

Police Aviation News

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Issue 362

June 2026



LOUISIANA: Shreveport

join with DeSota

using upgraded Kiowa



ESSEX & HERTS AA LAUNCH THEIR AOC

EDITORIAL

This edition of *Police Aviation News* is late to publication due to the editor's attendance at the PAvCon Europe conference and exhibition in Malaga, southern Spain.

It is probably the first time in 30 years that other matters held back the 'set in stone' publication date of the first of the month for PAN by such a margin of days. It was all in a good cause though, this year's event was without doubt a best overall gathering of police aviators and their suppliers that I can recall and I have not missed one yet!

Next year should prove to be equally attractive but you need to be in it to experience all the good vibes! Keep an eye out for the date and location.

There will be an illustrated report on the Malaga event in a Special Edition later this month, meanwhile I need to get this edition out to the readers!



Bryn Elliott

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FRONT COVER IMAGE: On May 7 the City of Shreveport joined with the De Sota Parish Sheriff's Office to launch another step in combatting crime within the city limits via the sky.

The partnership is an example of what can happen when agencies work together with one mission in mind — protecting communities.

DeSoto Parish Sheriff's Office acquired the Bell OH58A N355SJ 69-16230 from the Louisiana State Police for \$15,000. The Kiowa has been completely restored and appears to be equipped with updated Trakka role equipment and Macro Blue screens.

The aircraft may well have been the Louisiana State Police Kiowa N355SP that gave up its registration N355SP to the Bell 407GX i c/n 56403 the State acquired in 2024.

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LAW ENFORCEMENT

AUSTRALIA

QUEENSLAND: At last month's RotorTech 2026, the vertical flight industry exposition held at the RACV Royal Pines Resort Gold Coast, Queensland, Bell were leading on their recent success in selling a further three Bell 429 helicopters to the Queensland Police Service (QPS). The trio will mainly be assigned to northern parts of the state.

The marketing at the show was opportunistic and mostly just a photocall, the real ceremonial induction of the airframes had taken place a week earlier at the end of April at a launch event where two of the 429s appeared at Townsville, a coastal city in northeastern Queensland for a ritual blessing. The two aircraft were blessed by QPS Chaplain Artie Shepherd on April 28, marking the official launch of the aerial assets and celebrating the expanded rotary capability into North Queensland.

In 2025 alone, POLAIR significantly enhanced the QPS operational response across the Northern District, responding to more than 1,147 calls for service. From April 1, 2026, the POLAIR presence in North Queensland has now transitioned to a full operating capability, with identical aircraft and mission role equipment to the existing POLAIR aircraft in South East Queensland and trained and accredited police officers performing aircrew duties as Tactical Flight Officers. The Bell 429 helicopters are delivered under a 10-year service contract between the QPS and local service provider Meridian Helicopters.

QPS Police Air Operations Manager Chief Inspector Daniel Bust said significant operational results by POLAIR highlight the value of the capability to frontline policing across North Queensland. Bust also explained the aircraft and mission role equipment have been tailored to the unique operational requirements of POLAIR, significantly boosting the unit's capabilities.

With a total of six Bell aircraft in their fleet, QPS operates Australia's largest Bell law enforcement fleet, marking a significant milestone in enhancing public safety and operational capabilities across Queensland. In recent weeks, Bell announced that it has successfully signed purchase agreements for three Bell 429s in the United Kingdom and Estonia. Earlier in the year, Nakanihon Air Co., Ltd. (NNK), one of Japan's largest helicopter operators, has also signed a purchase agreement for two additional Bell 429 aircraft to support HEMS operations.

Editor: Queensland is one of the largest police aviation operations in Australia, in addition to the helicopters they fly light fixed wing mainly on transportation missions.

With a population of around 4.3M spread over an area of 1,852,642 square kilometres (715,309 sq. mi), only a small part of the state is served by the helicopters. In 2025 Queensland Police Service (QPS) celebrated 50 years since the inception of aviation in Queensland policing.

Policing aviation in Queensland dates back to June 1975, when the QPS acquired its first two aircrafts – former Australian Army fixed-wing tailwheel aeroplanes that had previously served in Vietnam. The operation remained fixed wing only until quite recently, although there were brief trials in 2003 and 2012.

CZECH REPUBLIC

POLICE: The Czech Ministry of Interior and Airbus Helicopters have signed a contract for 11 five-bladed H145 helicopters, marking a significant milestone in the modernisation of the Czech Republic's public safety infrastructure. These state-of-the-art multi-role aircraft will be operated by the Czech Police Aviation Service, serving as the backbone of its fleet for law enforcement, search and rescue, and emergency medical missions. The comprehensive agreement encompasses not only the delivery of the helicopters but also an extensive training and logistics package to ensure seamless operational integration.

The Czech Ministry of Interior has chosen the H145 to support its vital missions. As the Czech police currently operate the H135, it is proposed that transitioning to the H145 is the logical next step in their fleet's evolution, allowing crews and maintenance teams to benefit from a high degree of commonality (as enjoyed over the fleet life of the EC135) and ensure seamless operational readiness from day one.

The Czech Police Aviation Service is a long-standing operator of Airbus products, currently utilising a fleet that includes nine H135 family helicopters. This fleet will be replaced by the five-bladed H145, which will significantly enhance their tactical range and lifting capacity while streamlining maintenance through advanced digital systems. Prior to the arrival of the first Airbus EC135s in 2004 the police operated a mix of BO105s, some Warsaw pact helicopters and the Bell 412. It would appear that the remaining Bell's, now over 15 years old, will also be replaced.



Sixteen years ago, in 2010 the Czech Police were the host nation for the second PAVCon police aviation conference held at Pribram, south of Prague. They sent along OK-BYD one of their recently acquired Eurocopter EC135s as an exhibit. [PAN]

In total, there are more than 1,800 H145/BK117 family helicopters in service, logging a total of more than 8.5 million flight hours. Powered by two Safran Arriel 2E engines, the H145 is equipped with a full authority digital engine control (FADEC) and the Helionix digital avionics suite. It includes a high performance 4-axis autopilot, increasing safety and reducing pilot workload. Its particularly low acoustic footprint makes the H145 the quietest helicopter in its class, while its CO2 emissions are the lowest amongst its competitors. More than 200 H145 helicopters are in service around the world in public service and law enforcement missions.

CONFERENCE COURSES: JULY 13-15 | EXHIBIT HALL: JULY 15-17 | CONFERENCE CLASSES: JULY 16-17



SOUTH AFRICA

POLICE SERVICE: We do not often cover day-to-day operations in *Police Aviation News*, the usual fare is new equipment, new resources and training and new people.

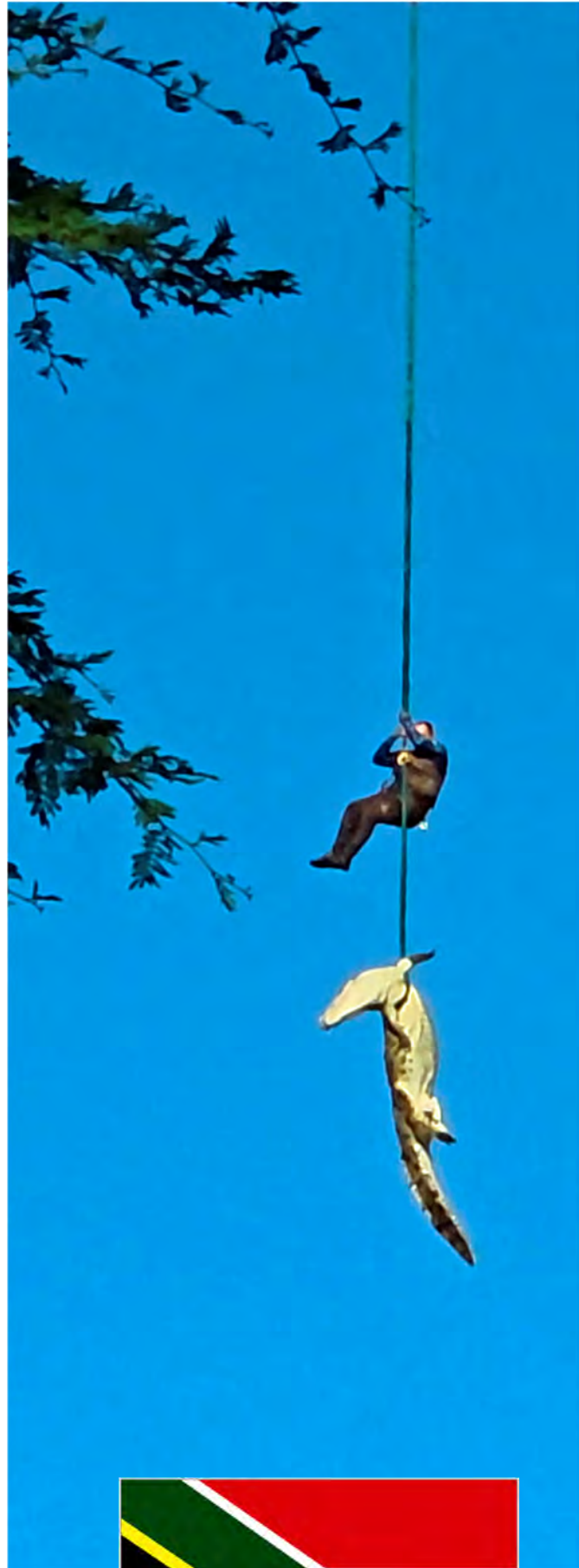
A diversion from that track this month with a storyline from South Africa that might be expected to rarely occur in the annals of airborne law enforcement and is certainly one for the career scrapbook.

On May 5 a police officer was recalling the time he was lowered from a AS350 helicopter into a crocodile-infested river in South Africa as part of an effort to recover human remains. The officer, Captain Johan Potgieter, was tasked with capturing a thousand-pound (500kg) crocodile suspected of eating a businessman who had been swept away by floodwater. The suspect crocodile was found lying on an island and looking enlarged enough to have recently eaten a substantial meal. It was suspected that the meal was likely to have included the missing human.

The man's car had become stranded attempting to cross a low bridge in the flooded Komati River. By the time the police got to the scene, it was empty, leading them to suspect he had been swept away by the water.

Drones and helicopters were used to in the search mission which led police to a small island where a number of crocodiles lay in the sun, one they believed had eaten the man. The suspect crocodile was shot dead by Potgieter's colleagues before he was called but death was not confirmed before the officer was winched down to the beast to retrieve its carcass. A helicopter lifted both the thankfully dead crocodile and the officer from the island. The presence of other crocodiles, hippos and rocks in the river, meant it was too dangerous to use a boat or canoe to recover the body of the reptile.

Since the operation, remains have been found inside the 4.5m (15ft) and 500kg (1,100lb) crocodile. DNA tests are underway to confirm their identity. It seems that the crocodile was regularly snacking on humans as body parts and shoes from more than one source were found inside the reptile. [SAPS]



Captain Johan Potgieter. [SAPS]

UNITED KINGDOM

NATIONAL: More good news for the National Police Air Service with the announcement that two further Airbus Helicopter H135 helicopters have been ordered through the Home Office as part of replacing the ageing fleet. This takes the order total to nine new aircraft to be delivered role equipped from next year. This represents nearly half of the rotary wing fleet scheduled for replacement.



So far NPAS have taken delivery of just one aircraft for pilot training. The first role equipped airframe will appear for service delivery next year after an extended role fit.

The current leader of NPAS, Ch. Supt. Fiona Gaffney gave an attention-grabbing presentation to the recent PAvCon Europe event in Malaga, Spain and in that she set out the future aims of NPAS. Much of the content was familiar or assumed but there was much detail that broke new ground. Read the forthcoming Special Edition of PAN on the event to update your knowledge later this month!

WILTSHIRE: The additional new aircraft orders did not go down well with one member of the NPAS Strategic Board

The current Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for the county of Wiltshire and the city Swindon, Philip Wilkinson, is responsible for overseeing Wiltshire Police, setting the local police and crime plan, and holding the Chief Constable accountable on behalf of the public. He is scheduled to be in post until 2028 when all PCCs are likely to be abolished. He also serves on the sizeable NPAS Strategic Board representing all five West and South West police forces.

When the announcement of the additional orders for helicopters was made public, he quit his role on the Strategic Board because of the amount of money being spent on helicopters.

Wilkinson stated that he thought the new helicopters risked "a serious misuse of public money" and more should be spent on drones and advances in artificial intelligence (AI).

The first dedicated police drone's unit was launched in 2017, and the Home Office said to date £11M has been spent on multiple police drones.



ALMONDSBURY: On a lighter note, a film crew from NATS was busy in April and May filming at the Bristol base of NPAS and the Great West Air Ambulance. The filming was linked to an upcoming case study on a maritime SAR exercise delivered as part of the NPAS BVLOS trials in 2025.



The filming featured David Walters Head of Futures and Innovation (above) and Richard Ellis of NATS reflecting on partnership working with ATC and comparing that with real operational experience.

MAINTENANCE: Not entirely related to the greatly welcomed prospect of new helicopters in England and Wales was the message put out by Babcock the AOC supplier of Airbus Helicopters H135 helicopters to Police Scotland.

Babcock are boasting an availability rate of 98% for their far newer Scottish contract H135 fleet. Scotland lease their one helicopter and its back up and that offers them a far newer aircraft. It is many years since the venerable NPAS fleet were able to rely upon a five-day turn-around for 135 maintenance.

For the month of April, NPAS released figures that stated that their aircraft were available for deployment 77.1% of the time, it was at least an improvement on



Police Scotland 135 [Babcock]



A visit to the Essex and Herts Air Ambulance for their AOC launch on May 14 provided an opportunity for a new view on the adjoining police pad of Hangar 10 at North Weald. As well as the local response helicopter (G-POLD) NPAS keep one of their training helicopters in the large hangar. This is G-POLU which started life with Merseyside and spent many years with the police in Norway. Coincidentally, North Weald was the wartime base for the Royal Norwegian Air Force in 1942-45 and is seen as their ancestral home [PAN]

March. NPAS do highlight that due to routine maintenance, engineering requirements and the demands of operating an aviation fleet, achieving 100% availability is not possible. They include human factors like pilotage in their numbers where Babcock probably do not. Nonetheless the Babcock figures for their fleet show what can be achieved in terms of a new aircraft with the right contractual limits in place.

Engineering related unavailability reduced to 7.8%, reflecting improved maintenance performance during the month. Pilot related unavailability also decreased during April.

Response times

In April, NPAS received 4,060 calls for service, the highest monthly total since March 2019, reflecting a significant increase in demand for aerial support.

46.9% of calls were attended, higher than the previous month, while the decline rate fell to 12.9%, reflecting improved operating conditions and increased capacity to deploy aircraft.

Across the year, 87.3% of NPAS taskings have resulted in a positive outcome*, meaning the operational objective set by the requesting force was achieved. This includes activities such as searching defined areas, supporting pursuits, and providing real time aerial intelligence.

Crews continued to deliver strong operational outcomes, supporting forces across England and Wales in locating vulnerable people, suspects and vehicles. The acceptance of two crew working greatly assists modern flight availability but years ago it would be a no-fly decision.

The NPAS figures are somewhat depressed by the inclusion of the EC145 fleet which was built to a different (older BCARS) maintenance standard than the EC135 and even when new could not turn around an annual in five days. Generally, the old NPAS airframes can expect to be off-line for a month but other factors including the non-availability of spares in a power by the hour contract can have a very negative effect on outcomes.

It is not yet known whether the new fleet will return to the original guaranteed spares provision of power by the hour. Airbus Helicopters offers its HCare Services agreements to allow operators to pay a fixed, predictable hourly rate for each flight hour to cover spare parts, maintenance, and repairs, drastically reducing unexpected downtime and inventory management costs. Some years ago, the NPAS management withdrew from that option as a cost saving measure, and it is fair to say they have paid the price in airframe downtime ever since. See the PAVCon edition for the update on that!

POLICE CONFERENCE

In Malaga, Spain the leader of the NPAS operation Fiona Gaffney MSc gave a presentation to the conference. Immediately prior to her appearance she also posted both a personal update and a mention of her intention to be in Malaga.

The Update on Linked-In covered most of the salient points of her past year.

“Seems like months since I wrote an update. Time passes so quickly but what a great few months it has been for NPAS.

“I continue to build great relationships with a whole range of people. From our forces through the National Strategic board and Independent advisory group as well as one to one briefing with the regional Chief Constables and base visits by the regional PCCs.

“Regular and productive conversations with those maintaining our aircraft and delivering our fleet replacement Airbus Helicopters and Gama Aviation.

“Growing our partnerships with some great people in NATS, UK Home Office, Civil Aviation Authority and BlueLight Commercial.

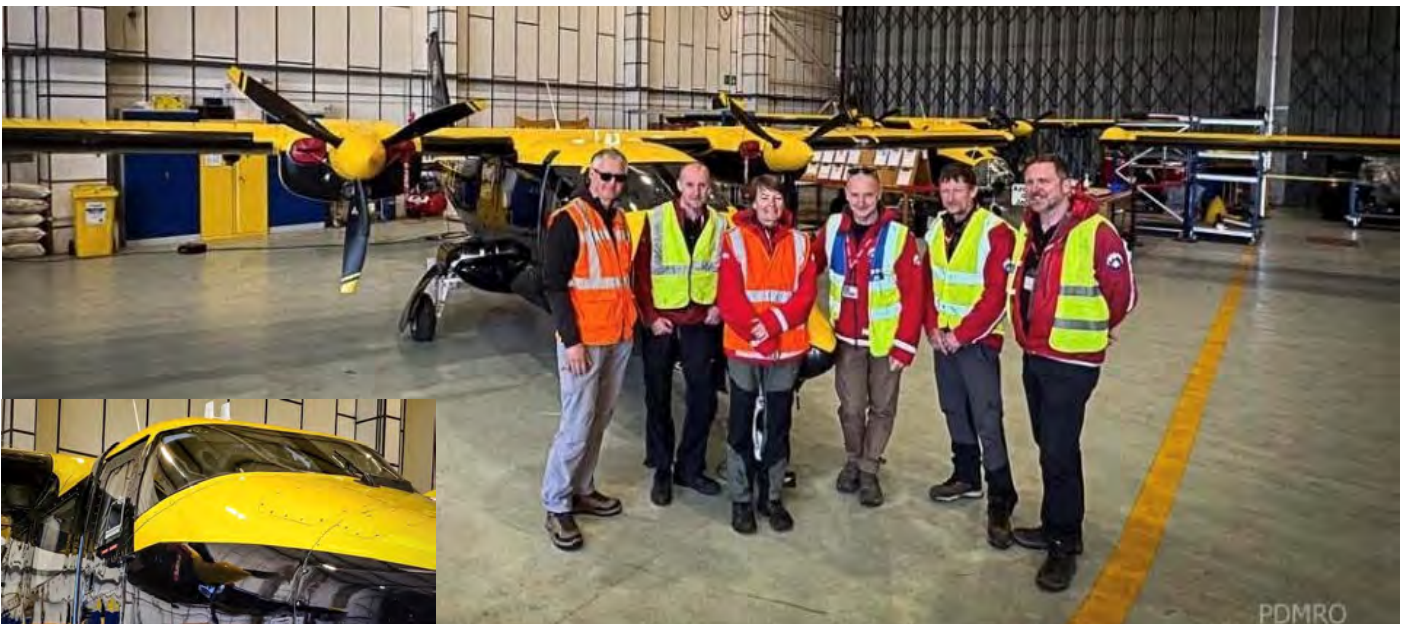
“I have also had the opportunity to visit and learn from a peers across Police Scotland, Police Service Northern Ireland and An Garda Siochana and look forward to the ongoing conversations across our different operating models.

“Lots to consider with the NPCC team but nothing more important than how we move our people into a different organisation and ensure NPAS continues to deliver its fantastic operational business.

“I am back on another round of base visits to make sure I continue to stay in tune with and understand our operational challenges and opportunities. I’ve also made sure I am up to date with my First Aid and PPST just in case I ever need to leap from a helicopter!!

“Of course, I could not leave this post without acknowledging all the work that has gone into securing the funding for an additional 2 aircraft meaning our fleet replacement programme is now 9 EC135 T3 with fantastic mission equipment and the most advance technology available. They will bring so much greater reliability and availability, just what we need as we move towards a blended aviation response fit for the future of policing. Thank you to BLC, Home office and the forces support in achieving this.

“Definitely a job like no other!!” [Fiona Gaffney MSc - Edited]



Although the last month has been very much orientated towards the new NPAS rotary wing fleet, mention has been made of the other resource—the fixed wing Vulcanair P68R fleet based at East Midlands Airport.

These images were posted by a visiting group of drone pilots from the Peak District *Mountain Rescue Organisation (PDMRO)*. They consist of seven volunteer mountain rescue teams, one cave rescue team, and search dogs all dedicated to saving lives in the challenging landscapes of the Peak District close to the fixed wing base.

During the visit, there were discussions on safely and effective operations alongside each other, including deconfliction procedures as both NPAS and mountain rescue teams are increasingly deployed to the same incidents.

UNITED STATES

CALIFORNIA: The Riverside County Sheriff's Office has now taken delivery of a 2025 Pilatus PC-12/47 "Spectre" N893RC c/n 2435.

The department acquired a Pilatus PC-12 NGX airplane and Airbus H125/H145 helicopters as part of an \$18.46M acquisition approved in April 2023.

The PC-12 NGX is used for rapid transportation of investigative teams, search and rescue operations, and aerial mapping, allowing for quick response over a large geographic area. The Pilatus is notable for its capability to land on unimproved surfaces, including desert terrain.

These acquisitions are part of a broader expansion, which includes plans for a new, permanent 20,000-square-foot hangar at March Air Reserve Base to accommodate the growing fleet that includes an Airbus H145 N995RC (Rescue 9) acquired in 2021 and the latest H125 fleet renewal acquired in 2024.



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The Chino Police Department in San Bernardino County, California is budgeted to have 127 sworn officers, supported by an additional 81 professional staff members.

In November 2024 they ordered a Bell 505 helicopter and took a brief delivery of it at Piney Flats, Tennessee a year later before sending it off for completion.

The brand-new Bell 505 helicopter touched down for the first time at its new home at the Chino Airport on Friday, November 7 to be greeted by police and local officials including the Chino Mayor Eunice Ulloa. "This helicopter will transform how our Police Department enhances public safety to ensure our community remains a wonderful place to live. Congratulations to the Chino Police Department, and I can't wait to see our new helicopter in the Chino sky!"

The aircraft arrived fully painted as N710PD c/n 65651 before being sent off to Hangar One Avionics in Carlsbad to be outfitted with law enforcement technology and equipment that meets the Chino Police Department's needs. This process was scheduled to take up to six months.

The need for a police helicopter was first identified in 2001 to address Chino's growth and ensure the continued delivery of high-quality police services. Funding was made possible through \$2.7M in Law Enforcement Development Impact Fees (DIF) and a \$1M grant from San Bernardino County Supervisor. No general fund monies were used to purchase the helicopter.

The aircraft was delivered to the PD at Piney Flats in November and sent off for completion with Hangar One Avionics. It was recently completed with the role fit which includes a Trakka Systems suite of mapping computer, camera and searchlight. Additional avionics installed on this aircraft included an AEM audio system and PA, Macro-Blue Inc. 17-inch monitor, Ericsson cellular modem/router, Avmatrix-ME encoder, Technisonic Communications tactical radio and a few Applied Avionics annunciators.

LOUISIANA: On May 7 the City of Shreveport joined with the DeSota Parish Sheriff's Office to launch another step in combatting crime within the city limits via the sky.

Chief Wayne Smith and Sheriff, Jayson Richardson unveiled the new law enforcement helicopter that will help patrol the skies over both the City of Shreveport and DeSoto Parish.

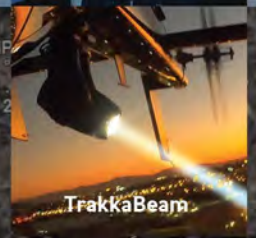
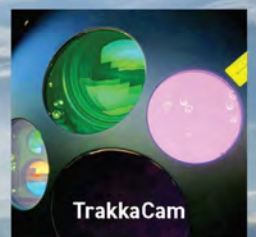


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This partnership is a powerful example of what can happen when agencies work together with one mission in mind — protecting our communities. The state-of-the-art aircraft is equipped with advanced technology designed to proactively combat crime, assist officers on the ground, support search operations, and provide critical aerial support during major incidents.

The DeSoto Parish Sheriff's Office acquired the Bell OH58A N355SJ 69-16230 from the Louisiana State Police for \$15,000. The Kiowa has been completely restored and appears to be equipped with updated Trakka role equipment and Macro Blue screens.

The aircraft may well have been the Louisiana State Police Kiowa N355SP that gave up its registration N355SP to the Bell 407GX c/n 56403 the State acquired in 2024.

SOUTH CAROLINA: Beaufort County's small fleet of helicopters is getting a crucial high-tech upgrade later this year, Sheriff P.J. Tanner says. The department has made a down payment to purchase a used Bell 505 Jet Ranger X for \$2.45M, the sheriff said. Unlike the current helicopters operated by the police, the 2019 model has an autopilot system and will come outfitted with an extensive role fit.

The Bell 505 will replace one of police's two Bell OH-58 Kiowa helicopters, which were manufactured in 1971 and supplies on loan by the U.S. Army as part of the Pentagon's 1033 Program, which provides surplus military equipment to state and local law enforcement.

The department will buy the helicopter using part of a proposed \$4M allotment from the county's general fund. That amount will also go toward refurbishing a "dilapidated" hangar on Lady's Island that currently houses the agency's two older helicopters.

Members of the Beaufort County Council were given a document with a list of equipment the Bell 505 will carry.

Externally the Bell will carry:
 TrakkaCam TC300 Gen 2 EO/IR
 TL360 searchlight
 The interior fit will include
 Macro Blue 17" monitor
 Churchill moving map and keyboard
 Starlink video uplink
 PAC45 audio system
 NVG compatible
 Garmin G600H 2-axis autopilot



Officials have already approved \$500,000 for the purchase as part of a capital improvement project, according to county spokesperson Hannah Nichols, and an additional \$1.95M budget amendment to fund the helicopter was passed during its first reading before councilmembers. Funding for the hangar project is expected to be proposed as part of the county's 2027 budget.

The current fleet includes N908BC 70-20470 acquired in 2014 and N930BC 70-15606 which joined in May 2018. Beaufort County Sheriff has 200 sworn officers backed up by 90 civil staff. [The Island Packet/PAR]

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TEXAS: Bell Textron Inc. announced the delivery of the Texas Department of Public Safety’s (DPS) new Bell 407 at the end of last month. This delivery comes on the heels of an announcement made during the Verticon event in the USA earlier this year highlighting the purchase order of the new Bell.

Once again Bell highlighted the nearly 60-year relationship they have with Texas DPS, but there is as yet not clear reason why they have switched from an all Airbus AS350 fleet to again operating the Bell. The Bell is marginally cheaper to acquire when compared with the H125. The new Bell 407GX_i will join the department’s only other in-service Bell, a 412EP after the completion of its role fit.

The helicopter will be stationed in Austin and will soon begin providing airborne law enforcement support across Central Texas, DPS said, continuing aerial assistance for partner agencies and communities served by the department’s Aircraft Operations Division.

DPS said the helicopter is slated for a major technology upgrade by the end of 2026. The planned improvements include integrated police radio systems, a high-definition thermal imaging camera, an augmented reality mapping system, a powerful searchlight and satellite connectivity to support mission-critical operations such as video downlink.

Editor: In 1967, Texas DPS began their helicopter operations with two Bell 47G-5, the first Bell aircraft model produced in Texas. These aircraft proved to be effective in performing manhunts, search and rescue operations, and ensuring the safety of the land across the state of Texas. In 1969, the department added five additional Bell aircraft: three Bell 206 Jet Rangers and two Bell 47G-4As. Over the years, the department went on to operate additional Bell models, including the Bell 206B, Bell 206L, and much later, the former Houston PD Bell 412EP. The new 407 is the first new purchase from Bell in over 30 years.





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ITALY

SOUTH TYROL: Avencis have delivered an Airbus H145 to Heli-South Tyrol Air for HEMS operations across the challenging alpine environment of South Tyrol. Also known as Alto Adige or Südtirol, it is the northernmost autonomous province of Italy.

The delivery follows the renewal of an Avencis contract with its South Tyrolean partner HELI-South Tyrol Air Rescue to provide rapid response air rescue in the challenging region.



This helicopter is the first of three new aircraft set to support the operation. Avencis now operates 12 five-blade and a total of 43 H145 helicopters. In Italy alone Avencis operates 21 H145s. [Avencis]

NEW ZEALAND

SEARCH AND RESCUE SERVICES: Three Airbus H145 D3 helicopters have been delivered to Search and Rescue Services, thereby supporting the continued expansion of New Zealand's emergency air ambulance capabilities.

This project also reflects SRSL's long-term investment in operational excellence, including the development of advanced training capabilities at its Taupō centre. [Rotortrade]

PAKISTAN

BALUCHISTAN: Pakistan's largest province by area, rich in natural resources, diverse landscapes and cultural heritage, yet with a population under 15M it is sparsely populated. It is located in the west bordering on Iran and Afghanistan.

In April it was announced that the local officials/government had launched Baluchistan's first ever Air Ambulance for the people of Baluchistan.

Editor The aircraft illustrated is shown to be a Cessna 208B Grand Caravan PB1231 and it seems to have a long history of service in the region.

Back in 2007 it seems to have been delivered to the Baluchistan Police as AP-BPB with a construction number of 208B 1231. What appears to be the same aircraft was photographed being operated by the Pakistan Air Force in 2016 as 1231. The Pakistan Air Force and Army have bought and operated several Caravans in the general logistics role and as air ambulances over the years. Now, ten years later, it has become PB1231 as a civilian air ambulance



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SLOVENIA

MINISTRY OF HEALTH: The Slovenian Ministry of Health and the Ministry of the Interior have approved the graphic design of new helicopters for helicopter emergency medical assistance (HEM). This is an important step toward establishing a modern, comprehensively organised HEM system in Slovenia.

The graphic design, prepared by Leonardo in accordance with the tender documentation, ensures good visibility of the helicopter and clearly reflects its intended use for the implementation of HNMP. These are the first two dedicated helicopters in Slovenia, entirely dedicated to performing these tasks.

The helicopters will be equipped with a modern medical interior, enabling optimal patient care during flight and the safe, efficient work of the medical team. The procurement procedures for portable medical equipment are already underway, while activities are also underway to train crews and establish the infrastructure for the new bases.

The establishment of the HNMP system represents a significant upgrade of the existing emergency medical assistance (EMA) system. The system complements the operation of mobile EMS teams, especially in areas where access times are too long due to geographical, traffic, or infrastructure constraints. In these cases, modern, well-equipped helicopters will enable significantly faster arrival at the patient. This improves EMS team access times, directly leading to better clinical outcomes. [Ministry of Health/Leonardo]



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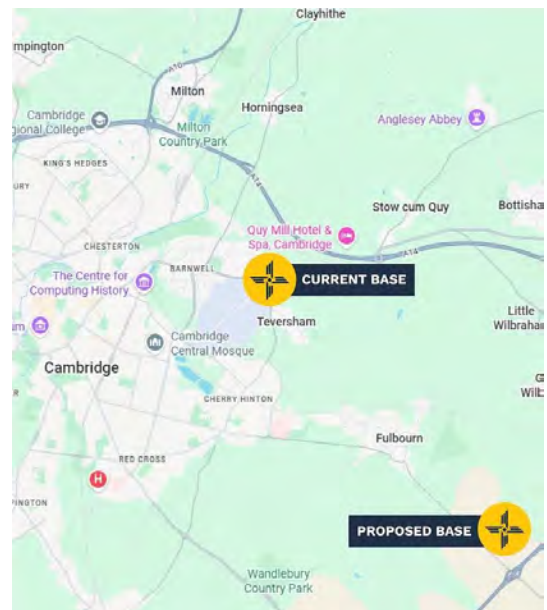
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UNITED KINGDOM

EAST ANGLIA: In the past month the planning permission for the relocation and building of a new Cambridgeshire Air Base at New Shardelowes Farm in Fulbourn was approved by South Cambridgeshire District Council at a planning committee meeting in April.

The new base is strategically located within 700 metres (2,000 feet) of the A11, the major arterial road provides rapid access to the south, north and east. Additionally, Balsham Road offers direct connectivity to Cambridge. Response times are comparable to current Cambridge base in terms of drive and flight times and associated population coverage. A ten-minute flight time can reach a population of 1,206,000 and a 20-minute drive time can reach a population of 276,000.

The site has been audited by Babcock, the aviation partner to EAAA, and is highly compatible with aviation. For the Airbus H145 D3 helicopter, which they operate, the site can accommodate a Final Approach and Take-Off area (FATO) which allows them to perform a class one clear area departure, enabling safer flying. It's also been assessed as being highly compatible with Point-in-Space (PinS) approach, which would allow them to utilise GPS-based navigation for precise landing and take-off in challenging weather conditions.



The ten-acre site will allow the building of a new base to the specification they need, futureproof and safeguard the operation. There are no plans for immediate expansion of the current service from Cambridge Airport (7am–7pm by air, 7pm–7am by road), but the situation is always under review. Flying 24/7 from Cambridge isn't an immediate plan, but the capability will be built in in case it is needed. Any future change would depend on clear evidence of need and the resources and funding to sustain it long term as well as an agreed local plan.

The charity is now focussing on the need to raise the £8.2M needed to build the new base and secure the future of lifesaving care in the region.

East Anglian Air Ambulance serves an area roughly two-thirds the size of Wales with a population of almost 3.2 million people. The charity currently operates two Airbus H145 helicopters from two strategically located bases at Cambridge Airport and Norwich Airport. The locations enable the HEMS crews to fly to anywhere in their area within 25 minutes. The charity also provides a mutual aid back up service to adjoining charity HEMS.



ESSEX & HERTS: As reported briefly in the January issue of *Police Aviation News*, Essex & Herts Air Ambulance (EHAA) was awarded its own Air Operator Certificate (AOC) by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), in December 2025. This marked a significant milestone for the charity and secured its operational independence for its life-saving work. Other UK air ambulance charities, including Devon, London, Thames Valley and Yorkshire have also achieved their own AOCs and at least two others are currently working towards gaining the same status.

It is now six months on from the CAA granting the AOC to EHAA and with a CAA audit looming it was time to officially celebrate the December milestone with a ceremony attended by staff, supporters and the me-

dia. The gathering took place at the North Weald Airfield base of the charity on May 14 in typically British weather ranging from hailstones to bright sunshine. For the event both of the charity's Leonardo AW169 helicopters (G-EHEM and G-EHAT) were based at North Weald with newer one (G-EHAT) on standby for calls.



Among other positive aspects, the AOC facilitates the charity operating its own aircraft and directly employing its pilots. The EHAA AOC is specifically tailored for Helicopter Emergency Medical Services (HEMS), which recognises the unique operational requirements of air ambulance missions.

Securing the AOC follows three years of hard work and preparation by the charity and means it now has full operational control of its aviation activities from scheduling & co-ordinating flights to training crew and maintaining the aircraft, previously this was outsourced to an AOC holder that added significant profit margins to each element of the aviation product they provided. Despite the high set-up costs of getting the AOC, EHAA can now rightly claim to be now saving a significant sum. The award of the AOC signals that EHAA has the necessary personnel, assets, and systems in place to ensure the highest safety standards.

The main work was started some three years ago and has involved most of the staff and trustees of the charity in getting the standards in place and compiling the extensive paperwork. The Operations Manual itself runs to 1,300 pages and that is just one document.

Where the original set up utilised leased aircraft and pilots provided by the AOC holder the pilots are now directly employed and meet new tighter guidelines. Gone are the floating pilots who might have several places of work and no real connection with the locality and the charity now they are known entities who have a personal interest in the operation. Knowing the person in the driving seat is a primary assurance for the medical staff who put their lives in the hands of the pilot on every mission.

In selecting the directly employed pilots for the charity under the AOC the Chief Pilot Andy Moorhouse selected individuals with the required piloting skills but also looked out for some important interpersonal skills – dealing with the public and promoting the charity in a positive manner.

After arriving at the scene of an emergency the medical staff depart and leave the pilot to look after the helicopter. On occasion this is to ensure it is not damaged but usually it is dealing positively with the crowds of well-wishers that the helicopter inevitably attracts. The right reaction and words to the often-repeated questions from an eager and enquiring crowd. It is all part of the positive messaging of the fund raising that sustains the operation. Contrast the European charity air ambulance model with that in the USA where the customer dollar breaks many families – or leaves the patient untreated. Like all the others in England and Wales, EHAA prides itself in providing a service that is free at the point of delivery.

The AOC was put in place by the current Aviation Director Bill Long who continued the work of the now retired Operations Director Cliff Gale the former UEO of Sussex Police air support (1998-2006) who had guided the charity for 16 years after leaving the police. He finally retired last year as the charity's Special Projects Advisor.

According to CEO Mark Jarman-Howe, the new status means Essex & Herts Air Ambulance can be even more responsive to local needs. It also means the charity will employ its pilots directly providing more stability in a competitive market.

Bill Long, Aviation Director at Essex & Herts Air Ambulance, said: "Obtaining our AOC is both an exciting achievement and a significant responsibility. Our team has worked exceptionally hard to meet the CAA's stringent requirements, and this success reflects their professionalism and dedication. With our own certificate, we now have the operational control and flexibility to ensure Essex & Herts Air Ambulance remains resilient, responsive, and ready to serve our communities when they need us most. This should be a source of pride for everyone at Essex & Herts Air Ambulance and an important step in securing our future as a life-saving service."

Essex & Herts Air Ambulance will work in close partnership with Sloane Helicopters, at Sywell, Northampton, who now provide maintenance services for the charity's fleet, and Leonardo, manufacturer of its AW169 aircraft, to ensure the highest standards of safety and operational readiness. As with all the UK HEMS the helicopter service is backed up with response cars for those periods when the helicopters are not available or the weather precludes flying.



To recap, after a review of the application in early December 2025 the CAA granted the North Weald base its AOC on Christmas Eve 2025 and Andy Moorehouse 'volunteered' to undertake the first operational day on Christmas Day. They were needed and flew one mission. The AOC was extended to the smaller leased base at Earls Colne near Colchester on Good Friday 2026. Again, Andy Moorehouse flew the first day.

Looking to the future, the charity has no immediate plans to acquire an additional Leonardo AW169 helicopter to add to the fleet. Spare aircraft are supplied through Sloane Helicopters as required. The two in service still have low hours, the 2017 G-EHEM c/n 69049 had flown 2,274 hours in April and the newer 2023 G-EHAT c/n 69167 still has under 700 hours.

As a charity, Essex & Herts Air Ambulance relies fully on donations from people and organisations to keep its helicopters flying, to find out more or to donate, please visit ehaat.org

Editor: The move of a significant number of UK air ambulances from holding contracts with AOC holders to setting up their own looks likely to place some of the former providers in difficulty.

Thirty years ago, UK emergency services operators with their own AOC were unknown. The police and air ambulance took out lease packages that covered aircraft, pilots and maintenance with the extras including hangarage and crew accommodation in portable buildings or existing structures an added item on the invoice. Back then several companies thrived on the business. Although the names have changed somewhat over the years they remain in the background. The larger organisations included such as Police Aviation Services/Medical Aviation Services/Specialist Aviation Services based at Staverton who were taken over by the 'upstart' operation of Gama Aviation when the finances became tricky, Bond based next to them morphed into Babcock and of the original players only Sloane Helicopters trade under the same banner as they did in the 1990s. Several other companies undertake the AOC work for individual air ambulances, the customers often being just a one-off arrangement. As stated, several air ambulances have now taken up their own AOCs, and the police have done that for a long time now.

All this reduces the opportunity for work other than role fits and maintenance, and profit margins are under threat and each of these suppliers will necessarily have to change their operation to suit.

www.PoliceAviationNews.com
A wealth of on-line resources



HAMPSHIRE & ISLE OF WIGHT: Hampshire & Isle of Wight Air Ambulance has received a major £100,000 grant towards its new airbase near Southampton Airport.


The funding boost has come from the Bradbury Foundation, Hong Kong, and will support the creation of the charity's new 'Bradbury Training Room,' a dedicated facility that will allow doctors, dispatchers, pilots and paramedics to practise vital emergency response skills through realistic simulation training designed to mirror the high-pressure incidents crews face daily.

The space will also be used for specialist major incident exercises and joint training sessions with ambulance services, NHS Trusts and partner organisations across the region.

Since its launch, the appeal has so far raised £3.5M, thanks entirely to the generous support of members of the public, local organisations, community groups, and trusts and foundations, including the grant from the Bradbury Foundation.

After more than 19 years based at the airfield adjoining the famous Thruxton motor racing circuit the helicopter has moved to Southampton.

The new Southampton-based airbase is within touching distance of completion and will drastically reduce response times, ensuring critically ill Islanders receive the medical aid they need in record breaking times. Some seventy percent of Hampshire and Isle of Wight Air Ambulance emergencies are to the south of the region: Winchester, Southampton, Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight – a considerable distance from the current airbase in Thruxton, Andover. Further information can be found at www.hiowaa.org/appeal.



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FLIR.COM/380X

YORKSHIRE: Following a concerning incident where objects were thrown at one of their helicopters during take-off by an unsupervised child, Yorkshire Air Ambulance (YAA) has launched a new safety campaign - because the consequences don't bear thinking about.

YAA has released a new public safety film, *How To Stay Safe Around Yorkshire Air Ambulance Helicopters*, aimed at educating the public on how to act safely when helicopters land at incidents across the region.

Featuring members of YAA's aviation team, the campaign highlights the real dangers surrounding helicopters during take-off and landing, including powerful rotor blades, intense downwash, restricted crew visibility and the growing risk posed by drones and objects being operated or thrown near aircraft.

While the Charity understands that seeing a helicopter land can be exciting and attract attention, crews are reminding the public that these are highly controlled and safety-critical operations where a split-second distraction or unsafe behaviour could have devastating consequences.

The new campaign film also urges members of the public to be mindful when taking photographs or videos at incidents, asking people to respect the privacy and dignity of patients and families who may be experiencing some of the worst moments of their lives. In recent years it has become normal for all those attending serious emergency services injury incidents to seek out volunteers and practitioners to shield the casualties in public spaces from prying eyes and camera lenses and consequent exposure on social media.

The YAA plans for a new, purpose-built Northern Air Support Unit at Skipton Bridge near Thirsk, continue. This will be the first charity owned property providing their service – the main base at Nostell Priory near Wakefield is owned by the National Trust and the current northern base at RAF Topcliffe is owned by the Ministry of Defence. That base provides the flight crews limited facilities located in aged military buildings. The YAA has operated out of the Topcliffe air traffic control tower for over a decade.

Following years of careful planning and collaboration, the new site, just 3.5 miles from Topcliffe, will offer the charity further security. It will reflect the facilities at Nostell Air Support Unit and provide a permanent home in the North of the region.

UNITED STATES

MINNESOTA: Although it is not unknown across the world of emergency air ambulances in rural Minnesota, they are lauding the introduction of new medical techniques in their HEMS.

Sudden cardiac arrest happens without warning, people collapsing at home, at work, on the roadside with a heart that stops completely in minutes. Every moment that follows matters.

Even the fastest emergency response can't always close the gap between a medical crisis in a remote location and advanced care available in hospital.

For Minnesotans a new programme is looking to change that. For the first time, a specialised cardiac care team is being flown by helicopter from M Health Fairview University of Minnesota Medical Centre (UMMC) in Minneapolis to rural communities across Minnesota. Instead of waiting for patients to be transported to advanced care, the care comes to them.

Extracorporeal membrane oxygenation, or ECMO, is a form of life support that temporarily takes over the work of the heart and lungs, giving care teams a chance to identify and fix the underlying heart problem that first caused cardiac arrest. It can dramatically improve survival odds, but it's a race against the clock, beginning ECMO within minutes can vastly change the survival chances of the patient.

Until now, patients in rural Minnesota had to be transported to Minneapolis before ECMO could begin, losing critical minutes along the way. Fairview's LifeLink III helicopter ECMO programme based on a fleet of Philadelphia built Leonardo AW119 Koala helicopters seeks to boost the chances for the patient.

When a cardiac arrest call comes in, a helicopter carrying an ECMO expert and specialized equipment departs from Minneapolis, to meet up with local emergency teams bringing the patient to the nearest participating hospital or in the back of the road ambulance. Once stabilised, the patient is transported to Minneapolis for ongoing care.



AW117 Koala helicopter ECMO 01: During a practice drill, care teams rehearse rapid patient loading for transport. The ECMO helicopter deploys experts and equipment from M Health Fairview University of Minnesota Medical Center to reach patients experiencing sudden cardiac arrest in rural Minnesota, improving access to lifesaving care and survival outcomes.

The operation currently serves three locations: from M Health Fairview University Northland Medical Centre in Princeton, from M Health Fairview Lakes Medical Centre in Wyoming, and Ridgeview Emergency Medical Services, with plans already in place to expand.

The helicopter operation extends a model already working in the Twin Cities. Fairview’s Minnesota Mobile Resuscitation Consortium has been delivering mobile ECMO care across the cities using ground transport since its launch.

FIRE FRANCE

HERAULT: The Aerial Forest Fire Fighting Unit of the SDIS of the Hérault Department of southern France is changing hands. It is now the DELTA 2 Company of the Candillargues (also located in Hérault) that will operate AT-802Fs leased in Chile.



GREECE

NEW SEASON: As part of the build-up for the new Fire Season in the western Mediterranean Sea Helicopter Express has delivered two Sikorsky/Ericksen S-64E Skycrane firefighting helicopters N154AC and N218AC to Greece ready to deal with wildfires around Athens. [Babak Taghvaei]

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Police Aviation News includes materials produced for it by Ian J Commin of Insight Design of North Burnham, Slough SL1 6DS. This includes the banner titles and the PAvCon logo. In addition from time to times images specifically altered by Insight Design and others but originally produced for McAlpine Helicopters [now Airbus Helicopters UK], Oxford, will appear with permission of the original owner. In some cases it may not be possible to indicate the source of this material directly associated with the images used, or such information may have been lost. Such images may be marked 'File' or 'PAR Collection'.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

EUROPE

As of 2024, non-EU citizens make up 6.4% of the total population. Out of the 449.3 million EU inhabitants in 2024, 28.9 million were non-EU citizens. There are countries outside the EU, such as Switzerland, Australia and Iceland, that have a much larger proportion of foreign-born residents

UNITED KINGDOM

CHANNEL REPORT

This short report covers the month of May, with half the month, 16 days, unsuitable for crossing the English Channel in the current generation of large, unseaworthy, underpowered and grossly overloaded inflatable boats. This was due to adverse weather, with winds in excess of 10 knots. In the other 15 days, 2,726 illegal migrants were landed at Dover from 41 boats, an average of 66 migrants per boat.

On the weekend, 22-25, a long weekend including a public holiday in the UK, in perfect weather with a light breeze and a calm sea, just under 1,000 (989) migrants were landed from 14 boats in 4 days. The number of boats used on each day were, 6, 4, 3 and 1, which may have been the result of a shortage of boats. Alternatively, this may have been the result of more determined action, by the security services, in Belgium and France, to 'stop the boats'.

Illegal migrants continue to cross the English Channel in large, grossly overloaded inflatable boats, to enter the UK without permission.



Facebook/InfoMigrants

A significant milestone occurred on Friday, 8 May, 'Victory in Europe (VE) Day' in the UK, when the total number of migrants arriving in the UK without permission, crossing the English Channel in small boats, exceeded 200,000 (200,013 since the first 299 migrants arrived in in small boats in 2018. The current total for 2026 is 9,142, which is 38% fewer than in the same 5 months, January to May 2025. A further indication that action by the security services in Europe may, at last, be taking effect.

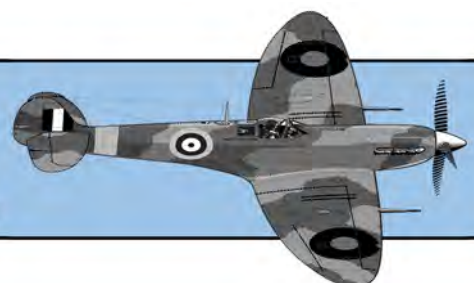
A more detailed analysis, covering the first 6 months of 2026, will appear in the July edition of *Police Aviation News*.

James A Cowan MBE

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SOLENT AIRPORT: The new Bristow SAR Training Centre at Solent Airport has opened with a 4m pool with wave generation, helicopter simulator hung from an overhead crane hoist.

Built by Mildren Construction Limited Hurn, Christchurch, Dorset, Construction started in 2024 adjacent to Broom Way on the east side of the airport.

No details have been released by the operator, but it does not seem to include a crew escape dunker facility. The section of simulated helicopter fuselage is more focussed towards winch operator and winchman training. Set up to simulate rough sea rescue, cliff rescue, moving deck rescue and general water rescue.

Solent Airport is the former RNAS Lee on Solent air base. Besides Bristow SAR the site includes a facility for Britten-Norman and was the base for the long defunct Hampshire Police Air Support for many years.

INDUSTRY

Canadian special-mission avionics manufacturer, **Anodyne Electronics Manufacturing Corp.** (AEM), has expanded its presence in Australia and New Zealand, welcoming experienced aviation professional David Betts as Sales and Business Development Representative. AEM joins forces with Betts to better serve its customers in the region and to help operators gain access to its best-in-class solutions.

Based in Australia, Betts brings more than 25 years of rotary-wing experience, supporting operators, OEMs, and government agencies across SAR, HEMS, and defence sectors. He also represents wireless communications provider, Axnes, and has extensive expertise training and supporting mission-critical avionics in demanding environments.

David.Betts@ext.aem-corp.com or visit www.aem-corp.com .



At the recent **RotorTech show** in Australia, Airbus in Australia Pacific, Airbus Helicopters and Australian health-technology innovator Lindo signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to explore integrating antimicrobial blue light (aBL) disinfection technology into Helicopter Emergency Medical Services (HEMS) platforms.

The agreement will establish a framework for joint research and development into occupant-safe, continuous disinfection solutions. These solutions could be embedded within future aeromedical configurations of Airbus helicopters, supporting HEMS programmes in Australia and across the broader Asia-Pacific region. Critical care transport environments operate under intense time pressure, with high patient turnover and inherent infection risks. Advancing autonomous, continuous disinfection within these settings is vital for

enhancing biosafety while maintaining the operational tempo that lifesaving missions demand.

The initial phase of the collaboration will centre on feasibility studies, system integration and validation of aBL lighting solutions within Airbus Helicopters platforms, with a view toward certified aircraft integration in the longer term.

The Lindo research and development programme is being led with design partners at Marker Design, with the continued support of the Victorian Government in enabling advanced manufacturing and technology development within the state.

Early in May **StandardAero**, a provider of aerospace engine aftermarket services including engine maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) and engine component repair, announced it has acquired Unified Turbines, LLC (Unified Turbines) in an all-cash transaction. Unified Turbines represents StandardAero's 14th acquisition since 2015 and eighth acquisition in its Component Repair Services (CRS) segment.

Founded in 1997 and operating out of its facility in Milton, VT, Unified Turbines is an FAA Repair Station. The company provides hot section component repair and overhaul services for a range of Pratt & Whitney and Honeywell engines that power a variety of turboprop aircraft, such as King Air, Cessna Caravan, Pilatus PC-12, ATR 42 and 72, and De Havilland DASH 7 and 8 regional aircraft, among several other platforms. Unified Turbines has been a high-performing StandardAero vendor since 2001.

The acquisition of Unified Turbines adds critical engine component repair capabilities on key engine platforms where StandardAero is already a market leader, including Pratt & Whitney's PT6A and PW100 turboprop engine families. These capabilities are highly synergistic with StandardAero's Engine Services segment, which leverages faster component repair turn-around times to deliver best-in-class solutions to its customers.

Organizationally, Unified Turbines will be aligned with StandardAero's CRS segment, a core driver of strategic growth for StandardAero. The company has established more than 20,000 unique repairs across its broad portfolio of commercial, military, helicopter and aeroderivative engines served.

Air Covers Ltd based in Wrexham, Wales, UK has been awarded the Kings Award for Enterprise in the Oversea Trade category. This is the highest award for industry and recognised Globally. This year only 76 companies were recognised with the award, only 5 of those being in Wales.

The award marks a growth of 168% in product sales in the period from 2022-25

This is the second time Air Covers has received the award. In 2020 a similar award was presented by the latest Queen Elizabeth II. The new award will be presented by His Majesty King Charles III in due course.

Editor; This company was founded by Sasha Pattinson/Smith the daughter of Mike Smith who featured in an obituary last month. Police Aviation News May 2026 page 33.

Last month **Maverick Aviation Group** Limited announced it had acquired Genaire Ltd., a Canadian aerospace company with over 70 years of history supporting both military and commercial aviation operators. This acquisition marks a significant expansion of Maverick's capabilities into fuel cell and ground service equipment ("GSE") repair and sales. In addition, Maverick will assume Genaire's role as an original equipment manufacturer (OEM), producing Twin Otter skis and pallets for the C-130 Hercules—critical components supporting Canada's aviation infrastructure and defence operations.

The integration of the two companies will enhance the provision of aviation support services. With operations spanning multiple major airports across Western Canada and a growing presence in Eastern Canada through Genaire, Maverick is uniquely positioned to scale Genaire's offerings while maintaining the high standards and customer relationships that have defined the business for decades.

Maverick Aviation Group Limited is a Canadian aerospace holding company operating a portfolio of Approved Maintenance Organizations (AMOs) across Canada. The Company specializes in avionics, instrument repair and calibration, engineering, and aerospace non-destructive testing, serving general, commercial and defence customers. www.maverickaviationgroup.ca

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Even as the police in England and Wales await the integration of 4G technology into its aircraft fleet, aircraft manufacturer **Britten-Norman** (BN) is advancing the development of airborne 5G with the preparation of a BN2T-4S Islander for trials.

BN has delivered a key milestone in its collaboration with World Mobile Stratospheric, with the Islander aircraft supporting the programme now prepared for the next phase of system integration.

The aircraft is now having airborne 5G antenna system installed, marking a significant step forward in the development of aircraft-based connectivity solutions.

The installation of the advanced phased-array antenna system represents a complex integration challenge, supported by over 100 individual engineering drawings produced by Britten-Norman's Design Office. This work underpins the aircraft's role as a platform for next-generation airborne connectivity and highlights the company's in-house capability across structural analysis, systems integration and certification.

When fully equipped test flights are scheduled for this summer to validate how airborne, aircraft-based 5G systems can deliver real-time mobile connectivity. The programme is intended to demonstrate applications ranging from connecting remote and underserved communities to rapidly restoring communications in disaster-affected regions.

Flight assessment will be conducted by Britten-Norman's flight operations team in collaboration with World Mobile Stratospheric and in cooperation with BT at its Adastral Park R&D facility near Ipswich.UK.

Editor: The airframe in use for the 5G project is currently registered G-BWPO originally built in 1997 as c/n 4009 for military use as a Defender ZH004.

The UK based 2Excel Group has announced that after a decade of service supporting the UK Coastguard Service (UKCS) in aerial surveillance and other roles their primary Piper PA-31 aircraft, G-UKCS (GUX), c/n 31-7400984 built in 1974 will retire.

From now the primary aircraft will be G-SCIR, c/n 31-7712038 a 1977 built Piper Navajo Panther (PA-31) and replaced 'GUX', following its final flight for the Global Oil Spill Response (OSRL) Division on April 29. The retiring aircraft has a few thousand more flight hours and is three years older. Both were originally



sourced from the USA.

The Panther aircraft is a performance-enhanced conversion of the Navajo, offering improved take-off and climb performance, higher cruise speed, a quieter cabin, and increased stability. There will be no change to the surveillance capability provided, as G-SCIR will use the same proven surveillance suite, including the existing OFIL ROM 400 turret, sensors, and the Carte Nav mission system.

Over its years of service to OSRL, the retiring aircraft, G-UKCS, has been involved in;

- Total mobilisations: 24
- Total surveillance sorties: 73
- Flying hours in service to OSRL: 4,125, roughly a third of the total accrued by the aircraft.
- Total flight distance in service to OSRL: 250,631 nautical miles (equivalent of circling the world 10 times!) ^[2Excel]



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Small roll becomes a big cost driver. The difference is simple: The aircraft rolls. The sensor doesn't. Comment below or ping [Augustinas](#) in Vilnius, Lithuania if you want to go deeper into the results. ^[AISPECO/LinkedIn]

SPAES has completed work on a life raft system modification for EC155 helicopters. The STC called for the integration of additional life raft deployment handles directly on the raft containers and was to meet an EASA Part-26 requirement to improve deploy ability in offshore and HEMS operations.

Bell Textron Inc. announced the order of three additional Bell 407GXis by Life Flight Network, to add to their other 35 Bell aircraft being operated. These new mission-ready Bell 407GXis will join their fleet to continue offering rapid response and exceptional emergency medical care across their extensive service area.

Operating a combined helicopter and fixed-wing fleet of roughly 60 aircraft throughout the Pacific Northwest, Intermountain West, and Hawaii, Life Flight Network provides 24/7 ICU-level care and support to hospitals, emergency responders, police, EMS and fire departments.

Backed by over 290,000 flight hours and Bell's proven sustainment network, the 407GXi gives air medical providers like Life Flight Network a platform capable of completing lifesaving transports in challenging en-

vironments in a safe, reliable and effective way. Life Flight Network also operates other Bell platforms including the Bell 429.

Last month **FlySight**, an Italian company specialised in advanced geospatial situational awareness and mission management solutions for Aerospace, Defence, Security, and ISR operations, announced a new strategic partnership with Rapid Imaging Solutions for the distribution and promotion of the OPENSIGHT suite in the United States market.

Under the agreement, Rapid Imaging Solutions will support the introduction and commercial development of OPENSIGHT across U.S. law enforcement, security, and airborne mission operators, using its local expertise and industry network.

OPENSIGHT is FlySight's advanced multi-domain and multi-platform software suite designed to enhance real-time situational awareness, mission planning, sensor integration, and operational decision-making. The platform combines moving-map capabilities, augmented reality, AI-enabled analytics, and real-time video processing into a flexible and modular architecture compatible with existing systems and NATO standards.

As part of the collaboration, the companies will begin joint technical and operational evaluation activities, including demonstration environments tailored to U.S. operational requirements.

FlySight develops software solutions for the elaboration, georeferentiation, visualization and dissemination of the information, providing real-time decision support.

Typical applications are in the avionics, naval and underwater sectors, both for the on-ground segment and for the on-board one.

For more information, please visit FLYSIGHT.IT or LinkedIn: <https://it.linkedin.com/company/flysight-s-r-l> or Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/user63133759>

Editor: This announcement was released a few days before this year's PAVCon Europe 2026 in Spain. (May 28-29 in Malaga).

It included a message confirming that FlySight was again to participate in the police aviation event created by Police Aviation News in 2009 and this year hosted by World Aviation Aerial Services.

One of a number of long-standing and enthusiastic supporters of the event, FlySight renews its sponsorship this year, reaffirming its commitment to a platform that fosters innovation, collaboration, and industry growth.

ACCIDENTS & INCIDENTS

24 April 2026 Cessna 172P Skyhawk N99467 Survey aircraft of the USAF Civil Air Patrol. Departing Quakertown-Upper Bucks Airport, Pennsylvania the aircraft lost control and veered off the runway striking an edge light. ^[ASN]

30 April 2026 Bell 206L4 N409AE Air ambulance of Air Evac Lifeteam. The helicopter landed in the grounds of West Cheatham Elementary in Chapmansboro, Tennessee. After first responders prepared to load a patient into the helicopter, one of the crew lost control of the gurney and it rolled into the turning tail rotor. The edge of the empty gurney hit the chopper's tail rotor, shearing off their edges and forcing the aircraft to be grounded. Another medical helicopter was rushed to the scene, and the patient was transferred to that aircraft and taken to a hospital. ^[WSMV4]

3 May 2026 N651MC Air Ambulance. A Mercy Flight helicopter makes an emergency landing in a parking lot on Westfall Road in Brighton, Sunday, May 3, 2026. (Photo by Ken Sauer/WHAM)

Brighton, N.Y. — A Mercy Flight helicopter experiencing mechanical issues landed in a parking lot on Westfall Road Sunday afternoon, according to Chief David Catholdi of the Brighton Police Department. ^[X]

7 May 2026 Airbus Helicopters H145 (BK117D2) G-GSAS Air Ambulance of Scottish AA. Was en-route to an emergency call when it ditched into Loch Torridon and subsequently recovered to dry land due to local weather conditions. After departing Inverness, the helicopter took up a southwest heading, more or less directly towards Applecross, and climbed to 3,200ft over the high ground. After passing Inchvuilt, on the River Farrar, some 50km east of Applecross it began a gradual right turn, towards the northwest. It continued to the northwest for about 10 minutes before reaching Loch Torridon. The pilot and crew were unharmed.

12 May 2026 Cessna A185F Skywagon N61368 Patrol aircraft of the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, Augusta, Maine, USA. Aircraft departed from Dry Pond Seaplane Base, ME on aerial patrol with

the pilot aboard. Crashed into high ground near Avon, ME killing the pilot Game Warden Joshua Tibbetts.

12 May 2026 Bell 407 N652AE Air ambulance of Air Evac Lifeteam. The 26 years old Bell suffered substantial damage in an accident at Baylor University Medical Center Dallas Heliport

The pilot and two-person medical crew were not injured. There was no patient onboard. The crew had transported a patient to Baylor Medical Center. Before departing from the helipad, the pilot attempted to contact the Dallas Love Field Airport tower controller to request a Class B airspace clearance. When no response was received, the pilot lifted off into a hover in attempt to gain better reception. The pilot reported subsequently hearing a "loud crack" and feeling a jolt in the pedals. The pilot landed the helicopter on the helipad and shutdown the engine. Video surveillance footage depicted the helicopter lifting off from the helipad and turning to the right. During the climb and the right turn, the helicopter drifted backward and struck the building mounted camera. The video footage ended at that point. The helicopter sustained damage to the tail rotor blades and tail rotor pitch change links. [NTSB]

14 May 2026 Beechcraft C90 King Air N249CP Air ambulance of Texas based Angels Envy Aviation LLC opb Trans Aero MedEvac. The crew was headed from Roswell to Sierra Blanca Regional Airport for a medical transport when the plane crashed and was destroyed when it crashed in a wooded area in the Capitan Mountains near Capitan, Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA. The two pilots and two medical crew, Keelan Clark, Generation Jets pilot, Ali Kawsara, Generation Jets pilot, Sarah Clark, Trans Aero MedEvac flight nurse and Jamie Novick, Trans Aero MedEvac flight nurse were fatally injured. Sarah Clark was the daughter of Otero County Emergency Manager Matt Clark.

ADS-B data suggests the airplane flew into mountainous terrain in the Captain Mountains range while trying to fly the ILS/LOC approach for runway 24 at KSRR (Sierra Blanca Regional Airport a public use airport located 15nm from Ruidoso, New Mexico, United States). The crash site has been labelled the "Seven Cabins Fire" by the US Forest Service and is located near end of Capitan Gap Road - East of Capitan and about 1500 feet due East of Summit Peak in Lincoln County, NM. [FS/Media]

15 May 2026 Single engine fixed wing water bomber. The aircraft was fighting a Minnesota wildfire when it was struck by a bullet while scooping water from a lake to drop on a wildfire in Portage Township, northeast of Orr in northern St. Louis County. The damage was discovered when the single-engine plane returned to the Hibbing airport. A 48-year-old man who lives near Orr was arrested at his home, with charges pending. [Media]

19 May 2026 Marsh (Grumman) S-2F3AT Turbo Tracker N433DF Firefighting aircraft of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. While the aircraft was performing a fire suppression flight near Santa Nella, California the left wing struck a wind turbine. Single occupant no casualties. This was the seventh mission of the day. [Fight Aware]

UNMANNED

In mid-May Tekever, a multinational leader in advanced autonomous systems originating in Portugal and already operating across Europe, announced its official expansion into the United States with the opening of its first office in Fayetteville, North Carolina. This development is a significant milestone in the company's global growth strategy, positioning Tekever close to major US defence innovation hubs and operational end users.

The new Fayetteville location will serve as a strategic hub for technical support, coordination, and daily engagement with US-based partners. By establishing a local presence, the company aims to enhance its responsiveness to the US market's evolving operational requirements and ensure that its cutting-edge intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, search and rescue (ISR/SAR) capabilities are supported by dedicated in-country expertise.

TEKEVER's expansion into North Carolina follows a period of rapid international growth. The company now has facilities in the UK, Portugal, France and Ukraine, and employs more than 1,300 people, including several hundred specialists in engineering, AI and data science

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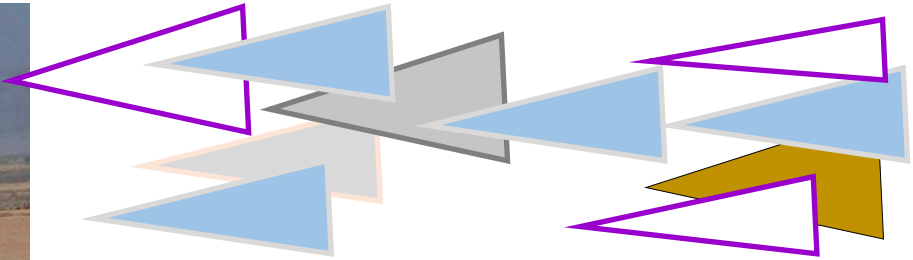
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WHEN NECESSITY BECOMES THE MOTHER OF INVENTION

In the April edition of *'Police Aviation News'* the article, 'Killer Drones' highlighted the dilemma facing those countries being attacked by Iran using Shahed Aviation Industries 'kamikaze' drones. This simple, mass produced, inexpensive unmanned aircraft, originally designed as a gunnery target, now carries a 110 lb, or a 200 lb warhead. In the early weeks of the conflict there was a report of an F-35B 'stealth' fighter, costing £90M, flying over Jordan and shooting down a Shahed drone, costing just £20,000, with an advanced short-range air to air missile (ASRAAM) costing £200,000! Why didn't the F-35B pilot use the aircraft's cannon to shoot down this slow flying, non-evading target? The British Ministry of Defence ordered the F-35B without the optional, externally mounted gun pod carrying the GAU-22A four-barrel 25 mm Gatling gun!

Why didn't the pilot of the F-35B flying over Jordan shoot down the slow moving, non-evading Shahed drone with cannon fire? The British F-35B, flown from Royal Navy aircraft carriers, doesn't carry the optional, externally mounted, 25 mm Gatling gun.



Wikipedia

Nevertheless, the 'gunners' of UK's Royal Air Force Regiment were quickly equipped with 'Rapid Sentry' which fires the Thales Martlet air defence missile; which they subsequently used with great success. At the same time, the British defence company, BAE Systems, together with the Ministry of Defence and QinetiQ were pursuing a quick fix for a cost-effective air to air missile, one that would cost a lot less than an ASRAAM and less than Thales Martlet too. The result is the new Advanced Precision Kill Weapon System (APKWS) which, according to an MoD press release, 'Will be fitted to RAF Typhoon fighter jets so that they can destroy targets precisely and at a fraction of the price of missiles currently used.' The cost of an APKWS missile is approximately the same that of a Shahed drone. On this occasion, necessity really did become the mother of invention!



The pod carrying 7x APKWS missiles mounted under the wing of an RAF Typhoon fighter aircraft.

BAE Systems

The new air to air missile, APKWS is the Hydra 70 unguided rocket with laser targeting added, which then turns the unguided rocket into a low-cost precision weapon capable of taking down enemy drones and other threats. The key points are:

- * A new low-cost missile system to defend UK citizens and partners in the Middle East from drone attacks.
- * Working rapidly with industry the MoD moved from testing to deployment in just a few months.
- The RAF Typhoon fighter is confirmed as the backbone of UK combat air defence.

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The addition of laser guidance turns the Hydra 70 unguided rocket into a low-cost precision air to air missile.



BAE Systems



According to Luke Pollard MP, Minister for Defence Procurement, *“The RAF fleet of Typhoon fighter aircraft is the backbone of UK and NATO air defence, with the RAF protecting Europe’s Eastern flank from Russian drone incursions and defending our partners across the Middle East.”*

The Typhoon fighter aircraft is the backbone of UK and NATO air defence.



MoD/RAF

The European Typhoon fighter is a true multi-role combat aircraft which can, in addition to the Advanced Precision Kill Weapon System, be armed with advanced short range and medium range air to air missiles, ASRAAM, AMRAAM and Meteor. Also, for air to surface missions the Typhoon may be armed with Paveway IV laser guided bombs, Brimstone missiles and the long-range Storm Shadow cruise missile. A 27 mm Mauser cannon is fitted as standard.



Nevertheless, there may be an alternative, a more proportionate, a more cost-effective response to attacks from inexpensive but, at the same time, deadly Shahed type drones. The alternate to the highly capable supersonic fighter, is a much less expensive training aircraft armed with gun and rocket pods. Rather than ‘using a sledgehammer to crack walnut’, there are various types of training aircraft which may be armed with both gun and rocket pods. Moreover, the speed range of most of these aircraft, around 300 knots in the cruise, is much more closely matched to the low speed, non-evading, Shahed drone. The unit price of these is, of course, considerably less than any supersonic fighter.

The cost of Beechcraft AT-6C Wolverine/ Texan II based on the Swiss Pilatus PC-9 trainer but armed with gun and rocket pods is considerably less than a multi-million-pound fighter aircraft. Providing a much more proportionate, but, nevertheless, an effective response to attacks from mass-produced, inexpensive Shahed drones.

James A Cowan MBE

Note:

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



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

Hai Air has announced that its Managing Director, **Nick Hardy**, has been appointed Head of Leonardo Sales at Sloane Helicopters, Sywell Airport, Northampton.

Nick's career has taken him around the globe, from his time in the Royal Air Force to building relationships at every level within the aviation industry. In the past he was part of the sales team at McAlpine Helicopters/Airbus Helicopters UK at Oxford [2002-2011].

He brings to the market straight-talking, in-depth knowledge of the market and a genuine focus on helping people. [The Hai-Air Team]



PODCAST OPTION

Jeff is a rotor pilot who has experience in LE flying as well as air ambulance flying. The guys talk about all sorts of things related to helicopters, including how Jeff got into air support, and some of the cool things he has witnessed from the sky.

The value of air support in law enforcement, EMS, and America's fighting forces cannot be understated. Hear about Jeff's journey in police and EMS aviation and ways you can prepare if you are aspiring to a career as a pilot in one of these demanding careers.

We talk about ways the balcony-view in the sky can affect the outcome of critical incidents on the ground, some pursuit and medevac stories, and some of the things senior leaders need to understand about commanding a specialized unit.

 <https://www.tacticaltangents.com/podcast/hangarz>

This is not a Hangar Z podcast Warning Lots of bang bang.... Keep your head down!

LETTERS

Following on from last month's editorial comments about Meeker equipment on helicopters and space craft Cal Meeker messaged the editor.

Bryn,

Thanks for the kind words. we do a lot of business with NASA; they have our steps on their 135 as well. They have a GSS camera installed to track the rockets as they lift off. Not to mention the Mars helicopter was dropped off our AF200 mount to check the parachute system.

Never a dull day around here!

Cheers

Cal

MOVE ALONG THERE

The Amazon air delivery service has arrived in Britain. Still early days and currently confined to a small area in Darlington, County Durham in the North East of England. Packages weighing less than 5lb (2.2kg) and containing everyday items are now being delivered within a 7.5-mile (12km) radius of Amazon's fulfilment centre - in as little as two hours. The actual delivery to a customer uses the same craft as currently used in the USA and requires them to have an open area of "yard" or grass from which the parcel is delivered from a hover.

Sure, there were a few jokes about how the delivery of half a dozen Champagne flutes might have an unhappy ending but thankfully customer number 1 only had a pack of rubber gloves delivered. They might be difficult to smash in a drop.

It remains to be seen whether the customer base is large enough though. The average "yard" in the UK is likely to be fairly small and littered with trees and bushes all of which should prove to be a challenge to the craft even if it does not land.



Even though the number of available police officers employed by British police has risen significantly in the last 30 years, cancelled rest days and unsustainable workloads are now the operating model for UK policing. Nearly 820,000 rest days [2,240 years] are owed to officers in the UK according to a survey. [Police Oracle].

Despite the rise in available UK law enforcement staffing, it seems that all of the major exposures of criminal activity are initiated from outside the police service. Time and again newspapers and television crews reveal high profile crimes, crime syndicates and criminals and present the 'facts' on a plate to the law enforcers. Even then, often with apparently irrefutable video evidence, they seem to have difficulty in getting cases into the courts.

Police are supposed to avoid politics interfering with their duties and yet time and time again they take a political stance. Recently it was reported that Border Force staff were refusing to talk to members of the Reform Party even though they had recently been voted in across the country as the preferred representatives of the people by a large number of voters.

The advertising industry keeps pumping out the attractions of pre-paid cremations and 'Unforgettable Cruises' for all ages... there have been lots of both recently. What with foundering rubber boats of migrants and the 140 passengers on the MV Hondius with the added attraction of a lethal hantavirus who needs the thrills of theme parks!

And talking about the thrills of the police service we may as well take a look at recent riots in the UK. The newspapers said they were "unprecedented" occasions so they must have been something special! Unfortunately for the media they were not thar unprecedented.

On May 16 there were two 'rival' events, marches by the public, one marching in favour of Palestine and said to be left wing as well as hating all that was Israel and the other favouring British values and labelled Extreme Right Wing and therefore nasty and anti-establishment. A few thousand noisy people and nothing too great in the annals of London riots and demonstrations.

The pair attracted surveillance from the air by drones and helicopters as well as escorting by thousands of officers on the ground who were intent on keeping them apart and were ready for major disorder. It all went very well and the racially orientated banners and the national flags of England and the United Kingdom did not clash.

All a very quiet set of affairs compared with the 1968 Grosvenor Square battles outside the US Embassy, the June 1974 clashes in Red Lion Square the street battles in Lewisham during August 1977 that were put in the shade by 1980s Brixton and the joys of the Thatcher era Poll Tax Riots of 1990. Those were the days, and in 1990 we finally had helicopters to look after our health and wellbeing (although I guess we did not call them that in those days!). Never saw them but the clatter of their main rotors resonated through the high walled streets – effectively drowning out the screams and taunts of the crowd and even the steel tipped clatter of the police horses in the charge. Unprecedented? Bah humbug! Just a day at the office.



In July 2010, the government set out its ambitions for the future of policing in a White Paper, *Policing in the 21st Century*, making a statement that paved the way for the future creation of the Police Digital Service to supplant the well-regarded National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA). In December 2011, plans were unveiled to replace the NPIA with a new professional body that by 2021 became the Police Digital Service (PDS).

In 2023 it said of itself "PDS, coordinates, develops, delivers and manages digital solutions and services that enable UK policing to improve public safety, has grown exponentially since 2021, going from a small organisation to one that now employs over 270 people working remotely across the UK."

Some warning words have appeared on-line concerning the company PDS Ltd., also known as the Police ICT Company. It is listed as a not-for-profit business and is registered at Company's House as 08113293.

It is not an inconsequential company and records a turnover of £56M last year and over £65M the year before. Last year's profit was given as £2.2M, with member funds standing at £13.52M. They list £9.26M as salary grants and received a £22M grant from the Home Office last year. Nearly £31M is classed as sales to "members", £16M is classed as "third party revenue" but it not easy to pin down what the terms mean. The Home Office made a grant of £22M last year. It all looks very successful.

Unlike most Companies House entries though the turnover of Directors is extensive. PDS lists 65 appointments and 52 resignations mainly comprising current and former police and fire officers and commissioners. Disquiet has been raised over this high turnover of people in the higher echelons of the emergency services involved.

The Companies House listing of those involved in reveals a string of Police and Crime Commissioners (the PCCs are scheduled to be disbanded shortly) and 'people' operating from police addresses. Disquiet has been raised as to whether those involved are "in breach of police regulations that say you cannot use police addresses for private business correspondence. Much less position and rank to further commercial gain." They may all be unpaid volunteers of course.. [Linked-In]

Editor: Whether the originator of this line of questioning is correct or wrong is way beyond my pay grade but it certainly smells similar to the sort of personal advancement activity being undertaken by ACPO when, in 2015, they decided to change their name to NPCC! Some might say the numbers are 'unprecedented.' No doubt the truth will out in time.

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EVENTS

You may have noticed that it has been around 20 years since the event we now call PAVCon Europe was set in place (its origins actually span a longer period but let's not allow the detail to get in the way of the story). Another event is also celebrating 20 years of operation and that is the Emergency Services Show which now fills a significant part of the exhibition space at the NEC in Birmingham.

This year's event at the NEC is on September 16-17 and they would love you to come along. The event covers products operated by all the emergency services and, thanks to renewed interest by the police and aviation sectors, they are slowly getting out of their tendency to focus on fire and ambulance. The ESS is co-located with the Emergency Tech Show – a much younger event but covering similar storylines.

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

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