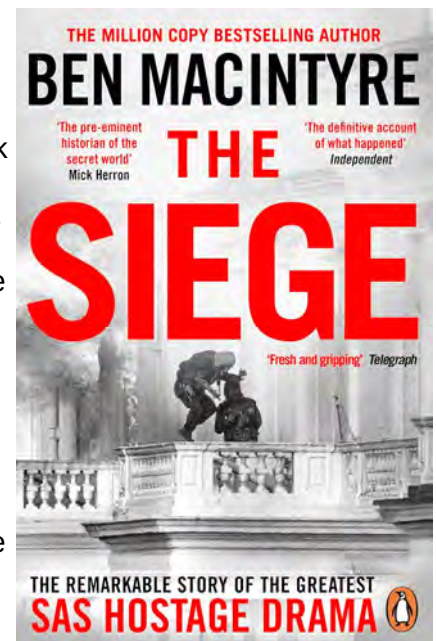
The Siege: The Remarkable Story of the Greatest SAS Hostage Drama by Ben Macintyre

On April 30, 1980, six heavily armed gunmen burst into the Iranian embassy on Princes Gate, overlooking Hyde Park in London. There they took 26 hostages, including embassy staff, visitors, and three British citizens.

A tense six-day siege ensued as millions gathered around screens across the country to witness the longest news flash in British television history, in which police negotiators and psychiatrists sought a bloodless end to the standoff, while the SAS – hitherto an organisation shrouded in secrecy – laid plans for a daring rescue mission: *Operation Nimrod*.

Drawing on unpublished source material, exclusive interviews with the SAS, and testimony from witnesses including hostages, negotiators, intelligence officers and the on-site psychiatrist, the writer takes readers on a journey that culminates in the minute-by-minute account of the siege and the well documented rescue at teatime on the Bank Holiday Monday. It is one of those occasions in life where you can probably recall exactly where you were when the siege was ended. I can recall it vividly.

The Editors copy of the book has just arrived but reviews are already circulating including these positive comments: -



'The pre-eminent historian of the secret world . . . His books have set the gold standard for accurate historical reporting, but read like heart-pounding thrillers' Mick Herron

'Macintyre does true-life espionage better than anyone else' John Preston

The TV angle is for Channel 4, they have commissioned Wonderhood Studios to produce a feature length, 90-minute documentary film about the Siege and Operation Nimrod.

The plan is that the film will feature first-hand testimony from people involved in the siege including former hostages, former members of the Metropolitan Police, eyewitnesses, and hostage negotiators and the SAS soldiers who ultimately were given the authorisation to go in.

Meanwhile of course we need to get around the passage of time – 45 years – in which many of those involved are with us no more.

From sources already asked I believe that the air support presence from Lippitts Hill predates the official creation of the Met ASU (November 1980) but includes the police officers and pilots who were at the launch event months later.



In May 1980 the Metropolitan Police were transitioning from hiring helicopters to owning them in order to meet a ban on single engine helicopters over London (that should sound a familiar refrain for today's drone operators) and as a result they were leasing MBB Bolkow BO105s and using civil pilots through British Caledonian based at what is now Brighton City Airport pending the arrival of their new Bell 222 helicopters being role equipped by CSE, Oxford.



©PAR File

The search is on for anyone, a pilot or observer, who was involved in the siege or any archive photo or video relating to it. In the November there were three contracted pilots [above], an inspector, John Saville, three sergeants and sixteen constables.

'LIFESSEEKER'

'Lifeseeker' is a mobile telephone location device, which turns every mobile 'phone into a locator beacon. It's made by Centum Research & Technology for both manned aircraft and for drones. To date, Centum have recorded some 1,000 successful missions in 20 countries with 35 end users. When searching in a mountainous region it has been estimated that it could take 150 searchers, with 10 rescue vehicles, 40 hours, or longer, to find a missing person. If the missing person is carrying a mobile 'phone, which must be switched on, then, with 'Lifeseeker', the search team is reduced to 2 or 3, in an aircraft, searching for approximately one hour.



'Lifeseeker' comes in two sizes, the SAR model for large manned aircraft and the Mini series for drones and smaller manned aircraft.



Centum

Unlike those search systems that rely on the mobile 'phone being within range of a telephone mast, together with a response from the person carrying the 'phone, for example, 'Location Tool' and 'SARLoc' this airborne location device is different.

In Switzerland, 'Lifeseeker' is carried by the helicopters and the drones belonging to the Rega Search and Rescue Service.



Rega

With 'Lifeseeker' the aircraft becomes a mobile telephone mast which interacts with the mobile 'phone to show the position of the 'phone with an accuracy of 5 metres. No action is required by the missing person, who could be unconscious. All that is required, from friends or relatives, is the missing person's telephone number and the name of the service provider to provide the IMEI number of the mobile 'phone which is the subject of the air search.



'Lifeseeker' is to be carried by Rega's new fleet of large helicopters, the Airbus H145 from next year and is currently available in the AgustaWestland AW109 Da Vinci, designed to a specification, provided by Rega, for mountain rescue.

Rega

The end users in 4 continents include the Swiss Air-Rescue Service, Rega and the volunteers of North Shore Rescue in British Columbia, Canada. More recently, Centum have entered into an agreement with Airbus Helicopters to, if requested, factory fit 'Lifeseeker' to their helicopters prior to customer delivery.

Airbus AS350 Talon helicopter belonging to the volunteers of North Shore Rescue in British Columbia, Canada.



North Shore Rescue

In the United Kingdom there are currently no aircraft carrying Centum's 'Lifeseeker', or, 'Artemis' which is made by Smith Myers Communications Ltd in the UK. Although those aircraft belonging to HM Coastguard and the National Police Air Service may, at sometime in the future, add equipment capable of locating mobile 'phones belonging to missing persons. Both 'Lifeseeker' and 'Artemis' turn a mobile 'phone into a locator beacon.

In the interim, I'd be very pleased to follow the example of the volunteers of North Shore Rescue in Canada and add the Mini 'Lifeseeker' to my own aircraft, a Victa T5 Super 150, to find missing persons more quickly in the North of England. (See Police Aviation News, September 2025, Pages 37-39 - 'Missing From Home'.

In the meantime, the last word goes to CENTUM CEO, Hector Estevez,

"Our mission is unequivocal - to save lives."

James A Cowan MBE

Note: The author served in the Royal Air Force as a pilot, flying the RAF's maritime patrol aircraft, the BAE Nimrod, the 'Mighty Hunter'. After completing 29 years of regular military service he transferred to the RAF reserve forces to complete a further 12 years service. Whilst a member of the RAF reserves he was also a police pilot in the North East of England and a pilot with the Scottish Air Ambulance Service. He also qualified as a parachute pilot with the British Parachute Association, flying the Cessna 182 and the Cessna 208B Grand Caravan. He has a part share in a Victa T5 Super 150 which he uses to support the 'blue light' emergency services when searching for missing persons and for air to ground photography.

MOVE ALONG THERE

A spectacular drone and fireworks show in Quanzhou, China, celebrating the launch of the Cai Guoqiang Contemporary Art Centre, turned chaotic after a technical glitch caused dozens of drones to crash mid-performance.

Some plunged into the sea, others hit the ground — forcing an abrupt end to the event. Fortunately, no injuries were reported.

It looks like there is hope with the British economy after all. For over a year now the new Labour government has regaled the population with tales of how the previous Conservative government had left the new lot with massive £20 billion 'black holes' in the economy. From there further new, much deeper, black holes developed to deepen the gloom. The latest storyline is that the government in power suddenly found that they have a wholly unexpected £3 billion pound windfall in the accounts. That is a promising fluctuation!

Personally, I get problems with being just £5 out with my accounts, it just seems the politicians work with far bigger numbers.

Meanwhile as the winter darkness of the northern hemisphere draws in the NPAS air unit in the East Midlands, Husbands Bosworth, were again entertaining the local group of scouts and explaining what they do. In the summer a similar group took the tour and sat in the EC135P2 helicopter but two of the lads took a tumble in the dry moat that protects the helipad from ramming. They were not injured.

In September another similar group arrived and it was decided that their health and safety was paramount so the dangers of the moat were duly explained by TFO Ian Worthington. The visit passed off without any repeat of the earlier falls.

What was not planned was that as Ian stood by the gate to wave the visitors off he overbalanced and disappeared from their view into the moat. All beautifully captured on the base CCTV.

Gallantly the visitors stopped their vehicles and helped the officer back on to high ground



The current UK government led by Prime Minister Kier Starmer continues to struggle. The usual reason given for failing is a lack of staff and a lack of money.

This is not likely to change soon. Despite allegations from the opposition parties that the Civil Service has been growing at an alarming rate, according to latest figures most government departments are short of trained staff in such as the Health Service and the Probation Service. The latter are short of 3,150 staff, and so cannot undertake their duties efficiently, but it seems that they cannot afford to employ and train an extra 3,000 people anyway so its 'game over'!

Police are looking for an ocean hoarder. Despite allegations that major ice floes and such are melting, leading to the 'rapid rise of sea levels' there have been few discernible changes in perceived water levels on the coastlines around the world.

UNITED KINGDOM—CHANNEL UPDATE

The numbers, the number of illegal migrants landed at Dover by the UK Border Force and the volunteers of the nation's lifeboat service, the RNLI, have, in the last quarter of 2025, surpassed the annual total for 2024 which was 36,816. The current total for this year, at the time of writing in late October, is just shy of 37,000, standing at 36,956. The national press was quick to react.

WHAT THE PAPERS SAY

In mid-October the highly regarded national broadsheet, 'The Daily Telegraph', reported, "**Mahmood: UK has lost control of its borders**". The Home Secretary (Minister for the Interior), the Rt Hon Shabana Mahmood MP had warned that Britain's failure to control its borders is eroding trust in politicians and the credibility of the state.

This is no surprise; the UK has failed to control its borders since the first 299 migrants crossed the English Channel in small boats in 2018. Now, every week, every month, every year, hundreds and thousands of illegal migrants stream across the Channel from northern France in inflatable boats. These boats, escorted by French naval vessels, rendezvous with the rescue vessels belonging to the UK Border Force in mid-Channel, before the migrants complete the second-half of their journey in relative comfort.

The press were also quick to report that one illegal migrant, one who arrived in a boat on the 6 August and was then deported back to France, under the new Anglo-French agreement of 'one in, one out', had re-crossed the English Channel just 29 days after he'd been deported. The story was widely reported in the national newspapers.

MEANWHILE - IN FRANCE

Towards the end of October, the BBC French correspondent, Andrew Harding who has on many occasions reported migrants endangering their lives, together with the lives of their children, at the hands of people traffickers, returned to northern France. In his most recent report, '**France backing away from pledge to intercept migrant boats**', Harding interviewed a local resident, living in Gravelines, Jean Deldicque, and the head of Boulogne's lifeboat volunteers, Gerard Barron.

Despite the much vaunted change of policy, which would permit the French police to follow the inflatable "taxi boats" into shallow water and then disable them, (Reported by Andrew Harding from a beach in northern France in July) this new initiative would seem to have been quickly forgotten! Jean Deldicque who, on numerous occasions, has seen the "taxi boats" passing his house on the banks of the Canal de L'Aa at Gravelines without any intervention by the police, pleaded, "*It's mad, mad, mad. You have to stop the boats.*"

Also, Gerard Barron reports, "*Odd as it may seem, if they [the migrants] don't request assistance, you cannot force them to accept it. The crew has reported to me that on occasion, when they have approached a dinghy carrying too many people and asked if they want assistance, they have seen knives flashed.*" These incidents involving volunteers rescuing illegal migrants travelling in overloaded, unseaworthy, underpowered inflatable boats are not without precedent. In an earlier incident, when volunteers of the UK lifeboat service, the RNLI rescued illegal migrants from a sinking boat, near Calais, they were advised to transport the migrants across the English Channel, to Dover, for safety of the crew of the lifeboat!

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

After almost a decade of illegal migrants crossing the English Channel from northern France to England, it's become clear that the Home Office, together with the UK Border Force, are failing in their core du-

ties. The Home Office has been described by its leader, the Secretary of State for the Home Department, the Rt Hon Shabana Mahmood MP, as, “Not yet fit for purpose”.

This follows an internal report which labels the Home Office as dysfunctional and detached from its core functions. The report by former Home Office special advisor, Nick Timothy, now a Conservative MP, found a ‘culture of defeatism’ on immigration. Also, failures which make it harder to tackle crime and small boat crossings. However, the most serious criticism was directed at the handling of asylum and immigration. The report described the system as ‘lethargic’ with a backlog of 166,000 asylum cases, with interviews often delayed for up to two years.

Following receipt of an earlier edition of Police Aviation News the Border Security Command Hub within the Home Office, made the following statement,

“Any first responders, whether or not the Royal Navy, Border Force or any other force duly coordinated by the Maritime & Coastguard Agency [HM Coastguard] are bound by international maritime law, particularly the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) convention and the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). These require mariners to assist any vessel in distress regardless of the occupants’ legal status. Most migrant boats are small, overcrowded and unseaworthy - thus legally considered ‘in distress’.

The Royal Navy cannot be used to ‘push back’ boats or forcibly return migrants to France. These actions would breach both SOLAS and ECHR obligations. The UK’s approach must remain compliant with international law and humanitarian principles.”

Nevertheless, the French authorities, police, coastguard and the French navy, La Royale, are also signatories to international maritime law and are obliged to rescue and to offer shelter to those rescued at sea in French waters.

TIME FOR CHANGE

This liberal interpretation of the law by Home Office must be challenged. For the UK Border Force to facilitate criminal activity by rendezvousing with unseaworthy boats in mid-Channel, before transporting their passengers, illegal migrants, to the UK from France cannot be condoned. The public see this as the Home Office, the Border Force supporting criminals, being complicit in a criminal activity.

To assist the Border Force vessels at sea the Home Office has a fleet of aircraft to identify and track the boats leaving northern France, those carrying illegal migrants. These aircraft include the deHavilland Dash 8 special mission platform.

Home Office



The Home Office has agreed that most migrant boats are legally considered to be ‘in distress’. Therefore, their passengers must be rescued at the earliest opportunity, if necessary, in French waters, before they face the added danger of crossing the world’s busiest shipping lane. Then, those who are rescued should be landed at the nearest place of safety. France is a safe country!



The Border Force vessel Hurricane rendezvousing in mid-Channel with a large inflatable boat carrying up to 80 illegal migrants, mostly young men. At this point the crew of the rescue vessel are outnumbered 10 to one.

Home Office



The dilemma for the UK Border Force, together with the volunteers of the lifeboat services, the RNLI and the French Societe Nationale de Sauvetage en Mer (SNSM), is that their crews, up to 8 per vessel, are too small in numbers when confronting up to 80 illegal migrants, mostly young men who have paid a criminal gang a large sum of money to be taken to England. Fortunately, the Home Office, together with HM Coastguard have a fleet of aircraft and drones, including the PAL Aerospace de Havilland Dash 8 special missions aircraft, the Diamond DA62 MPP and the Beechcraft King Air, to identify and track boats, those carrying illegal migrants, as soon as they set sail from northern France.

To support the Border Force with sufficient personnel, to stop a boat carrying up to 80 migrants who are determined to cross the English Channel to enter the UK without permission, the Royal Navy River-class offshore patrol vessels carry a crew of 50, including 20 Royal Marines. The River-class offshore patrol vessels of the Royal Navy can also deploy the AW159 Wildcat helicopter for close air support.



MoD/RN

The Royal Navy has a fleet of River-class offshore patrol vessels, one of which, HMS Trent, has recently been deployed to the Caribbean for 'drug busting' operations. These vessels carry a crew of 50 which includes up to 20 Royal Marines. Each vessel carries two fast boarding boats, and each can embark an AW159 Wildcat helicopter for close air support. The Royal Navy, together with the Royal Marines, would, when accompanying the five Border Force rescue vessels, (Re-purposed crew transfer vessels designed to deliver technicians to offshore wind turbines) provide the personnel, the 'muscle' which the Border Force, together with the RNLI and the SNSM, clearly lack. When engaged in a stand-off, with 80 illegal migrants trying to cross the English Channel in a large inflatable boat, a demonstration of strength in numbers should not be underrated.

CONCLUSION

Since the first illegal migrants crossed the English Channel in 2018 the total, in 8 years, will soon exceed 190,000. Moreover, without a change in direction, without a robust, military response, the numbers of illegal migrants crossing the border, crossing the Channel, unopposed by the French, or by the British, will continue to increase. The number in 2025, with 2 months to go, already exceeds the total for 2024. This year the number of illegal migrants landed in the UK by the Border Force and the RNLI in one year, will be the second highest on record. The record was set in 2022, when the annual total was 45,774. The new mantra, for the British and for the French too, must be, 'Close the border, destroy the boats, save lives at sea.' Criminal gangs must never be allowed to usurp law and order in the United Kingdom and in France. Enough is enough!

James A Cowan MBE

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EVENTS

Last week the UK police hierarchy held the NPCC Innovation and Digital summit 2025 held on the bank of the River Mersey in Liverpool. They marketed it as a landmark event, looking ahead at an innovative future for policing.

Over three days, over 800 delegates from across policing, Government and industry joined together to explore what the future for policing might look like, with a focus on the need for better collaboration between law enforcement and industry to utilise technology and transform the way we operate.

Speakers from across all areas have shared their views on the important role of technology, not least with Sir Brian Leveson who highlighted how fragmentation and inconsistencies between policing IT impacts the wider criminal justice system, touching on the benefits of a nationally consistent approach to technology, to promote efficiencies and deliver a better service to the public.

Editor: For all the good that might be derived from the event perhaps? Unfortunately the week also included some hard hitting reports on how policing was crumbling all round. Officers of most lower ranks were managing to stay in the service for 3-4 years and then giving up on the grounds of pressure and a lack of support from those senior officers who appeared to be talking among themselves about widgets and other technical matters they knew little about.

It is all very well there being talk about advanced technology but if the naysayers are correct there will be no one left in the lower ranks to push the buttons.

UPCOMING EVENTS

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.

We have diverse and cost-effective packages to ensure your participation with assured ROI, including exhibition booths to create strong impact and presence at the Event. We also offer customised packages best suited to your organization. For information on Sponsorship and Exhibiting, please contact: Navneeth K. | Project Director Mobile: +968 9123 7892 Email: nk@muscat-expo.com Muscat Expo LLC P O Box 1406 PC 133 Al Khuwair, Sultanate of Oman www.ofsecevent.com

17-20 November 2025 European Rotors 2025 Koelnmesse, Hall 8 Cologne, Germany This four-day business-to-business event, stands out in the rotorcraft industry. It offers certified training sessions, seminars, and workshops, making it a hub for industry leaders to conduct business and share knowledge. Co-organised by the European Helicopter Association (EHA) and the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and produced by Vertical Aviation International (VAI), it hosts the prestigious EASA Rotorcraft Symposium. With over 230 exhibitors from 80+ countries, there's a lot of potential for announcements to be made.

Since its launch in 2021 with a successful show in Cologne the show has been on a trajectory of growth and success. The second edition also took place in Cologne. For its third edition the show moved to Madrid, Spain, attracting over 5,400 industry attendees and 231 exhibitor companies from more than 80 countries, attesting to the show's popularity. The fourth edition, in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, had similar worldwide participation last year. Now it is back to its roots at a time when there will be other distractions on offer.

Just across the river as the aviation event there is a long running Christmas Market in the shadow of the Gothic cathedral. There are at least half a dozen markets scattered across the city - but the main one under the Dom is perhaps the best locally if not in Europe. You may want to avoid the face-painting and Punch and Judy show though. [www.cologne-tourism.com]





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LATE NEWS

AIR AMBULANCE NEWS



In an unexpected move the start-up Stoke Air Ambulance has announced that they have officially secured their first helicopter. The item announcing the acquisition illustrated an all yellow AgustaWestland A109E Power G-CMSR a 2001 former Spanish airframe currently operated by Castle Air in Cornwall. [Parapex Media]

While down in Cornwall it is worth noting that arrangements are now in place for Isles of Scilly residents needing to travel to the mainland for healthcare can now be transported via helicopter.

In response to feedback from islanders, NHS Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Integrated Care Board (ICB) has commissioned Penzance Helicopters for the transport of patients, alongside Skybus and the Scillonian Ferry. Penzance Helicopters currently operates up to 11 passenger flights to the islands daily with two Sikorsky S76 helicopters. [BBC]

PAvCon Europe 28-29 May 2026

European Rotors will see the official launch of the 2026 PAvCon Europe event.

The organisers of PAvCon Europe 2026, Steve and Imogen of Dynamic Range, have already announced the dates in May but the location has been held back for release in Cologne.

Everyone is going to have to wait until European Rotors Cologne, for the official announcement to be made. This will be on Tuesday 18 November. Please go to Hall 8, stand 800 (starter area) where you can talk to a member of the team and register your interest.



We look forward to seeing our long standing friends and to make new ones!



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