

Police Aviation News

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Issue 360

April 2026

POLICE AVIATION NEWS

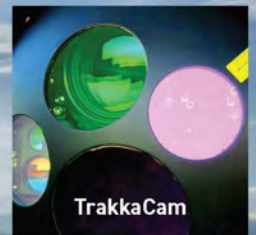
30 YEARS

1996 - 2026





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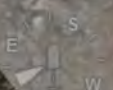
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EDITORIAL

Thirty years of publication, who would have thought it would even last that long. The project simply became self-serving and, thanks to the enthusiasm of many, self sustaining.



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There were no hard and fast plans to last any length of time – after all police in the UK traditionally treat their past colleagues as imbeciles after only a couple of years retired! Fortunately the major market quickly evolved as the USA where they are much more accepting of older and occasionally wiser heads. I was openly flying and interacting with the US long after my fellow countrymen locked the leaky doors behind me!

The aim was for an independent publication that did not follow the traditional police publication trait of only peddling positive information and in that the editor was fortunate in having been guided by Harry Slipper the late editor of *Metline* the Metropolitan Police Federation magazine – he liked punchy, irreverent, below the belt, story lines that occasionally graced his *Metline* pages. Well if I could write, and get away with, scribing attacks on the management whilst a serving officer the world was my oyster when I was out and on my own. In truth ACPO/NPCC and NPAS never stood a chance when they acted like buffoons, made silly choices or awarded themselves inappropriate medals. The official line seemed to evolve that if *Police Aviation News* were not invited to the event it could not report on it. Fortunately, it rarely worked out that way.

I am grateful that industry was on my side from the start, they saw the possibilities (though sometimes only while hiding out of sight) and they have relentlessly funded *PAN* and the younger offshoot *PAvCon Europe* conference for all of 30 years. As with the police readership, not all of the industry supporters appreciated the occasional negative editorial but they usually took it on the chin.

Across the readership, not everyone understands the publication and some do take some criticism way too seriously – there are some that much prefer the uncritical, always positive, news of those long lost fiercely controlled in house titles such as *The Job*, *The Law*, and even the supposedly independent *Police Review* etc than some upstart spewing facts from somewhere north of London. All too often it is the voice of the people, police people, that some sought to silence. Some of those voices are now no longer with us—finally set to ‘silent’—but, for good or bad, their counsel was often found in these pages.

The good news for the naysayers is probably that there is unlikely to be a 50th edition! Not promising though!

Bryn Elliott



©Ian Commin 1996

Cover: When first published *Police Aviation News* was still firmly stuck in the dark ages. The publication was mainly text and transmission by FAX machine or by mail. After four years though (2000) it burst out on the ALEA website in the form of a PDF publication (almost, but not quite, like today) and became available free to the world of air policing. News coverage of the others, ambulance, fire and SAR, came along later.

The image used on this month's front cover therefore reflects 1996 and is a Eurocopter AS355N Squirrel c/n 5572 operated by the Lancashire Constabulary under the leadership of Inspector Chris Weigh from 1994 at Warton. Where did the time go? [BAE for Lancashire Constabulary]

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LAW ENFORCEMENT



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CHINA

HONG KONG GFS: The Hong Kong Government Flying Service (GFS) Airbus Helicopters H175 fleet has officially reached a milestone! 25,000 hours of saving lives.

Whether it's winching survivors from rough seas during a typhoon or providing critical EMS support, these helicopters are the backbone of search and rescue operations in some of the world's toughest maritime environments.

As one of the few operators in the world flying the H175 for such rigorous public service missions, GFS continues to set the standard for what this aircraft can achieve.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

ABU DHABI POLICE: California, USA, based SRT Helicopters recently completed Maintenance Check Pilot training with the Abu Dhabi Police Aviation Department in the United Arab Emirates.

The programme included advanced evaluation training for the Bell 429, with emphasis on post-maintenance flight procedures, aircraft systems validation, performance assessment, and standardised safety protocols. The training supports the consistent and disciplined evaluation of aircraft returning to service following maintenance.

SRT Helicopters provided Maintenance Check Pilot training to the Abu Dhabi Police Aviation Department in the United Arab Emirates. They fly the Bell 429.



SRT Helicopters provides specialised instruction for Test Pilots and Maintenance Check Pilots across multiple aircraft models worldwide. These are designed to strengthen operational safety, reinforce regulatory compliance, and enhance mission readiness in complex operating environments. srthelo.com.

IRAN

AIR POLICING: From the start of March aviation in Iran deteriorated on a daily basis. Within hours of attacks by the USA and Israel what little civil aviation there had been in the vast, 636,000 sq. mis/1.6M sq km, country was decimated with the exception of a dwindling number of missiles and drones.

It is time perhaps to examine what is known about the air police in Iran at a time when it probably no longer exists. No doubt some losses took place last year when the nuclear programme was 'taken out' by US and Israeli forces but I suspect everything will be grounded if not destroyed after the latest actions.

After the Shah fell in 1979 there were two bodies looking after law enforcement aviation, the police and the military gendarmerie. There was little if any growth in the last 45 years, sanctions left the nation making do with whatever was already in service – generally Bell helicopters and some newer Mil M-17 that Russia allowed through under the sanctions radar. Keeping the fleet going amounted to re-manufacturing the Bell helicopters in country and buying in new light aircraft of local manufacture.

The only stories relating to police aviation in the past 45 years have been reports of accidents and the purchases of Russian helicopters. The Police were operating variants of the Bell helicopters in service when the revolution took place examples include the 206, UH-1, and 212, with some models originally manufactured by Agusta Bell. The known fixed wing fleet were drawn from new examples of the single engine HF Dorna D-139 trainer built from around 2009.

In October 2002 it was reported that Russian Mil helicopters manufactured at the Ulan-Ude Aircraft Factory were being used in fighting narcotics traffic in Iran, some 21 Mi-171 helicopters were delivered to Iran in 2001-2002 and a later new contract promised a further thirty were expected from 2003.





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JAPAN

NATIONAL POLICE AGENCY: Japan's NPA has placed a follow-on order for three H135 helicopters as part of its ongoing fleet modernisation programme. These aircraft will be deployed to the Hokkaido, Shimane, and Miyagi Prefectural Police departments, enhancing their capacity for multi-role law enforcement missions, covering patrol, search and rescue, and tactical transport.

This latest acquisition reinforces the long-standing partnership between Airbus and the NPA, bringing the agency's total Airbus fleet to 26 units.

This order follows the successful delivery of an H135 to the Hiroshima Prefectural Police in late 2025. The aircraft now operates in tandem with the department's AS365, demonstrating the seamless integration of Airbus assets into complex operations.

Currently, 98 H135s are in operation across Japan, with 15 units dedicated to law enforcement. Globally, the H135 family remains a market leader with over 1,600 sales. [Airbus Helicopters]

MEXICO

Dozens of airline flights to Mexican airports were cancelled in early March after cartel violence in the country sparked chaos.

In Jalisco state, airports in the cities of Puerto Vallarta and Guadalajara were worst hit, with arrival and departure boards effectively wiped out and no aircraft able to land or take off. Several US and Canadian air carriers cancelled services into the area, with several Mexican airlines, including Aeromexico and Volaris, also impacted.

Those airlines with aircraft inbound to Mexican airports decided to divert and land elsewhere – mostly in the southern USA.

Meanwhile the Mexican authorities claimed that the airports remained open; but social media has claimed that attacks had been launched near and around Guadalajara International Airport. The claims were apparently backed up by videos showing smoke and a degree of panic from people running for cover at the airport location.

In its guidance to citizens in the region, the US embassy in Mexico said: "Due to ongoing security operations and related road blockages and criminal activity, US citizens in several locations in Mexico are urged to shelter in place" Shades of Iran maybe.



SPAIN

POLICIA: TVU Networks, a global leader in live video solutions, has signed a major contract with a Spanish government agency following the successful completion of a major aerial transmission project.



The work focused on integrating TVU One with external antennas into a helicopter, in collaboration with Europavia, the aviation integrator responsible for ensuring all required certifications.

To validate the solution, Europavia and TVU designed a series of demanding flight trials in very challenging environments. The first missions took place over Canary islands, where long stretches of open water are notorious for disrupting connectivity. The second phase moved to Madrid, one of Europe's most congested cellular landscapes, where interference from thousands of antennas makes stable transmission especially challenging. Across both scenarios—and even during climbs to a record altitude of 3,300 feet the equipment performed with remarkable consistency, maintaining transmission where conventional systems would have failed.

After evaluating transmission solutions from several manufacturers, the Spanish government agency chose TVU Networks for its consistent performance across all test scenarios—delivering stable, high-quality results at varying altitudes and under the most demanding conditions.

The agreement covers the deployment of 18 transmitters and 5 transceivers, providing the client with a reliable foundation for live video transmission in critical operations.

Ed: The operator involved in these trials was not revealed but the photographs associated with them is of a Police Nacional Airbus H135.

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UNITED KINGDOM

NATIONAL: Further minutes of the NPAS Strategic Board meetings have been issued. The record of the September and December meetings are each just six pages long and three of those pages were the list of meeting attendees and recipients of the document. The passage of time has consistently reduced the content and relevance of the documents to public scrutiny but some pointers remain.

It was highlighted that NPAS faces significant challenges in recruiting additional TFOs as several police forces have now declined to promote the air service to their staff. NPAS faces a position where 18 of the 44 forces have declined support, and in some cases others are refusing to advertise the roles. Forces are also seeking to recall officers sooner or at the 5 year point.

There has been a period where there has been no NPCC Aviation Lead but this was finally resolved during the year. At the time of the previously posted minutes (June 2025) there was no incumbent but by September Assistant Commissioner Laurence Taylor, Metropolitan Police Service – London Region was effectively in post. His place in post was confirmed at the December meeting along with a decision to term him as both the NPCC Aviation Lead/Drones Lead. Previously the two roles were treated separately, as if some did not realise both were aviation. This does mean that both are now nominally being dealt with by the one person.

The Aviation Board Terms of Reference had been rewritten and work is underway looking at the service that policing gets from aviation and looking at performance across drones and crewed aviation to better understand the interdependencies between them for future requirements and capabilities based on evidence and outcomes.

Also in the minutes, there was an update on the Emergency Services Network (ESN - the much delayed replacement for Airwave Comms) from Jayne Gardner who has been the Delivery Assurance Director of the Home Office ESN Team for the last 30 months. She gave the meeting an overview of the progress of the ESN Programme and advised that the hardware will be ready for airwave compliance and the software enhancements in April 2026 (this month) While she acknowledged the fleet replacement alignment challenges and advised mitigation is in place no detail was given in the way of an implementation timeframe. The mention that the now ongoing fleet replacement faces ESN challenges suggests that the latest guesstimate for the completion of the ESN roll-out is still somewhere around 2030. The original date was 2017.

David Walters provided an update around the NPAS Uncrewed Aircraft Systems (UAS) trial activity and advised the aircraft had achieved all of the milestones for the project. The next step for the project team is to produce a business case in 2027 and go to market in 2028 with a live capability being available for policing in 2029/30.

The full minutes are available on the NPAS website.

Meanwhile the new Airbus Helicopters H135 fleet continues to emerge from the shadows with G-NPAA (2338) and G-NPAS (2339) already at Airbus, Oxford for completion work there are reports of G-NPAB (2349) been seen at the factory as D-HECW, and G-NPAC (2351) seen at the factory as D-HCBW, neither of which is yet on the G register. There are three more to look out for. [Parapex Media]

NORTHERN IRELAND: The PSNI currently have two Eurocopter EC145/BK117 helicopters, and two BN fixed wing operating from "a location in Northern Ireland" where the air operations are undertaken and managed by a Crime Operations Air Support Unit.

In early January a tender was issued for the maintenance of the helicopters with an expectation of a signature early in February. A little later than predicted, they duly signed the renewal of the contract late in February. Many elements of the contract are withheld from the public gaze for security reasons.

The contract with the unnamed maintainer is valued at £9,942,000 excluding VAT or £11,930,400 with the tax, it was signed on February 20 and runs for nearly three years from February 21, 2026 to the end of December 2028.

The much vaunted US led Good Friday Agreement, signed in April 1998, the landmark peace deal that largely ended 30 years of sectarian conflict (the "Troubles") in Northern Ireland continues to be a sham as far as the safety of the police are concerned so the contract can be reported but the detail is lacking for the safety of those security forces directly involved. Full normality has not returned.

The direction of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) states that an operator (PSNI) of an aircraft must have a

maintenance agreement in place with suitability licensed suppliers to provide continuing airworthiness and the respective maintenance services, without these formal arrangements in place the aircraft would have to be grounded. The stipulations do not mean that everyone has to be party to the detail.

The supplier is the original and sole equipment manufacturer of the PSNI aircraft types holds the Intellectual Property, and is the Type Certificate Holder for the core aircraft design and it is responsible for defining the aircraft's "build standard, safe operation and maintenance of airworthiness policy". The platform design, qualification data and safety case empowers the supplier to specify the requirements and mandate modifications for all components (includes specialist role equipment) fitted to the core aircraft and mission systems. The supplier is an CAA approved continuing airworthiness management organisation and a BCAR A8-23 authorised helicopter maintenance organisation. They have intellectual proprietary rights to the equipment fitted on the aircraft.

The current operational fleet of the PSNI is two EC145/ BK117 G-PSNO c/n 9296 delivered in 2009 and G-PSNR c/n 9488 delivered in 2013. The fixed wing fleet includes the venerable Britten-Norman BN-2T G-BSWR c/n 2245 which has been in service since the summer of 1992 and the BN2T-4S G-CGTC c/n 4019 operated since June 2013.



There are reports that the PSNI are seeking to dispose of their 20-years old EC135T2+ helicopter. There are reports in the media that the helicopter was to have been withdrawn from service in 2023 but it appears to have stayed in use for some time later. At the time Chief Constable Simon Byrne told the Policing Board that a pause in recruitment, a reduction in overtime and a review of police station opening hours were also to be reviewed.

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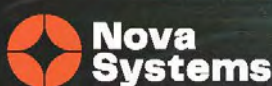
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The EC135T2+ G-PSNI c/n 0337 was delivered in the podded configuration in 2005 and served through until 2024 when it had 17,787 hrs. Last noted flight is believed to have been as UKP 441 in late October 2024 when it was noted near Chipping Norton, England. It had also been noted near there in August that year, the last note of operating in Ireland was June 2024. The reduction of the maintenance contract to the two EC145 airframes would suggest that the time for disposal has arrived.

NOTTINGHAM: On June 13, 2023 Valdo Calocane, who suffered from paranoid schizophrenia and had previous interactions with health services and the police, killed three people and seriously injured three other people in Nottingham city centre. After killing two young people Calocane hijacked a van and killed the driver and drove it into the three other people, causing life changing injuries.

One year ago the government formally announced 'The Nottingham Inquiry' to seek lessons that might be learned from the deaths. The public hearings began on February 23, 2026 and are live streamed on YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/@TheNottinghamInquiry>

Unanswered questions in the process relate to whether the availability of effective air support might have saved at least one of the three deaths. The Nottingham attack by a mental patient took place over several night time hours and might highlight the actual hours of availability of local manned air support in Nottingham. Current police input to the inquiry indicates that the local police were happy with the level of local air support – they had a drone that was not used – but others are suggesting that this does not address the current lack of resources. Here is an opportunity to highlight the dire state of police air support when it was clearly needed and it is effectively being passed over by a mixture of intent and a lack of knowledge by those in a position to highlight the situation.

Editor: A decade ago "when real air support was funded" Nottinghamshire shared a helicopter with Derbyshire and it was based at Ripley in Derbyshire, 15 miles from Nottingham. The unit worked extended hours but even if the airframe had been operational, it would still have not been flying when the killings took place from around 0400hrs. There remain a lot of ifs and buts of course but it might be a case for discussion at the enquiry if those currently in service were aware of the whole circumstances. Ten years dulls memories and there are those that take advantage of that position.

Nottinghamshire Police have not fared well throughout the inquiry process but the lack of air support has been the least of their woes.

In the time since NPAS was formed the Ripley operation has gone. Like many others and the nearest survivor could be said to be Husbands Bosworth 45 miles distant which only serves up air support for a meagre twelve hours - when they have an aircraft and a pilot. The NPAS cuts have swept away manned alternatives including Sheffield and Humberside, although the actual flight hours achieved by each of these MD Explorer units always was questionable. Unfortunately, the replacement for the Explorer fleet, the fixed wing, continues to fail to match the need in terms of flight hours or availability achieved.

The nearest 24/7 helicopter is that based at Wakefield, 60 miles from Nottingham, and as a single helicopter serving an often very busy area it was always unlikely to be available to even transit to Nottingham regardless of the perceived need.



The NPAS fixed wing operation may come in for regular criticism but last month their services were on-call far and wide. The Vulcanair twin was to be seen far from its home base in The Midlands answering calls to service along the southern and south-western coasts. [NPAS]

UNITED STATES

CALIFORNIA: In what appears to be a shock move helicopters of the emergency services have been prohibited from flying over Los Angeles Airport (LAX) airspace under any circumstances.

The prohibition initially emerged as a ban on such as news copters flying close to the airport from mid-February. It was as they spoke publicly about their status two weeks into the ban that the news teams found that the ban also extended into the emergency services operations from February 26.

At around 11:00 a.m., that day a LAPD helicopter departed Hooper Memorial Heliport in downtown Los Angeles for a routine patrol.

As the crew approached the LAX airspace they checked in on the tower's dedicated helicopter frequency, as they had done thousands of times before. They requested clearance to enter the airspace and operate in a specific area outlined in a long-standing Letter of Agreement (LOA) with LAX.

The helicopter was denied entry into the airspace without explanation. The resulting confusion was heightened by the fact that another patrol helicopter had entered the same airspace earlier that morning without issue.

When LAX Tower was contacted, LAPD was advised that the area was closed to all rotorcraft until further notice. Again, no explanation was provided. There was no published TFR or NOTAM indicating a closure.

The LAPD's Air Support Division has operated since 1956 and both they and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD) Aviation Unit have continuously operated within the area for some 40 years without conflict or incident.

In response to the enquiries of news channel ABC, Ian Gregor, Senior Advisor to the Office of Communications/Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) issued a statement on March 2:

"As a result of the FAA's proactive nationwide safety review of airports with mixed helicopter and airplane traffic, we are evaluating restricting Visual Flight Rules (VFR) operations near Los Angeles International Airport (LAX). While we conduct this evaluation, air traffic controllers will more often prohibit VFR operators from entering LAX airspace based on the volume and complexity of traffic they're working, along with daily airspace occurrences including weather and any nearby construction."

"In February 2025, we began using innovative AI tools to evaluate airports with high volumes of mixed helicopter and airplane traffic and are implementing appropriate safety mitigations.

VFR operators navigate visually and they must request and receive air traffic control permission to enter controlled airspace such as that around LAX. Most helicopters operate under VFR.

The review of mixed traffic operations was brought about in the wake of the fatal collision of a military helicopter and a small airliner in Washington DC. On January 29, 2025 a Bombardier CRJ700 airliner collided with an Army Sikorsky UH-60 Blackhawk over the Potomac River in Washington, D.C.

CALIFORNIA: The Fresno Police have launched their first new helicopter in 20 years. The \$7M Airbus H125 N534PD c/n 9698 is the first helicopter purchase in 20 years. The AStar is equipped with the FLIR380 EO/IR turret with in cockpit Macro Blue displays and a Spectrolab SX-16 searchlight.

The unit flies some 1,500 hours annually and currently operates two Eurocopter EC120 helicopters that are 21 and 23 years old. N514JD c/n 1309 was acquired in 2003 and N524MW c/n 1371 came into service in 2005.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA U.S. PARK POLICE: The Washington, DC based operation is seeking a sole source purchase from Bell Textron for three multi-mission configured helicopters to replace the current fleet.

Aircraft to be purchased include two Bell 412EPX and one Bell 407GX_i helicopters. Some of the specified equipment to be installed on the pair of 412EPX include a FLIR Systems 380 - HDi camera, Trakkabeam TLX searchlight, LifePort MA Aerosled two patient litter kit capable of supporting bariatric patients, and an external hoist. Select equipment to be installed on the 407GX_i includes a FLIR Systems Talon MMS camera, Trakkabeam TLX searchlight, and a LifePort Med Deck removable litter kit.

The new aircraft will replace legacy model 412 and 206L helicopters currently in service. [CS Facebook]



IDAHO: A few years ago the Kootenai County Sheriff's Office in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho had a dream project to operate a helicopter in support of their law enforcers.

Kootenai County is located in the north west of the state of Idaho. It has a population estimated at 171,362, making it large locally but limited in terms of tax dollars.

In October 2022 it was announced that the Sheriff was asking for approval of funding for a two-year, donation-funded pilot programme for a helicopter unit – the first of its kind in Idaho. It was to cut costs by using volunteer pilots and would focus primarily on search and rescue.

Community members had donated a little more than \$700,000 toward the project. This has led to the purchase and upgrade of a \$500,000 1994 Bell 206/TH-67 helicopter. The sheriff's office estimates that annual expenses for the unit, including maintenance and insurance, would be about \$71,500, significantly more than the \$10,000 Kootenai County allocated annually to Spokane County to use its helicopter.

Two Bear Air Rescue, based in Whitefish, Montana, had provided the sheriff's office with aerial support for about seven years. But it usually took three hours to fly to Kootenai County and the rescue service is often occupied with local missions in the Whitefish area. Similarly, because Spokane County prioritises local service calls, the department isn't always able to respond when Kootenai County requests aerial support. A helicopter based in Coeur d'Alene would enable local law enforcement to respond faster and more reliably.

The plan came to pass and Kootenai County Regional Air Support (KCRASU) was formed around the 30 years old JetRanger to operate as a non-profit organisation for SAR and rescue missions and police support as ABLE 1.

Now, three years later, they report 140 missions, 14 SAR and having flown over 146 hours flight time and yet they are on social media offering to give up the aircraft to another air operation. Even though a great

deal had been spend on upgrading the airframe and there were several appeals being promoted on a dedicated website to further support operations, early in March they were offering the Bell N67176 c/n 5119, for disposal.

The Bell is now well equipped with a new Trakka TC-300-S Thermal and HD Camera, which reportedly cost them a highly discounted \$250,000 direct from Trakka, and a Trakka A800 searchlight. They have new Macro Blue monitors that still have the protective film on them, high skirts, dart steps, a NVG compliant cockpit, ADS -B in/out, Honeywell kni-405b radar altimeter and much more. The aircraft is being aimed at the LE market. [Mark Wersching (retired) Huntington Beach air support/www/web]

Editor: So, what went wrong? There is a website and social media links still out there for the operation but a lot of it looks dated with nothing looking newer than 2024.

It seems that after the agreed two-year period insurance costs permanently grounded the helicopter. The commissioners considered a proposal to donate the helicopter to the county while a nonprofit arm continued to fund the operation. The two-year pilot was supported by donations from the business community, plus \$10,000 per year from the county that would have otherwise gone toward a contract with Spokane County for the use of their helicopter.

Those 140 incidents or calls and the 14 SAR operations were undertaken between August 2023 and September 2024, and the helicopter has not flown officially since September 12, 2024. It seems that the helicopter was used for nonprofit training since that date due to "discrepancies in the insurance policy." Insurance coverage cost \$22,000 for the first year the helicopter unit was active, according to the sheriff's office, while a new insurance estimate for the county was between \$46,000 and \$53,000 per year from 2024.

There seems to have been a plan to simply move the airframe over to 'the county' where it might sit within that \$10,000 pa funding they made to the operation. Anyone that knows anything about aviation and insurance would have rumbled that sleight of hand very quickly and it seems not to have happened. There have been numerous instances of US LE aircraft operating uninsured and with untrained pilots and mechanics in the past, but it is unlikely that anyone in the flying team would fall for that one in this instance. Commissioner Bruce Mattare is reported to have hesitated to embrace the proposal. He could not see an air unit could operate on \$10,000 for long! Wise man.

SOUTH CAROLINA: The South Carolina Law Enforcement Division (SLED) seeks proposals to upgrade its MD500E helicopters to the MD500 "Super E" configuration.

The scope of the work will include refurbishment and several modifications. The "Super E" upgrade will increase internal and external MGW and useful load by 300+ and 150+ pounds, respectively, and improve hover performance. Changes to the aircraft involve adding longer main and rear rotor blades, a tail rotor gearbox extension, a modified tailboom, and new vertical and horizontal stabilisers. The aircraft will retain its main rotor gearbox and its 250-C20B engine.

Other planned updates include installation of new Garmin avionics, a new FLIR systems camera, relocation of the FLIR camera and search light to a side mount, along with a full interior and exterior refurbishment. Performance of the work will be at a qualified MD Helicopters service agent. SLED currently operates a fleet of two MD500E, one Bell 407, and one Bell 412.

The advertisement features a background of a cloudy sky. On the left, there is a detailed image of a Macro-Blue tactical mission display unit. The display shows various data fields and a control panel with buttons labeled 'HOME', 'BACK', 'FWD', 'LEFT', 'RIGHT', 'UP', 'DOWN', 'ENTER', 'ESC', 'F1', 'F2', 'F3', 'F4', 'F5', 'F6', 'F7', 'F8', 'F9', 'F10', 'F11', 'F12', 'DEL', 'INS', 'HOME', 'END', 'PAGE UP', 'PAGE DOWN', 'STOP', 'START', 'PAUSE', 'RESET', 'POWER', 'VOL+', 'VOL-', 'MUTE', 'MUTE OFF', 'MUTE ON', 'MUTE LOCK', 'MUTE UNLOCK', 'MUTE TOGGLE', 'MUTE LOCKED', 'MUTE UNLOCKED', 'MUTE TOGGLE LOCKED', 'MUTE TOGGLE UNLOCKED', 'MUTE TOGGLE LOCKED UNLOCKED', 'MUTE TOGGLE UNLOCKED LOCKED', 'MUTE TOGGLE UNLOCKED UNLOCKED', 'MUTE TOGGLE LOCKED LOCKED', 'MUTE TOGGLE LOCKED UNLOCKED', 'MUTE TOGGLE UNLOCKED LOCKED', 'MUTE TOGGLE UNLOCKED UNLOCKED'. The display also shows 'Macro-Blue' branding and 'Tactical Mission Displays' text.

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AUSTRALIA

FLYING DOCTOR: The World's First PC-12 PRO Aeromedical delivered to the Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia. Serial number 3010 arrived in Australia – the first of five brand-new PC-12 PROs for delivery to the Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia (RFDS) Central Operations. The RFDS is a highly valued customer for over 30 years, so it seems fitting that the world's first PC-12 PRO in aeromedical configuration should go to the longest-standing aeromedical partner.

These new PC-12s will form part of the Central Operations fleet, regularly flying through the central corridor of South Australia and Northern Territory, delivering world-leading medical care to some of Australia's remotest regions. The spacious pressurised cabin of over nine cubic meters can comfortably accommodate patients, crew, and high-tech medical equipment. The large cargo door and lift system facilitate quick and easy patient loading.

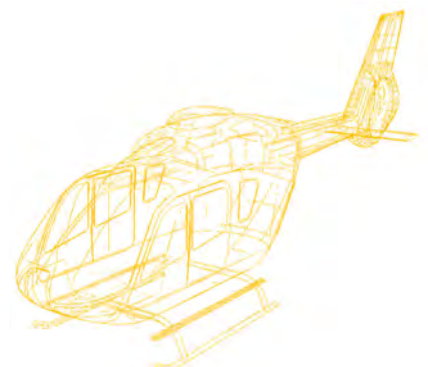
This brand-new aircraft builds on the proven legacy of the PC-12, delivering enhanced performance, advanced avionics and increased capability to support the RFDS in achieving its mission.

NETHERLANDS

HEMS: Currently The government of the Netherlands contracts air ambulance services provided by four Airbus helicopters available 24/7 and based around the country to minimize response times. They provide a basic HEMS and inter-hospital transfer service. The four, based in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Volkel in the province of Noord-Brabant, and Groningen are supplemented by the Netherlands Coast Guard helicopters and military helicopters from the Navy and Air Force.

In early March it was announced that an additional helicopter and base would be set up to enhance the civil operation. The decisional made in the Dutch Parliament is that an extra trauma helicopter will be put in place at Teuge Airport in Gelderland and a mobile response vehicle will be added at Zuid-Limburg. The unit is expected to be stationed at Maastricht Aachen Airport in Beek. The projects have a €15M Euro budget.

The new operation will provide coverage for eastern Netherlands and reduce the workload of trauma teams in Amsterdam and Rotterdam. No aircraft type or delivery time has been specified so it might be expected that a new H135 will be ordered to match the existing fleet. [NL Times]



UNITED KINGDOM

SCOTLAND: Gama H145/MBB-BK117D-3 G-WSAS c/n 21461 registered with the CAA on March 4 is now registered to Gama Aviation at Farnborough and ferried yesterday from the Airbus Helicopters facility in Oxford to Staverton for them to do the bulk of the completion before going on the Scottish contract.

Of the two other airframes in this contract G-XSAS c/n 21419 arrived at Staverton on November 28, 2025, and the third is not due from Germany for some months.

UNITED STATES

CALIFORNIA: Mercy Air 15, a critical care air medical base serving Kern County and surrounding communities, has enhanced its lifesaving operations with the delivery of a new Bell 407GX helicopter equipped with Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) capability. This upgrade significantly improves the team's ability to respond during winter weather, particularly the region's well-known Tule Fog conditions that often limit visibility and ground aircraft not certified for IFR operations.

Mercy Air 15 previously operated a Bell 407, a reliable and trusted aircraft. However, its inability to operate in IFR environments meant that dense fog and low ceilings, conditions common throughout Bakersfield's winter months, could prevent the aircraft from launching. The newly delivered Bell 407GX changes that.

Along with IFR capabilities, the Bell 407GX features advanced avionics and safety systems, including Garmin avionics, a fully integrated autopilot system, and real-time satellite weather. These enhancements enable pilots to fly more safely and efficiently.

NORTH CAROLINA: Last month, Pivotal, a market leader in light electric Vertical Take-off and Landing (eVTOL) ultralight vehicles, announced a proof-of-concept project with Hyde County and Code Blue Resources to establish a scalable emergency medical response model using eVTOLs, which until now have mainly been used by citizens in the private sector. Flight-trained paramedics serve as volunteer pilots, deploying Pivotal eVTOL aircraft to provide rapid, advanced medical care directly at high-acuity emergency scenes when conditions are appropriate.

Hyde County Emergency Services (HCES) will utilise the ultralight vehicles, with Pivotal serving as an integral partner providing not only the vehicles but also comprehensive flight training and operational integration support. Code Blue Resources will lead the medical component of the initiative, which is focused on significantly accelerating emergency response and on-scene time to treatment for critical care calls.



Pivotal's eVTOL technology represents a possible leap forward for public safety operations. Its ability to deploy rapidly, without runways or specialized infrastructure, opens entirely new possibilities for situational awareness, operational reach, and scalable response. By integrating EMS, Law Enforcement, Search & Rescue, and Emergency Management functions into a single aviation response platform, this project

demonstrates a multi-disciplinary approach that improves speed, safety, operational coordination, and improved outcomes while minimizing cost and logistical complexity.

This pilot project will evaluate the operational requirements for deploying Pivotal eVTOL aircraft as an EMS dispatch vehicle under a Public Aircraft Operation (POA). No persons or property will be carried for compensation or hire. The vehicle will not be used to transport patients, cargo, or delivery equipment.



FIRE AUSTRALIA

VICTORIA: Toll Uncrewed Systems has supported a groundbreaking Fire Rescue Victoria trial in a BVLOS profile for the first time with Fire Rescue Victoria. As part of the trial Toll flew an advanced RPAS beyond visual line of sight - day and night - using the Great Shark 330 with EO/IR sensors. These missions showcased how drones can deliver critical intelligence for emergency response, mapping fire zones and locating crews in challenging conditions. A big step toward safer, smarter disaster management! The project was supported by AVT Australia and DTC, a Codan Company. Read the full, 76 page, report: <https://bit.ly/4IJdNJW>.



EUROPE

LUXEMBOURG: Entrol the manufacturer of certified flight simulators, has announced the successful installation of a state-of-the-art Air Tractor AT-802 simulator for Aquarius Aerial Firefighting (Aquarius AFF) in Luxembourg. This device was specifically configured for the "Sea" (Fire Boss) version and is a cornerstone of the pilots training programme.



The simulator project stands out for its focus on operational realism ©Entrol

To ensure a seamless training experience, Entrol has integrated original components of the aircraft type, including a real Garmin G600 TXi avionics and the pilot seat. This combination of real hardware and proprietary software eliminates tactile differences in the cockpit, allowing pilots to develop precise muscle memory for critical missions.

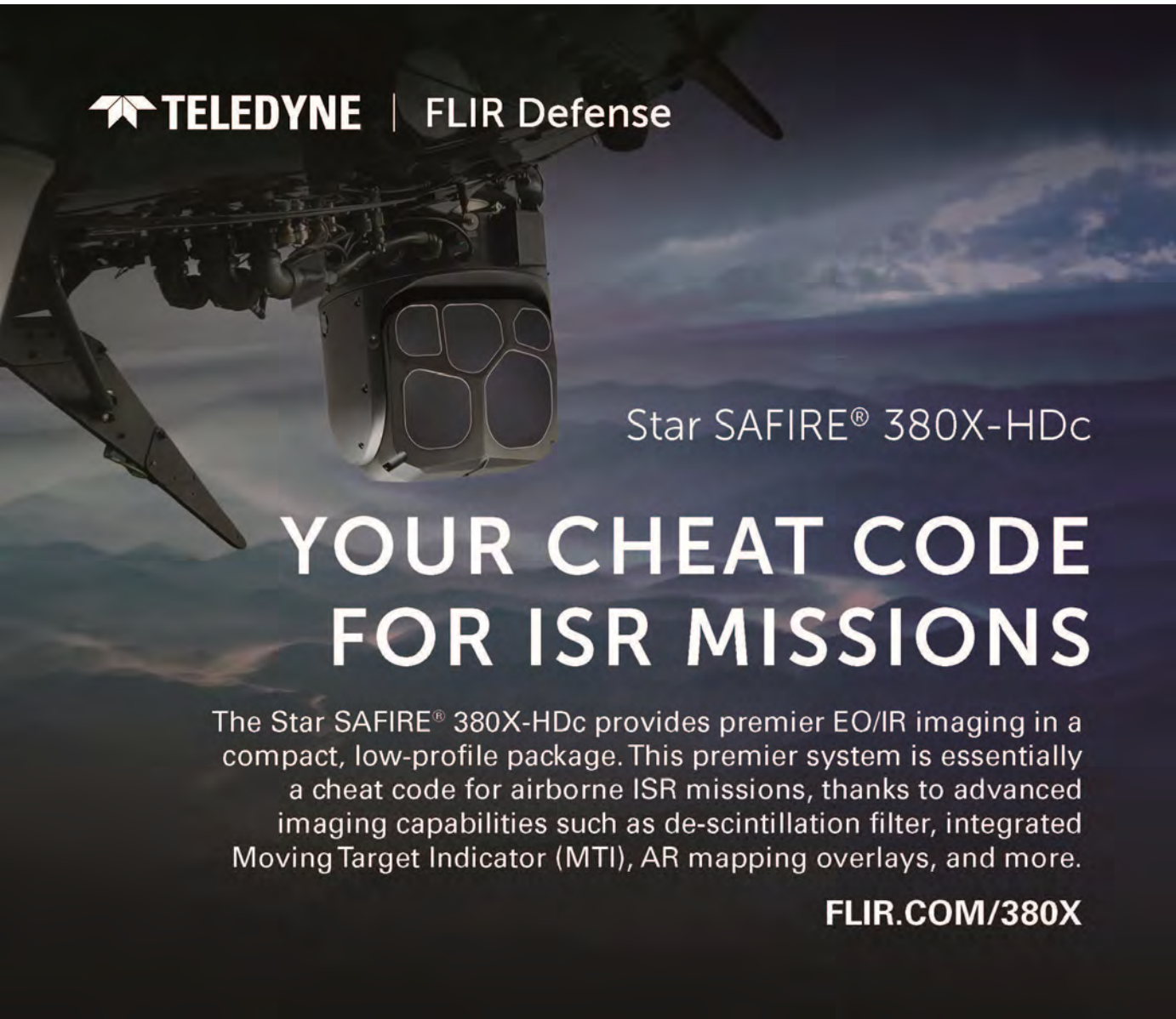
The flight model has been specifically engineered to replicate the complex aerodynamics of the Fire Boss, particularly the **water scooping process** on lakes or sea surfaces.

Aquarius Aerial Firefighting (Aquarius AFF) is a Luxembourg-based aerial firefighting operator founded in 2023. As a subsidiary of all-cargo airline Cargolux, the company builds on the rigorous safety standards of its mother company with the mission to bolster aerial firefighting capacities in Europe and beyond. Committed to protecting nature, lives, and livelihoods, Aquarius Aerial Firefighting operates a growing fleet of AT-802 Fire Boss aircraft to provide assistance in the fight against devastating wildfires.

FRANCE: Airbus has completed a unique first-of-its-kind trial in forest firefighting. By linking aircraft, helicopters, drones and ground personnel via communication and data processing systems, Airbus has demonstrated the ability to carry out highly accurate water drops and significantly reduce the time between fire detection and extinguishment.

The trial mobilised significant resources, including the Airbus H130 Flight Lab helicopter, two aircraft, an ATR 72 test aircraft and a Cirrus SR20 light aircraft, four drones including an Airbus Aliaca, and three lorries from the Departmental Fire and Rescue Service of Le Gard (SDIS 30) to collect and process data. To interconnect the entire system, Airbus deployed a local private mobile network bubble in the area, connected to Agnet, the mission-critical communication solution developed by Airbus for security and emergency services.

These tests were carried out by Airbus and its partners at the Garrigues military camp in Nîmes (France), based on scenarios developed with Departmental Fire and Rescue Services (SDIS) as well as the Entente Valabre, a public body empowered by the French Ministry of the Interior to assess forest firefighting equip-



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ment, provide training for personnel in France and abroad, and which is recognised as an international authority.

In these scenarios, two drones and the light aircraft captured images of the fire area, including infrared footage, and transmitted them in real time to Airbus servers connected to a command centre aboard a ground vehicle. The images were analysed, geolocated and merged with data, including satellite imagery, taking into account the terrain, wind strength and direction measured by a drone, and the location of firefighters on the ground. Data processing systems using AI produced a comprehensive view of the tactical situation on the ground and in the air, and enabled flight paths and water drop points to be transmitted to the helicopter equipped with a precision water drop assistance system and to the ATR72, which was simulating a water bomber.

The equipment was unveiled for the first time at the annual Aerial Firefighting Conference & Exhibition, taking place last month in Rome. [Airbus Helicopters]

SEARCH AND RESCUE

UNITED KINGDOM

UK SAR: On March 15 at Oban Airport in the Scottish Highlands the UK Maritime and Coastguard Agency operation declared a brand-new seasonal helicopter base operational for the first time.

The Bristow Leonardo AW189 equipped team got their very first tasking just hours after go-live, helping locate a walker in a remote area.

Meanwhile, 400 miles away, another Bristow team at the Caernarfon base, Wales, went live with the final helicopter in the UK's new SAR-configured AW139 fleet taking to the skies - thanks to Dan Foster for this great shot of it taking off from the Welsh base.

New aircraft, new bases and a growing lifesaving capability. Both milestones are key parts in the delivery of SAR2G, the major national programme delivering next-generation SAR for the UK.



INDUSTRY

Smith Myers Communication Ltd were exhibiting their products at both the Security & Policing, UK Home Office Show, at Farnborough UK and the Atlanta, USA VERTICON events last month. They announced additions to their Artemis fully airborne-qualified Mobile Phone Detection and Location System (MPDLS) including a passive Wi-Fi and Bluetooth detection and geolocation capability, together with ATAK Cursor-on-Target (CoT) integration. With these latest advancements, ARTEMIS once again redefines the capabilities of airborne and deployed mobile detection systems. The addition of passive Wi-Fi detection enables ARTEMIS to identify and geolocate devices associated with local wireless networks. This capability supports faster decision-making and improves responder safety in time-critical scenarios, particularly in aerial firefighting and disaster response situations. Passive Bluetooth detection further extends operational reach, enabling Artemis, in certain circumstances, to detect and geolocate devices even after a handset's main battery has been depleted. Both new detection modes operate entirely passively. The introduction of the ATAK Cursor-on-Target (CoT) command capability enhances operational integration by enabling Artemis to output precise geolocation data directly into CoT-enabled mission systems, allowing automatic cueing of EO/IR cameras and other networked sensors.

Pilatus Aircraft said volatile US trade tariffs, a sharp fall in the dollar and supply-chain disruption weighed on its 2025 performance, pushing operating earnings lower even as sales inched higher and the order book remained close to \$3.6 billion. The Swiss manufacturer reported total sales of \$2.02 billion in 2025, operating earnings (EBIT) of \$205 million, and incoming orders worth \$2.25 billion. Despite a lower order intake than in 2024, Pilatus said it closed 2025 with a continuing high volume of orders in hand, underpinning its outlook for the coming years. The company's year-end backlog stood at approximately \$3.57 billion.

Following the successful completion of the mid-life upgrade for the #MissionSystem of the **Maltese Armed Forces'** third Maritime Patrol aircraft, the entire fleet in the Mediterranean region is now equipped with state-of-the-art mission system technology. The King Air B200 aircraft, originally delivered back in 2017, was recently modernised in #Braunschweig and transferred to the Maltese Armed Forces with new sensor capabilities.

It is not that unusual for fixed wing aircraft to be displayed at the annual Verticon (Heli-Expo) US helicopter show but this year is a first instance for **Daher Aircraft**, the manufacturers of TBM 850 and Kodiak single engine aircraft types to join the exhibitors.



Daher made its first appearance at the annual show highlighting the company's Kodiak 100 and Kodiak 900 as highly capable fixed-wing airplanes to complement helicopter fleets in support of law enforcement, public safety and government operators. Exhibiting at the Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta during the March 10-12 event, Daher Aircraft highlighted how Kodiak serves as a "force multiplier" for helicopter-focused operations and additionally reduces overall costs.

Daher acquired the multi-role Kodiak in 2019, making a long-term commitment to this product line by enhancing production resources at the Sandpoint, Idaho industrial facility/ final assembly line; as well as significantly evolving and improving the airplane family – backed by reinforced customer support through a global network already established for the company's TBM turboprop-powered aircraft. The Kodiak aircraft family's endurance of seven to eight hours – and up to 9.5 hours in certain configurations – offers significantly longer on-station time than helicopters. Kodiak users in the law enforcement and public service field include New York State Police, Virginia State Police and the Missouri Highway Patrol.

In February 2026, Belgium's military intelligence service, ADIV/SGRS, launched an investigation into the proposed takeover of **NHV Group (Noordzee Helikopters Vlaanderen)** a major Belgian helicopter operator by Chinese Owned GD Helicopter Finance (GDHF), a Dublin based leasing company ultimately owned by the Chinese aviation leasing group GDAT.

NHV plays a strategic role in offshore aviation across Europe, providing helicopter transport to North Sea oil platforms and offshore wind farms. Its services support critical energy infrastructure and maritime operations in the region.

The potential acquisition has raised national security concerns within Belgium. Authorities are assessing whether indirect Chinese ownership could create vulnerabilities, particularly if the company becomes involved in defence related aviation services in the future. NHV has reportedly explored opportunities related to support activities for Belgium's upcoming fleet of H145M helicopters used by the armed forces and federal police.

Under Belgium's foreign direct investment screening framework, the government can review and potentially restrict or block acquisitions that may impact national security or critical infrastructure. As a result, ADIV/SGRS is examining whether the transaction could allow access directly or indirectly to sensitive logistics networks, offshore energy assets, or military aviation support capabilities.

NHV has stated that the transaction would not alter its operational structure and that the company would continue to operate from Europe. However, Belgian authorities are expected to carefully weigh strategic risks before any final approval.

VERTICON SPECIFIC

Oddly the event included another MD500 launch as the sporty little former Vietnam era warhorse came out and pretended to be new. The new 500 is called the **564** and is effectively a slightly breathed on MD530 with a name clumsily contrived from 500, 6 blade main rotor and 4 blade tail rotor none of the features is new but it is the first time they have come together.

One wonders whether they will be offering upgrades to the pretty numerous fans of the OH-6/MD500 as they always have done. The result is still a fast, nimble three-seater with room in the back for some beers.

Fortunately, no-one was holding their breath at the launch, so no injury was caused. At least when Lynne Tilton was in charge there was something to see – and that was not a helicopter.

I have seen some MD launches in my time and long since gave up waiting in awe, it would be wasted. Even if launched the creation would likely fizzle out and come to nothing.

The market still needs a well-engineered 21st Century MD900 variant but that beast has clearly been given up by the management in Mesa.



Metro Aviation partnered with Davenport Aviation and the New York State Police on the completion of the H145 as part of the modernization of the NYSP Aviation Unit. Metro was awarded a multi-ship completion contract through Davenport Aviation and has already delivered two aircraft, with additional aircraft scheduled for completion in the coming years.

The NYSP H145 on display was equipped for a wide range of mission profiles, from tactical law enforcement to search and rescue, with specialized equipment including an onboard hoist, customized Tactical Flight Officer (TFO) station, FLIR 380 HDC thermal imaging system, Trakka searchlight for nighttime operations, and more.



Featured on the Airbus booth was a **Memorial Hermann's** H160, representing the health system's continued partnership with Metro Aviation. Metro previously delivered two H145 aircraft for the hospital system and is currently completing two additional aircraft.



©Airborne Technologies

Last month **Airborne Technologies** attended the recently held Vexcel User Meeting in Athens. It was a great opportunity to connect with industry experts, exchange insights, and explore the latest developments in aerial imaging and geospatial technologies.

They were able to present to attendees their Exhaust Gas Pipe solution for the Cessna Caravan and share how it supports optimized sensor operations.

The CLEAR VIEW Exhaust Deflector Kit is a fully certified solution designed to eliminate heat distortion in airborne imaging. Specifically engineered for the Cessna 208B Caravan and certified under EASA STC-AT-188, this innovative system ensures crystal-clear imagery for surveillance, reconnaissance and mapping missions. For years, airborne operators have faced the challenge of heat distortion caused by exhaust gases interfering with sensor outputs, limiting the sensor detection to only one side of the aircraft, thereby causing money/time consuming flight path workarounds. Our solution solves this problem by redirecting hot exhaust gases away from sensor hatches, protecting the accuracy of high-resolution data from modern wide-angle sensors. Key Features relating to the EASA STC dated August 27, 2025:

Undisturbed Sensor Imagery: Eliminates exhaust interference in visual and laser-based data.

No Performance Loss: No impact on aircraft performance below 12,000 ft

Plus points of the design include no noise impact and an ability to operate without affecting acoustic signatures. The lightweight design adds only 50 kg..



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ACCIDENTS & INCIDENTS

17 January 2026 Airbus Helicopter H145 N903SH. Air ambulance of Sanford AirMed, Sioux Falls, South Dakota. After delivering patient to receiving facility, aircraft/team were returning to base. Approximately 10 minutes prior to landing at base airport, pilot noticed engine oil pressure decreasing on the #2 engine. After checking other parameters, it appeared to be an indicating problem, but as pressure continued to drop into the red pilot elected to perform the emergency procedure for low engine oil pressure. Paramedic opened the checklist to the Emergency Procedures and pilot performed the procedure to shut down #2 engine. A shallow approach with a run-on landing was performed to the runway. After landing, aircraft was shut down and moved to AirMed hangar. Inspection revealed engine oil pressure transducer was defective. Transducer replaced and aircraft returned to service. (CONCERN Network)

06 March 2026 Airbus EC135P2+ JA824H Air ambulance of Doctor Heli operated by Hiratagakuen Aviation. Engine warning just after take-off - safe landing [Parapex Media]

07 March 2026 Bell 505 N911FW Fort Worth Police. The helicopter took off on patrol from the heliport at Meacham International Airport at about 10:15 p.m. while responding to assist officers on a call. When it reached an altitude of about 100 feet the pilot reported a mechanical issue. The pilot tried to return to the heliport but was forced to make an emergency landing on airport property, coming to a rest just short of the helipad. The airframe remained upright, but the skid landing gear was wrecked and some equipment compromised. The pilot and a tactical flight officer were taken to a local hospital for medical assessment. [Fox 4]

09 March 2026 Airbus EC145 N103MT Air ambulance of Med-Trans operating for TriStar Health SkyLife. The helicopter departed St Clares Hospital Heliport for Uw Hospital & Clinics Heliport in Madison Wisconsin. On the approach to the latter over a lake the pilot encountered light turbulence, and a post flight inspection revealed damage to the horizontal stabiliser.

10 March 2026 Bell 412 VH-VJF Firefighting helicopter of Coulson Aviation. Loss of control and equipment contact with water. A firefighting helicopter sustained substantial damage when it unexpectedly lost height when filling its underslung bucket from the Murchison River on Tasmania's West Coast, an ATSB investigation interim report details.

The twin-engine Bell 412 helicopter, operated by Coulson Aviation, was performing waterbombing activities for the Tasmanian Fire Service in the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park in the state's west on 10 March 2025.

While hovering at about 150 ft over the Murchison River refilling its bucket, which was attached via a longline, the helicopter sank unexpectedly about 50 ft.

While applying recovery control inputs, the pilot, the sole occupant, unsuccessfully attempted to jettison the longline, and it subsequently became taut.

"The helicopter then came to an abrupt stop, and the pilot heard a 'loud clunking noise'," said ATSB Director Transport Safety Dr Stuart Godley.

"The pilot then recovered the helicopter to a stable hover approximately 30 ft above the water and initiated rearward flight to release the water and retrieve the bucket from the river."

The pilot then observed an engine torque split – when the proportion of main rotor torque is spread unevenly between the helicopter's two engines.

"After regaining control and recovering the longline and bucket, the pilot found the tail rotor pedals to be stiff, but said they were still able to control the helicopter." [ATSB]



PAVCON POLICE AVIATION CONFERENCE EUROPE MALAGA SPAIN 27 - 29 May 2026



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UNMANNED

KILLER DRONES

As we approached the end of February 2026 very few, including the readers of 'Police Aviation News', would have known, or could have imagined, that on the 28 February the USA, together with Israel, would carry out military strikes on Iran. These air strikes followed a period of civil unrest in which many Iranian citizens, up to 30,000, were killed by government forces. There has also been a lack of agreement, by Iran, to abandon its ambition to build a nuclear weapon. The strikes destroyed both military and government targets and, in the process, the supreme leader of Iran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was killed, together with many of his government associates.

Until that point readers hearing the word 'drone' would, perhaps, think of very large military drones, such as the Reaper and the Protector, or those small drones flown for business applications, for recreation, and, in increasing numbers, by the police. Typically, these drones are 'quadcopters' with electric motors, flown within sight of the operator. But, also larger drones, such as the Schiebel S-100 Camcopter which is operated by His Majesty's Coastguard and is also being trialled by the UK's National Police Air Service.

Until the end of February the word, 'drone' may have triggered thoughts of those 'quadcopters' flown by the police.



Police Scotland

WAR WITH IRAN

The response by Iran, to the military strikes against their country, was to launch hundreds, if not thousands of Shahed 'kamikaze' drones, each weighing approximately 440 lbs, with an 8-foot wingspan and a warhead weighing up to 110 lbs. These drones which are mass produced in factories in Iran, but also in Russia and in the USA, are fully autonomous using the commercial Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) to navigate to the target from the launch point, a launch point which could be from the back of an adapted truck. The range, from the launch point to the target is reported to be between 600 and 1,000 miles, dependent on the weight of the warhead, with a speed of around 100 knots. The Shahed drone has a single MD-550 four-cylinder piston engine with a pusher propeller. The take-off, on rails, is rocket assisted. The reported cost of a Shahed drone is just £20,000.

As well as targeting Israel, the Iranian government lashed out at other nations in the Middle East, those with military and commercial links with the USA and with the UK. Drones, together with ballistic missiles, were used to attack Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emir-

ates. The Royal Air Force airfield at Akrotiri, in Cyprus, a British Overseas Territory, together with Turkey, were also attacked with the mass produced 'kamikaze' drones that were used to carry out multiple attacks over a very wide area of the Middle East.

The Iranian Shahed 136 drone, with an 8-foot wingspan, weighs approximately 440 lbs and can carry a warhead weighing up to 110 lbs for over 600 miles at 100 knots. The reported cost is just £20,000 per drone.



Wikipedia

WAR OF ATTRITION

Whilst the armed forces of Iran will never defeat those of the USA and Israel in a 'shooting war' the attrition rates, the sustainability, the cost to those nations involved in this conflict are worthy of note. For example, in the first week of the conflict a F-35B 'stealth' fighter, deployed to RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus, intercepted and destroyed a Shahed drone over Jordan with an Advanced Short-Range Air to Air Missile (ASRAMM). On that occasion a drone costing £20,000 was brought down by a missile costing £200,000, fired from a fighter aircraft costing some £90million. An aircraft with an operating cost reported to be in the region of £33,000 per flight hour! Other Shahed drones have been destroyed by RAF Typhoon fighters flying over those Middle East countries attacked by Iran. For how long can these asymmetric costs be sustained by respective defence budgets? To be blunt, will Iran run out of drones and ballistic missiles before the RAF runs out of air defence missiles?

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In addition to the jet fighters, Typhoon and F-35B, the Royal Navy AW159 Wildcat helicopter may be armed with 20 Thales Martlet air to air missiles mounted on a wing platform which produces lift and reduces drag.



Thales/RN

In the interim the Royal Navy has, with the support of RAF air transport, deployed AW159 Wildcat helicopters to RAF Akrotiri. Each helicopter may be armed with up to 20 relatively low-cost Thales Martlet (£50,000 each) air to air missiles. The suitability of a helicopter, flying a combat air patrol at 140 knots for up to 2 hours is open to question. Nevertheless, the Martlet multi-role missile may also be used for point defence, mounted on a vehicle - 'RapidRanger', or as a shoulder launched man portable air defence system (MANPADS). The Royal Air Force Regiment is equipped with 'Rapid Sentry' a static turret-like launcher which also fires the Thales Martlet, supersonic, laser guided lightweight multi-role missile (LMM) with a range of 8 km, designed to intercept light attack helicopters and drones. There are reports that in one night the RAF Regiment destroyed 14 Iranian drones, part of a swarm of drones attacking the allied base at Erbil in northern Iraq.

The RAF Regiment is equipped with 'Rapid Sentry'. A multi-barrelled short range air defence system equipped with the Thales Martlet laser guided supersonic missiles with a range of 8 km.



MoD/RAF

DRONE ON DRONE

In addition to jet fighter armed with air-to-air missiles, helicopters, also armed with air-to-air missiles, and static air defence systems, a new proposal, a product of the conflict in Ukraine, is termed the 'aerostrike interceptor drone system'. This drone defence system relies on the enemy drone being detected from the ground. Then a second drone, a quadcopter, is used to crash into enemy drone and destroy it. However, this system requires the interceptor drone, together with its operator, to be close to the flight path of the drone which is to be intercepted. One such system, called the 'Octopus Interceptor Drone', is built in the UK.

A LESSON FROM THE PAST

Some 80 years ago, 1944-45, during WW2, London and the South East of England were the subject of an onslaught by Nazi Germany, firing a barrage of V1 flying bombs, the precursor of today's cruise missile. The V1 was flown at 350 knots across the English Channel from launch sites in northern France.

In total, some 9,500 V1 flying bombs were directed at the UK, of which up to 2,500 reached their targets. In addition to strategic bombing, to destroy the launch sites, together with the factories building the V1, there were layers of defence which included RAF fighter aircraft, Tempests, Spitfires and Mustangs, directed by ground based radar, together with anti-aircraft (AA) guns along England's south coast and barrage balloons flying over London. Some 4,000 V1's were destroyed before they reached their targets, whilst others fell short. The RAF pilots accounted for the majority of those V1's that were destroyed. Only one in four flying bombs reached London. One of those RAF pilots who took part in this air battle was Squadron Leader Joseph Berry DFC**, the officer commanding No.501 Squadron, who is credited with destroying 59 V1 missiles, of which 33 were shot down at night. In 1944 airborne early warning aircraft such as the Boeing E-7A Wedgetail, ordered by the RAF, but now delayed by 5 years, and the Grumman E-2C Hawkeye, embarked on both US and French aircraft carriers, were many, many years away.

RAF fighter pilots, on stand-by to intercept V1 'flying bombs' in 1944.



A PROPORTIONAL RESPONSE TO KILLER DRONES

Rather than shooting down mass produced 'kamikaze' Iranian built Shahed drones, each costing £20,000, with a multi-million pound jet fighter, Eurofighter Typhoon, or Lockheed Martin F-35B 'stealth' fighter, each firing an ASRAAM air to air missile costing £200,000, is there a more cost effective, a more affordable, a more proportional solution? Yes, there is!

The Beechcraft T-6 Texan Mk II basic training aircraft, the Texan T1 in RAF service, has a top speed of over 300 knots, cruises at 280 knots and can be flown at 100 knots, the cruising speed of the Shahed drone. Moreover, hard-points can be added under the wings to carry gun pods, rocket launchers, or lightweight air to air missiles. The armed version of Beechcraft T-6 Texan is operated worldwide by 7 countries, including the Mexican Air Force and Navy, the Royal Thai Air Force and the Vietnam Peoples' Air Force. In the current conflict, with the proliferation of low-cost Shahed drones the light attack aircraft would, as in WW2, fly a combat air patrol, a barrier patrol across the anticipated flight path of the incoming drones, with interceptions directed by air defence radar. This would be part of a layered air defence with aircraft forming the outer layer, together with a ground-based missile system, for example, 'Rapid Sentry' providing close air defence for potential high value targets, the inner layer.

RAF Beechcraft Texan T1 basic training aircraft. Hard-points, under the wings can be used to carry gun pods, rocket launchers, or lightweight air to air missiles.



MoD/RAF

This concept is supported by the defence analyst, Thomas Novelly who, in 'Defense One', wrote, "Last week, a Royal Air Force F-35 pilot shot down a drone that had evaded air defences over Jordan. One former British military officer called it, 'using a sledgehammer to crack a nut'. Former US fighter pilots who spoke with 'Defense One' agreed with the former. UK officer's assessment. Some of Iran's drones, which cost in the low five figures, are being downed by missiles that cost twenty or forty times as much, launched from aircraft with relatively high operating costs. Also, the speed differential between jets and drones can pose problems in chaotic battlespaces." Dan Hampton, a former F-16 pilot said the Pentagon should also consider other solutions, such as using light attack aircraft armed with rockets and guns to counter drones.

CONCLUSION

In an earlier conflict, the Falkland's conflict, the threat was at sea, from those warships, submarines and reconnaissance aircraft belonging to Argentina. Within weeks the RAF's maritime patrol aircraft, the Nimrod MR2, became the Nimrod MR2P with the addition of an in-flight refueling probe to enable the aircraft to reach the operational area in the South Atlantic. Also new weapons were added to the standard war load, the lightweight torpedo. These 'new' weapons, new to the Nimrod, were one-thousand-pound bombs, together with a bomb sight, to attack submarines on the surface, the Harpoon missile to attack warships and Sidewinder air to air missiles to attack Argentinian reconnaissance aircraft.

Rather than using a 'sledgehammer to crack a walnut', Rather than using multi-million-pound jet fighters, firing very expensive air to air missiles, or using expensive to operate helicopters also carrying air to air missiles, the Thales Martlet each costing £50,000, there is, fortunately, an alternative. Light trainer aircraft, fitted with guns pods, flying combat air patrols, a barrier patrol, under the direction of land, sea, or air

based early warning radar would provide the RAF with a unique, a cost effective, response to the air attacks by the Iranians' using 'cheap and cheerful', low speed, but, nevertheless, deadly Shahed drones. At night the crew of the RAF's Texan T1 'drone busters' would, if necessary, wear night vision goggles (NVGs) to aid target identification.

Is it possible that those involved in the conflict in Iran, in particular the RAF, may now benefit from the lessons learned in 1944 during 'Operation Diver', the defence of the UK from attacks using V1 flying bombs? Also, lessons learned in 1982, during the Falkland's conflict, to quickly adapt an aircraft, an aircraft already in service, to meet a new, but, nevertheless, a deadly threat.

James A Cowan MBE

Note: The author is a former RAF pilot, a police pilot and an air ambulance pilot too.

AND if the image of the Iranian Shahed 136 drone on page 25 looked familiar it may be because you looked at this aircraft in a former lifetime! This is a Meggitt Banshee and back in the 1980s when they displayed it and its like at the Farnborough Air Show they just called them targets.... You can still get them, they are now made by QinetiQ in various forms. Some are armed.... It appears you do not know what you have until someone else starts pelting you with it!



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ADVERTISING WITH POLICE AVIATION NEWS

Times they are a changing sang Bob Dylan way back in 1964 and the same happens here in *Police Aviation News* in its 30th year of publication. 'Stuff' is being outsourced and that includes the PAVCon Europe Conference and Exhibition and now advertising.

New advertising customers are now being directed to a long-standing associate in Parapex Media, better known as Jeremy Parkin. We have worked together for a very long time, but he has an age advantage on The Editor.

As part of a plan to future proof the publication I have now outsourced the advertising and the website content therefore has been altered to reflect the new position.

The new Media Pack is on the primary www.policeaviationnews.com site in PDF form [in text on the www.policeaviationnews.info site]

Publication date for all issues is the first day of each month [National holidays excepted].

Advertising copy to be received by the 20th of the month prior to the scheduled publication date to guarantee appearance.

This will not change the arrangement for existing advertising currently dealt with directly by the editor.

PEOPLE

Tim Starn, formerly with the Costa Mesa PD for 27 years, joined Robinson Helicopter Company as the Business Development Segment Manager - Airborne Public Safety!

In his new role he will be focused on delivering versatile, mission-ready aircraft to global agencies—ensuring every project is delivered on time and within budget. Among his roles is the promotion of the R66 Police Helicopter and its role equipment.

With over 31 years of law enforcement experience, including significant tenure managing a premier regional aviation unit in Orange County, CA. Tim Starn resigned from Costa Mesa PD at the end of 2014 and has held several positions with law enforcement and aviation since then.



After more than three decades of service, Richard Turner closes a remarkable chapter at Adams Aviation Supply Company Ltd., Aeropia House, 2 Kelvin Lane, Newton Rd, Crawley, RH10 9TY UK bringing to a close a career woven into the very fabric of the company's growth and evolution. For 31 years, Richard was a constant presence through change, expansion, industry shifts and new generations of customers and staff. He left behind a legacy built on relationships, knowledge and steadfast dedication.

Richard joined the business from Merseyside on 11 July 1994, as the nervous new boy and over the decades that followed, he witnessed and contributed to the transformation of Adams Aviation.

"When Richard joined Adams as a fresh-faced recruit, it was immediately clear he had a genuine passion for aviation," recalls Robin Walsh. "He naturally gravitated towards the rotary, special missions and military sectors, areas that truly captured his interest and where we've continued to grow." Robin added with a smile, "Whether we were in tents selling products in muddy fields or representing the business at high-end venues around the world, it's been a lot of fun over the years. Thank you, Richard."



Beginning in UK Sales, he became a trusted point of contact for customers who valued his calm manner and practical product knowledge. His ability to build lasting relationships saw his responsibilities extend into German and South East European markets, and later into APAC sales — reflecting both the company's global ambition and the trust placed in him to represent the business internationally. Alongside regional sales responsibilities, Richard developed specialist expertise in Offshore Communications and later as Special Missions Product Specialist, supporting mission-critical requirements where precision and technical understanding were paramount.

Richard has consistently shown his support to the company and its customers, from testing an active noise reduction system aboard the Devon air ambulance helicopter, to sharing stands at European Rotors and PAVCon, he was always committed to representing Adams Aviation at its very best. <https://www.adamsaviation.com>

Editor: As reported recently Richard is also an RAF Reserve officer and PAN announced his promotion to Wing Commander to take over as Officer Commanding Kent Wing, London and South East Region, RAF Air Cadets with effect from 29 September 2025.

As PAN reported in the last edition (see page 35) there are troubles at the Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW). These issues seem to be widening as a few days after that story was carried the chief executive of the PFEW was arrested on suspicion of corruption.

The Daily Telegraph revealed the story that Mukund Krishna was arrested along with two former national board members by the City of London Police. The arrests followed an investigation into allegations of financial wrongdoing at PFEW, which represents more than 145,000 rank-and-file officers. Mr Krishna, a former management consultant, is the first chief executive of the PFEW, and is reported to earn more than £700,000 a year. Officers carried out a series of raids on premises in Wales, Somerset, London and Surrey to arrest suspects and gather evidence.

The Daily Telegraph (Charles Hymas) announced Lord Hogan Howe the former Metropolitan Police commissioner who was criticised for investigating false claims of a VIP sex abuse ring will lead the 'Independent Review of Police Force Structures' a government instigated review into cutting the number of forces brought about by the Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood.

While the article pointed out some of his flaws I reckon, he missed a whole queue of others including not being one of the more memorable positive ACPO police aviation leads and giving up the Merseyside Police helicopter to start off the disaster that became NPAS. In fact, I struggle to find something that he did get right unless his brief appearance at a Police Aviation Conference in London in 2006 can be seen as a positive. He refused to take questions because he clearly had no answers and scuttled off to New Scotland Yard where he had 'a meeting'. On past performance the UK police will be due to disband shortly.



AIR AMBULANCE TRUSTEES

Devon - Termination of appointment of Ann Holman as a director on 2025-12-07

East Anglia - Appointment of Mrs Eilish Elizabeth Ann Midlane as a director on 2025-12-16

Great North - Appointment of Dr Jason Easby as a director on 2026-02-20

Lincs/Notts - Termination of appointment of Graham Leonard Secker as a director on 2026-02-04

Dorset Somerset - Termination of appointment of William Nicholas Entwisle as a director on 2026-03-10

Great North - Appointment of Mrs Lisa Charles-Jones as a director on 2026-02-20

Welsh - Termination of appointment of Desmond Robert Kitto as a director on 2026-03-01

MOVE ALONG THERE

The truth is the first casualty in war. We do not yet know how many lies are being piled onto the ears of the public, but it is odds on that there are plenty out there.

Within days of the commencement of hostilities of United States Secretary of War Pete Hegseth told a news conference on that a US submarine had sunk an Iranian warship. He also claimed it was "the first sinking of an enemy ship by a torpedo since World War Two". Just one of a million crap claims to fame uttered by politician and airhead movie makers.

The crew of HMS Conqueror, a *British Churchill-class nuclear-powered fleet submarine* which served in the Royal Navy from 1971 to 1990 and was the submarine that sank the Belgrano in 1982, would like a word...

UNITED KINGDOM

CHANNEL UPDATE

The number of illegal migrants, those who have crossed the English Channel in grossly overloaded, inflatable boats, continued to increase in the first quarter of 2026, albeit not as quickly as in previous years. The reduction in numbers, year on year, is, most probably, the result of adverse weather with strong winds, together with rough seas, coupled with the increase in the size of the large unseaworthy, underpowered, inflatable boats, each carrying up to 70 passengers, sometimes more. Unexpectedly, there was also a significant change in the leadership within the UK Border Force, part of the Home Department (Department for the Interior), also known as the Home Office.

The first head of the Home Office Border Security Command, the former chairman of the UK's National Police Chiefs Council, former Chief Constable Martin Hewitt CBE QPM, was appointed by former Home Secretary, The Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP, in September 2024 and has resigned after just 18 months. *"His ability to bring together, policing, law enforcement, intelligence agencies and government bodies in response to major security threats was key to his appointment."* In the same 18 month period, September 2024 to February 2026, 59,445 illegal migrants were landed in the UK, by the UK Border Force, after rendezvousing with Border Force vessels and RNLI lifeboats in the middle of the English Channel.

Former Chief Constable and the first head of the Home Office Border Security Command, Martin Hewitt CBE QPM.



Home Office

Nevertheless, earlier this month, in March, following an intelligence led, multi-agency operation across Europe, the police in west Germany seized 11 large inflatable boats, together with engines, petrol cans and lifejackets worth over £95,000 (\$US 126,000). To give this successful operation some context, in the first 3 months of 2026 a total of 70 large inflatable boats were used to carry 4,441 illegal migrants to mid-Channel before they were landed in the UK by the Border Force and by the RNLI.

In the previous year, in the first 3 months of 2025, there were 6,642 illegal migrants landed in the UK by the Border Force and the RNLI lifeboat service. The new interim head of the Border Security Command

is the former director of the Home Office Small Boats Operational Command, retired, from the British Army, Major General Duncan Capps CBE.

Major General Duncan Capps CBE, the new, interim head of the UK's Home Office Border Security Command.



Wikipedia

Although every government has a primary responsibility, that of safeguarding its citizens and, at the same time, keeping its borders secure there is also an international obligation to protect life, both on land and at sea. Permitting anyone, irrespective of their creed or colour, men, women and children, to set sail in unseaworthy, underpowered, grossly overloaded inflatable boat, those boats which have been described as 'death traps', cannot be condoned. In an earlier edition of *'Police Aviation News'* it was recommended that the English Channel should be designated a Search and Rescue Region (SRR), supported by the governments of Belgium, France and the United Kingdom. Then, any boat deemed to be unseaworthy would be stopped at the earliest opportunity, preferably in shallow water, and its occupants would be landed at the nearest place of safety. Permitting these vessels, those carrying illegal migrants, to cross one of world's busiest shipping lanes is highly irresponsible and must be stopped immediately, before more lives are lost. Too many migrants, those attempting to cross the English Channel using an irregular route have drowned, have perishing from hypothermia, or, particularly children, have being crushed to death by others in the same boat. Successive leaders in the United Kingdom, heads of government, have used the catchy phrases, 'Stop the Boats' and 'Smash the Gangs'. The new, the recommended mantra is, 'Save Lives at Sea'!

James A Cowan MBE

EVENTS

1 April 2026 30 years of Police Aviation News.

8 April 2026 APSA Safety Stand-To Ohio State Highway Patrol, at 2829 W Dublin Granville Road, OSHP Hangar, Columbus, Ohio, 43235-2712 www.publicsafetyaviation.org

7-10 April, 2026 FIDAE, Santiago, Chile.

22-25 April 2026 AERO Friedrichshafen, Germany Air Show

27-29 May 2026 PAvCon Europe, Malaga, Spain. Working with their partners and site hosts, [World Aviation Aerial Services](http://WorldAviationAerialServices.com). The PAvCon Europe team are finalising details of the 2026 event. This will be held at a small, private, GA airport near Malaga.

Further updates and booking forms are to be found on the usual website at www.pavconeurope.eu. Block the dates in your diary now and register your interest in attending the event either as a member of the emergency services community, an individual attendee, and for more information about sponsorship and exhibiting at the show. Please share this announcement with your colleagues and other industry partners. Málaga is a busy airport (especially around the end of May), it is suggested that would be attendees book flights as soon as possible to avoid having to travel to another airport. The Networking Continues

13-17 July 2026 APSCON 2026, the 55th annual conference & expo, to be held in Broward County Convention Center, Fort. Lauderdale, Florida, USA. [APSA] www.publicsafetyaviation.org



MALAGA SPAIN

27 - 29
May
2026



When, in 1988, the original de Havilland Canada (DHC) company ceased production of the Twin Otter after 844 aircraft had been built, no-one would have predicted the latest milestone in the life of this iconic transport aircraft.

The first aircraft flew in 1965 and Viking resumed production of the DHC-6 Twin Otter in 2010 and later resurrected the DHC name which brings us to the aircraft with the c/n of 1,000. It as delivered to SATENA as HK-5469/FAC-1403.




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