

# Police Aviation News

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Issue 335

March 2024



## Mountain Flying in the French Alps



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## LAW ENFORCEMENT INTERNATIONAL

**CONFERENCE EUROPE:** After a short delay caused by the transfer of many tasks from Police Aviation Research to the new operators bookings have started. No sooner had the application forms been sent out by Imogen than they were being returned to her. The first booking, by a narrow margin was confirmed by Axnes in Norway. Several others are in place.

It is planned to have the customary Aircrew Training Sessions day at the event. This will take place on Monday May 27 and will be run by the experienced team from the Netherlands and Belgium.

Teledyne-FLIR have approached the trainer team with a view to including IR Tactics training in the line up of subjects. The company is looking to be one of the sponsors of this element of the event. Discussions continue around the detail of the event.

Currently the training is envisaged as being around 5 hours on IR tactics class similar in format to the US APSCON classes where the “What is Infrared” question is explained by a FLIR instructor and the remainder of the training (IR Patrol Tactics, Suspect Tactics & Trends or Vehicle & Foot pursuits and Aircraft Positioning) is presented by the police airborne thermal tactics instructors. At the end of the training all attendees will earn a Certificate of Completion to take back to the unit. A clearly demonstrable gain from attending the event.



**COVER IMAGE:** Two mountaineers await being picked up by EC145 JBF. A feature article on the French Gendarmerie appears later in this edition (29). The storyline relates how a training centre situated in the French Alps, at the town of Briançon undertakes Gendarmerie mountain flying training. It has been in operation since 2012 and located at Briançon since 2014. Mountain training is a part of the overall training of the Gendarmerie Air Forces (FAGN) pilots and flight engineers.

[The images and text were created about one year ago by FlyHighAeromedia staff Roelof-Jan Gort and Bjorn van der Flier].



There is an expectation that the two day exhibition on the floor of the Airborne Technologies hangar PAvCon is using will again house around 40 of the leading airframe and accessories manufacturers and dealers. There is ample room for more exhibitors.

The airport at Wiener Neustadt, a city located south of Vienna, is the home to the host company Airborne Technologies as well as Diamond Aircraft and Schiebel, famous for their unmanned air systems. Getting there is easy from the main airport in Vienna and flying in is an option.

As has always been the case serving police and airborne emergency services are welcome to attend both the exhibition and the training without charge. There are plentiful hotel rooms in the near vicinity and the event offers its customary free refreshments throughout.

Check out the event website [www.pavconeurope.eu](http://www.pavconeurope.eu) for the latest information. Please note that the older website [www.pavcon.org](http://www.pavcon.org) will be closing down later this month.

## FRANCE

OLYMPICS: On February 10 newspapers in France (Le Monde) and the UK (Telegraph) carried stories that belied one of the reasons the French were obliged to pull out of hosting the 2024 PAvCon Conference and Exhibition – they are dramatically short of resources.

In the storyline there is no mention of the conference of course but the French government are worried that they have insufficient resources to cover the upcoming Olympics.

The projected size of the crowd for the opening ceremony for the Olympics has been scaled back after a recruitment drive for the municipal police still left it with half the number that the planners put forward in 2020. Six months ahead of the games Paris has only 2,000 officers where the civil authority pledged 5,000. Even now some of the 2,000 are still in training so there is no magic bullet to getting the additional numbers up.

Meanwhile the Police National, the next stage up the law enforcement hierarchy, are unhappy to the point of going on strike. The interior ministry has been giving them one off bonuses of €1,900 (£1,620/\$2,030) to placate them and the fact they will have to be working over their summer holidays. Traditionally the whole of France shuts down for summer holidays between mid-July and mid-August – just the time the Olympics is on (26 July to 11 August 2024). The Paralympics is to run between August 28 and September 8.

According to UK Home Office figures, France does not have Official Data on police numbers, but the Internet figures suggest that there are some 150,000 police in France so in percentage terms the overall Olympic shortfall is not drastic, but at a time when the numbers need to increase to cover the special event it is clearly an embarrassment.

Meanwhile, clearly not aware of reality, Britain still expects hundreds more French police officers to patrol beaches to “break” the business model of criminal gangs and stop small boat crossings. The failing UK government simply keeps throwing money at the problem and expects France to resolve a difficulty that simply gets worse every day. It is perhaps a good job that the bad weather is reducing the number of migrants attempting to cross from France to England. Clearly this British aspiration looks likely to be set aside as unattainable in July and August.

In contrast, at 147,000, the police in the United Kingdom have higher numbers of officers than it has had for more than 12 years but the money going in to French policing is being denied to those in the UK. and many are unhappy and said to be giving up policing as a life career.

*Check out later in this edition (p29) for an independent report from France on the Gendarmerie mountain operations.*



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## TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

**AIR SUPPORT:** Late last month a local media outlet ran an item that proposed the revision of air operations in Trinidad & Tobago. It put forward the principle that traditional police – police on the street facing the criminal fraternity were now outdated and effectively requiring the omnipresence of air support in some form.

Historically the TT Police Service (TTPS) Air Support Unit had operated two BO 105 helicopters before moving on in 2011 to operating four AgustaWestland AW139 helicopters and an airship as a police force operated asset.

The operation was under funded by the local government, with inadequate provision for operating costs and spare parts although the entity had good quality, hangar, office space and the training local pilots and engineers. Set up with AgustaWestland as it then was, there was little transfer of technology and institutional knowledge to locals during the five years of the initial support contract.

When, in 2016, it came time for the operation to devolve to the locals they were simply not ready, being short of training and individual qualifications. A proposal was submitted to the government of the time to engage another provider for AW139 operations and maintenance but by mid-2017 they decided they could not afford the estimated annual cost of \$200M and the AW139s were duly grounded.

The new plan is to set up a national air unit, with assets available to all users in the country. It is still expected that the main user will be the police. The air assets of the TTPS Air Support Unit, except for the drones, are ageing and in urgent need of replacement. It is likely that the AW139 fleet will be discarded, and Airbus light twin helicopters brought in. [T&B Newsday]



The advertisement features a background image of a green and silver AgustaWestland AW139 helicopter in flight over a body of water, with a city skyline visible in the distance. The helicopter has "N941A" on its side and "AM-DADE E RESCUE" on its tail. In the top left corner is the Teledyne FLIR logo. In the top right corner is a close-up image of a FLIR thermal camera. The main headline reads "SUPERIOR FOV FOR SEARCH & RESCUE". Below this, a block of text describes the benefits of the Star SAFIRE 380-HDc camera for search and rescue operations. At the bottom right, the website "FLIR.COM/24PAN" is listed.

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## UNITED KINGDOM

**NATIONAL:** No sooner had the last edition of Police Aviation News been published with the updated details of the new location for the fixed wing element at East Midlands Airport than it was learned that the four aircraft were grounded. The no-fly regime was precipitated by the discovery of cracks in the retractable undercarriage. No official announcement has been made.

Initially all that could be learned of this rumour is that, according to the Flightradar 24 app, the last flight by an NPAS P68R appears to have taken place on January 27. That flight had been by G-POLX UKP153 and involved a 2.5-hour flight to undertake a mission over the North York Moors. The information provided by the Flightradar 24 App is of course reliant on transponder feedback but it would appear that :

G-POLV UKP155 26/1/24 last flew for one hour from East Midlands to Hurn

G-POLW UKP154 last flew on 1/1/24.

G-POLX UKP153 Its last flight by the four aircraft was on 27/1/24. The aircraft had returned from Hurn after 2 weeks downtime just the day before on 26/1

G-POLZ UKP152 Its last flight was on 24/1/2024, a 3-hour flight from East Midlands taking it over Cardiff and Sheffield. The aircraft had returned from Hurn on 23/1.

Accompanying the rumoured grounding was information that all the aircraft had cracks in their undercarriage and that there were no replacement units immediately available. Subsequent information suggests that the manufacturer has found at least one replacement unit.

*Ed: Aircraft are now 8 years old and yet it is claimed that the highest hour aircraft only has 600 hours on it – this is a fleet acquired with the expectation that they were to replace withdrawn MD902 Explorer helicopters that were expected – and that was often a forlorn expectation – to clock up 800-1,000 hours each annually. The fixed wing was supposed to take the pressure off completing the contracts designed to replace the remaining aged Airbus helicopters. So far, they have simply increased the preference for the operation of more reliable locally operated drones. As this publication has repeated endlessly, this whole project has been mired in controversy from the very beginning when NPAS issued a specification for a high wing aeroplane with retractable landing gear, a specification that could only fit the Vulcanair P68R. Other, potentially much rugged aircraft, the BN Islander and the Diamond DA42, were available, 'off the shelf' but they did not meet the strict criteria.*

*It is fair to say that the manufacturers of the P68R are not well pleased with this constant focussing of the issues surrounding the NPAS P68R fleet. However, PAN is simply reporting and speculating on what has subsequently been a matter of public record in the minutes to the NPAS Strategic Board. It is the Strategic Board that came very close to prematurely retiring the aircraft, not PAN.*

*There is no clear sign of other P68R operators having the same problem. Other P68s with fixed landing gear have had cracking issues dating back two decades but they do not appear to have resulted in a long-term problem. At the core of the latest development – it is not yet the subject of a press release or public record in minutes - appears to be the unique mission profile that NPAS has been operating. The last press release from NPAS, in mid-January, was the announcement that the East Midlands move had been made. Subject to confirmation, it is probably that no other operator is regularly flying these aircraft at the top end of their maximum weight capability. The standard mission profile sees the aircraft operating at its maximum take-off and landing weights of 4,548 lb (2,063kg) and 4,321 lb (1,960kg). Although all flights are far shorter than the maximum duration approaching 6 hours it would appear the operational sortie fuel allows for the need for full duration. As a result, the police P68s are regularly operating heavy and that may have resulted in the premature failure of the undercarriage members.*

*The manufacturer states that the P68R is intended to be a faster and lighter more advanced aircraft for private use and for flight training applications. Although other surveillance operators have not reported difficulties, the UK police mission undoubtedly stretches the aircraft beyond its original design ideals, and the new situation is the ultimate clash of capability and mission.*

*In a brief conversation with a representative of Vulcanair last month it is understood that contrary to initial information that a set of replacement undercarriage units had been sourced for fitting to an aircraft in February. As PAN went to press none of the aircraft appears to have been returned to flight. NPAS has been asked for a comment.*



## UNITED STATES

FLORIDA: CNC Technologies, an aviation technology and wireless communications company serving the law enforcement, military and government markets, announced a collaboration with Airbus Helicopters and Metro Aviation to provide the Broward County Sheriff's Office (BSO) with three fully role equipped aircraft for Fire Rescue and Public Safety operations.

Under the deal Airbus provides the aircraft, Metro Aviation provides integration and completion services, and CNC provides full mission suite design, state-of-the-art equipment, service and support, as well as on-going customer training.

The BSO Department of Fire Rescue has purchased two Airbus H145's for air medical, search & rescue and law enforcement missions. The Sheriff's Office has also purchased one additional Airbus H125 helicopter that will integrate seamlessly into the current fleet of two H125's performing law enforcement missions for the agency. The fleet of three Airbus H125's will transmit imagery and data through the CNC.Live access portal for all agency commanders to view in real time.

CNC.Live provides agencies with real-time access to view their video assets, improving their ability to coordinate joint responses during major incidents. In addition to the aircraft purchases, additional investment was made by BSO to expand its high-resolution video and data transmission network to maximize the aircraft efficiencies. Once deployed, all BSO aircraft will be managed under CNC's Service, Support and Training program with 24/7/365 coverage. [CNC]

*Editor: Readers may recall that at the end of August last year one of the HEMS EC135s, Air 85, operated by Broward was involved in a fatal crash onto an apartment block in Pompano Beach. A flight paramedic and a resident in the apartment died. In January more than two dozen first responders with the City of Pompano Beach Fire Rescue Department were honoured for their actions following that crash.*

FLORIDA: CNC Technologies has also announced the completion of two fully role equipped Bell 505 helicopters and one role equipped Cessna Caravan for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). The helicopters were ordered in the summer of 2022.

The Bell 505 helicopters including N975FW c/n 65480, are each outfitted with an L3/Wescam MX10 imager, Shotover ARS 750 moving map system, MacroBlue monitors and Trakka TLX searchlight. The Cessna Caravan has been outfitted with a state-of-the-art FLIR Star Safire 380 X-HD imager installed on a Southeast Aerospace side mount, with the Shotover ARS 750 moving system and MacroBlue monitors installed in a Southeast Aerospace Tactical Flight Officer (TFO) console.



All three aircraft were completed at AeroBrigham in Decatur, Texas. CNC will provide service, support and training to FWC staff to support the deployment of the complex aircraft mission suites. The advanced technology in the aircraft will assist FWC in performing a wide variety of wildlife, law enforcement and





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search & rescue missions across the State of Florida. [CNC]

*Editor: The Aviation Unit's mission is to protect Florida's natural resources and human life through proactive and responsive law enforcement services. Aircraft respond to SAR requests on land or water, assist other agencies during natural disasters, promote boating safety and provide law enforcement Homeland Security support. Established 1999, the FWC is the government agency that manages and regulates the state's fish and wildlife resources. The range of aircraft used and based at Tallahassee include examples of the Cessna single, Vulcanair P68 Observer 2 including N419FW c/n 419-19/OB2 the Bell 206B and 206L4 including N86FW c/n 2104 and N402FW c/n 52328 and the Bell Huey.*

**NEW MEXICO:** In San Juan County Sheriff's Office, they now have a new, role equipped, Bell 505 in service. After spending decades reliant upon two ancient Bell OH-58As they now have something near to state-of-the art to operate. Long time in planning, funds were delayed by the pandemic, the Bell arrived from CNC late last year and has now been taken into use.

Some 25 years ago they acquired the military surplus Kiowa's, N911SJ and N917SJ, and operated locally and over neighbouring counties in support of fellow law enforcers in the population centres of Aztec, Farmington and Bloomfield. San Juan County is in the northwest corner of New Mexico, bordering Arizona, Colorado, and Utah, it covers 5,500 square miles and has a population of 121,000.

One of the helicopters in the old fleet, N917SJ, is equipped with night vision goggles, mapping system, a SX5 search light and an FLIR 8500 infrared camera. The other, was less well equipped, only having a searchlight, and was used as a transport. That has now been retired and its registration transferred to the new helicopter as N911SJ.



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In January 2024 the Sheriff's Office welcomed its new Bell 505 helicopter N911SJ into service. Sheriff Shane Ferrari said the new helicopter had been on his wish list for an extended period, but it wasn't until March 2022 that lawmakers appropriated \$3.25M to the county for the purchase of the aircraft. Ferrari has said many times the two helicopters the Sheriff's Office has been using for the past several years are approximately 50 years old, and it was becoming increasingly difficult to keep them operational.

The new Bell 505 serves as the department's primary mission aircraft, while one of the two older airframes will serve as its backup. The agency's third helicopter is now being cannibalised for parts to keep the backup running.



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OKLAHOMA: The Tulsa Police Dept has had a checkered past. First mooted in the late sixties it eventually started renting aircraft on an ad-hoc basis in the mid-1970s. In 1982 Tulsa contracted with Oklahoma City for what became known as Police One, or informally as the "Copper Chopper," piloted by Officers Fred Whiteman and Joe Vandiver. A week after Police One first takes flight, it crashes in a north Tulsa pasture while pursuing a speeding vehicle, killing Whiteman, 35, and Officer Kelly Smythe, 25.

Two years later Tulsa purchased a new Hughes 500D helicopter but six weeks after its purchase, the police helicopter makes a forced landing after losing power while hovering. It was a total loss, but both the pilot and the spotter walked away from the wreck. The unit moved to another MD500D which was used until a new MD 500E helicopter is purchased in 1993.

The unit was grounded by budget cuts in 2009 but returned to provide a limited service the following year. In 2014 the unit purchased its first Airbus AS350B2. They now have two in service, N301TP and N302TP.

Last month the unit took part in a groundbreaking ceremony that will result in the building of a new hangar and office for the Air Support Unit, which is moving to the grounds of the Police Training Academy. The unit has operated out of the Tulsa Airpark since TPD bought that first helicopter in 1982. The two AStar helicopters barely fit into the existing hangar, and the office space is small and outdated.

The \$5.6M project is being funded through the American Rescue Plan with a \$3.5M grant, local funding with \$1M from the Hardesty Family Foundation, \$870,000 in city funding, and another grant for \$250,000 from the Chapman Foundation.

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# AIR AMBULANCE

## AUSTRALIA

**NEW SOUTH WALES:** The New South Wales Ambulance Fixed Wing Aeromedical Operations has brought its first Pilatus PC-24 into service. NSW Minister for Health Ryan Park said for the first time, NSW Ambulance will have 2 new Pilatus PC-24 jet aircraft in its fleet, as part of a \$54.3M boost to increase the capability of Aeromedical Operations.

In 2021, Australia's New South Wales Ambulance decided to purchase two of the PC-24s to further increase the organisation's operational capabilities. The operator will use the PC-24 to provide aeromedical services to the people of New South Wales, covering an area of approximately 800,000 sq. km. It is anticipated that the type will conduct around 800 flights, transferring approximately 6,500 patients, during its first year of service. In the immediate future the PC-24 crews are still training on the aircraft. Aerolite, Switzerland and Total Aerospace Solutions in Sydney have been contracted to complete the medical fit out of the Pilatus PC-24s VH-AMD and VH-AMM by mid-year.



The new jets will complement the existing five Beechcraft King Air 350C planes in the NSW Ambulance fleet. All will be operated and maintained by Pel-Air, as part of a 10-year contract with NSW Ambulance.

For the last 30 years Pilatus has been manufacturing and delivering aircraft to some of the most widely recognised and prestigious aeromedical operators around the world – including customers such as the Royal Flying Doctor Service in Australia, Ornge in Canada and Kommunalförbundet Svenskt Ambulansflyg (KSA) in Sweden. The PC-24 is the world's first air ambulance jet with a patient loading door. Patients can be loaded and unloaded by means of an electrically powered loading device or alternatively with a ramp – patient loading has never been safer, faster or easier. [Pilatus/NSW Gov]

The 2023 financial year was marked by major successes for Pilatus. One hundred and forty-eight aircraft were delivered despite the ongoing challenges of the operating environment. With total sales of 1.478 billion Swiss francs, operating income of 240 million Swiss francs and new orders worth 1.513 billion Swiss francs, Pilatus closed the past year with record results. Compared with 2022, Pilatus achieved a ten per cent increase in sales and added six percent to its operating income. In all, 47 PC-24s and 101 PC-12s were handed over to customers last year. [Pilatus]

**TASMANIA:** Tasmanian helicopter company Rotor-Lift will partner with Toll Group as part of its tender to continue supplying emergency helicopter services to the Tasmanian Government.

Over the past 18 years Toll has provided emergency helicopter services to the Australian Defence Force and has a strong history of providing airborne law enforcement support to the Australian Federal Police. Since 2017, Toll has operated the Toll Ambulance Rescue Helicopter Service on behalf of the NSW and ACT Governments, with over 32,000 AW139 flight hours and 19,000 missions flown. Rotor-Lift has completed more than 14,000 missions for both Tasmania Police and Ambulance Tasmania, supporting both agencies with helicopters, pilots and crews from its base at the Hobart Airport

 <p><b>PAvCon</b> POLICE AVIATION CONFERENCE</p>	<p><b>May 28 &amp; 29 2024</b></p> <p><b>Airborne Technologies GmbH</b> Viktor-Lang-Straße 8, 2700 Wiener Neustadt, Austria</p> <p><i>The Networking Continues</i></p>
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## JAPAN

**DOCTOR-HELI:** Kawasaki Heavy Industries, Ltd. announced delivery of an H145/BK117 D-3 helicopter to Central Helicopter Service, Ltd. This is the third D-3 delivered to the same company, and the 13<sup>th</sup> it has delivered in total. The D-3 delivered this time, like the two already delivered, is intended for use in emergency medical services.

## NEW ZEALAND

**NORTH ISLAND:** Philips Search and Rescue Trust operating a large helicopter fleet providing service to the central region of the North Island reported that 2023 was a busy year for the rescue helicopters under their care. The BK117 fleet is part funded by public donations.

The rescue helicopters completed 2,205 missions in 2023, comprising 754 missions by the Waikato Westpac Rescue Helicopter, 524 missions by the Aerocool Rescue Helicopter in the Bay of Plenty, 519 missions by the Greenlea Rescue Helicopter and 408 missions by the Grassroots Trust Rescue Helicopter.

The missions undertaken by the Waikato base included over 400 inter-hospital transfers, more than 100 medical missions, 77 rural or remote incidents, 47 motor vehicle accidents, six rescues and 93 other missions. Rotorua Hospital topped the list with being the most transported from, having over 70 missions take place, followed closely by Waikato Hospital with 67.



## UNITED KINGDOM

**CORNWALL:** You might think that a remote region like Cornwall, occupying the area in the extreme southwest of England, might struggle to operate its own independent charity air ambulance service. It appears it is not the case, and the charity has announced that it is now launching fundraising to acquire a second Leonardo AW169 helicopter to join the present one.



The charity has seen a rise in mission numbers over the last year, it was tasked 1,160 times during 2023. Of these 534 incidents were trauma-related and 297 were to help people who had suffered medical emergencies. The crew also attended 306 cardiac arrests.

This rise in taskings comes as the charity launches its #HELI2 Appeal, aiming to purchase the second helicopter. They hope to raise £2.85M by the end of December. [CAAT]





DEVON: Devon Air Ambulance (DAA) 200<sup>th</sup> Community landing site is now operational at Tews Lane Playing Field, Fremington.

DAA's extensive network of 200 surveyed landing sites have allowed their aircraft to land in many towns and villages across Devon during the 'hours of darkness' enabling their specialist medical crew to reach patients quickly and safely.

The network was first established in 2016 when the organisation began the move to nighttime flying. Creating a network of established, pre-surveyed sites caught the imagination of the Devon's supportive towns and villages quickly, and it did not take long to hit 100 sites and continue rising.

The previous milestone, the 150<sup>th</sup> site was achieved in June 2020 at Newton Ferrers, so DAA see the additional fifty sites as good progress in the timespan.

Fremington Parish Council have been working with DAA for several years, and the cooperation between the air ambulance and the council has led to other local sites being considered and surveyed. The first to be designated was at the football club, Beechfield.

ESSEX & HERTS: Cambridge- and Suffolk-based CAD and product design specialists Cambridge Design Technology (CDT) have just delivered their latest pro bono charitable project. The project involved the creation of large, detailed, scale replica models of the new fleet aircraft to be used by Essex & Herts Air Ambulance Trust (EHAAT), the Leonardo AW169, twin-engine helicopter. To create the design, a Cambridge Design Technology Computer Aided Design (CAD) engineer used a generic library version of an AW169, which was adapted in close detail and ready to be printed as a scale hollow model.

The CAD design was then 3D-scanned to allow a shelled, hollow CAD model to be replicated. After this, CDT studied photographs of the EHAAT AW169 fleet to replicate and scale the fine details. A model was then 3D printed by Prototype Projects and painted in the EHAAT livery.

CDT had to engineer the model such that the individual parts could be readily masked and painted before assembly. The complex rotor hubs had to be designed to replicate the fine detail of the finished part yet be engineered to meet the minimum



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size for 3D printing. Speaking as the model was presented to major EHAAT fundraisers in January, Stephanie Pisharody, Head of Philanthropy at EHAAT, said: "Thank you so much, Jon! I was blown away when I saw the completed models with such incredible attention to detail and a beautiful finish. These models have surpassed our expectations and will form an important part of our fundraising. We couldn't have done this without your support."

Jon Plumb, Founder and MD of Cambridge Design Technology said: "We are super excited to be supporting EHAAT in the publicity of its emergency services. If our CAD service can contribute in any small way to promoting the fantastic work EHAAT does in saving lives, we can't ask for more."

The limited run of 10 bespoke and personalised AW169 helicopter models was created as a beautiful memento for outstanding gifts to the campaign..

EHAAT CEO Jane Gurney expressed her joy as she presented the first of these models to Simon and Emma Brice, Witham-based business owners, at the air ambulance's eastern base at Earl's Colne in early January as a thank them for their exceptional support.



L-R: Claire Smith (EHAAT Trustee); Jane Gurney (EHAAT CEO); Cliff Gale (EHAAT Special Projects Advisor); Simon and Emma Brice.

**WALES:** The air operations of all Wales air ambulance service was recently taken over Gama, but in the background are plans to alter where operations will be flown from in the future. The matter has been the subject of much discussion, and it seems quite likely that at least one of the current operational bases will go.

A group has been agitating to 'Save Welshpool Air Ambulance Base' on the assumption that it will be the helicopter base to go. The base was set up in the small portable building by Bond Air Services in June 2006, at that time the aircraft operated was a Bolkow BO105. It became the third air ambulance on call in Wales and used a company helipad to provide emergency cover across mid and southeast Wales. Initially it was five days a week summer operation based at electronics firm Control Techniques in Newtown in the day at night it was stored 12 miles away at the Mid Wales Airport in Welshpool.

The service which was initially due to operate for 3 months to support Wales' other two air ambulances over the summer period, was eventually made a permanent fixture. Welshpool Airport has a CAA Ordinary Licence that allows flights for the public transport of passengers or for flying instruction as authorised by the licensee. The aerodrome is licensed for night use.

The two existing leased helicopters were then based at Swansea and Caernarfon, later a fourth helicopter

was set up at Cardiff Heliport.

Early in February papers were published ahead of a meeting of the Emergency Ambulance Services Committee which contained concerning news for the campaign to keep the Welshpool's Air Ambulance base open for the long term.

Six shortlisted options for the future of Wales Air Ambulance base locations were being considered - including closing bases, opening a new base in the north and other configurations. It was anticipated that these options would be clearly spelled out in the final phase of the engagement process so the public could comment on their preference.

The new papers that emerged show, that despite six options remaining, the two that have been identified as the strongest options, would both see the Welshpool base close.

**YORKSHIRE:** Based on a recent sequence of exchanging helicopters for maintenance purposes change of the aircraft for the spare is complicated.

Yorkshire Air Ambulance currently has two new Airbus Helicopters H145 (G-YAAA and G-YORX), one based at their main base at Nostell Priory near Wakefield and the other at Alanbrooke Barracks, Topcliffe near Harrogate. The charity has an arrangement with Gama Aviation (UK) for the provision of a spare H145. This may change in the future when the proposed third owned airframe arrives.

Maintenance is 160 miles south with Airbus Helicopters in Oxford and the H145 (operating as Helimed 97) was delivered there at lunchtime on February 5. At the same time the spare aircraft from Gama Aviation, H145 G-GMAH, had to be collected from its usual haunt in Scotland and flown 180 miles south in a little over 90 minutes to Topcliffe, also as Helimed 97. Meanwhile the usual resident at Topcliffe and the one retaining the full YAA colours, G-YORX, operated out of the main 'public face' base at Nostell.

## UNITED STATES

**NATIONAL:** For over 30 years the National EMS Memorial Service (NEMSMS) has been honouring the memory of EMS providers who have died in the line of duty while serving others.

The Service not only recognises EMS fallen, but it also supports the loved ones they left behind. More than a thousand providers have been honoured since the NEMSMS began.

NEMSMS is a volunteer-based organization whose dedicated team contributes their time and expertise to ensure the EMS fallen receive the recognition and honour they deserve. Because the NEMSMS board does not have a consistent and reliable source of funding, it poses a significant struggle every year to make sure that the Service and the "Weekend of Honor" can occur.

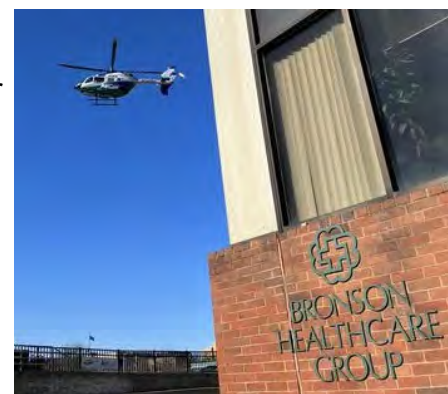


To help mitigate this yearly funding challenge, the National EMS Memorial Service is launching "REMEMBERship". This scheme will allow those who have lost a friend, loved one or colleague a means to not only remember them and their selfless sacrifice, but provide a way in which to honour other EMS personnel who die in the line of duty in the years to come.

Detailed information on the scheme, and how to sign up to provide a small recurring monthly tax-deductible donation of \$9.99 and what members will receive once enrolled, is located on the National EMS Memorial Service website [national-ems-memorial](https://national-ems-memorial.org)

**MICHIGAN:** West Michigan Air Care is to discontinue its based air ambulance service at the Ascension Borgess Hospital and Bronson Healthcare in Kalamazoo from April. The hospital landing pad will remain available for other operators to undertake admissions and transfers. The decision follows a steady decline in the calls for service. In the last 15 years, there has been a 50% reduction in air care service and that has partly compounded by an increase in transportation services in Southwest Michigan.

West Michigan Air Care was founded in March 1993 as a cooperative programme sponsored by Ascension Borgess and Bronson Healthcare. In September 2016, Air Care began a new partnership with Metro Aviation, which provided an Airbus EC145 helicopter (N145EL), pilots and maintenance.







NEW YORK: In Rochester the Mayo Clinic Ambulance Service has completed the latest stage of a re-equipment programme with the delivery of a third Airbus Helicopters H145 D3.

Mayo air ambulance offer fixed and rotary wing ambulances flown by professional pilots and staffed with highly trained paramedics, nurses, respiratory therapists, paediatric and neonatal specialists, perfusionists, and physicians who provide care to people with complex health conditions from scenes of injury and during transfer from hospital to hospital.

The new Fenestron equipped H145 helicopters will step up Mayo Clinic's medical helicopter fleet two generations compared with the previous early model H145 aircraft operated.

Mayo Clinic officials introduced two of the three new aircraft to the media on February 5, 2024. One will be based in Rochester. The other two are stationed in Mankato and Eau Claire. Anyone with good eyes who catches a glimpse of the new helicopter will see the tail numbers on the new aircraft are numbered to honour Dr. W.W. Mayo and Mother Alfred with the final letters of the registration being WM and MA, The number, 483, references the four founders of Mayo Clinic and the tornado that led to its in 1883. [Post Bulletin] Editor: The fleet delivered earlier this year includes N483WM c/n 21206, N483MA c/n 21202 and N483WC c/n 21132, the first delivery arriving in May 2023. The latest fixed wing element is a Beechcraft King Air 350C.

*In a typical year, Mayo Clinic Ambulance Service transports 1,800 patients via helicopter and 200 patients via its fixed wing air ambulance. Of the 2,000 patients received at Saint Marys each year by helicopter, 1,500 arrive through Mayo One, while the other 500 are transported by other air ambulance services.*

Also in New York State, Air Methods has announced that Yates County Emergency Medical Services (EMS) has selected Air Methods Ascend's online programmes to provide additional training for its emergency medical technicians (EMTs) and medics. Located in the Finger Lakes Region of the State of New York, midway between Pennsylvania and Lake Ontario, Yates County serves a population of almost 25,000 across four incorporated villages and nine townships. The County's EMS is comprised of 10 fire departments and four transporting ambulance corps with over 400 volunteer fire fighters and paramedics.

Ascend's offerings of innovative online education programs include Critical Care Review and EMS Review, which are designed to help flight and critical care clinicians as well as emergency medical responders seeking to advance their training, help improve emergent patient outcomes and meet their continuing education needs. Courses meet certification requirements for the Board of Certification for Emergency Nursing (BCEN), Commission on Accreditation for Pre-Hospital Continuing Education (CAPCE), and International Board of Specialty Certifications (IBSC). The in-person and online education programs provide access to world-class educators, state-of-the-art tools, and cutting-edge technologies to help pre-hospital and critical care clinicians build their knowledge, enabling them to operate at the top of their licensure and fulfil continuing education requirements.

Education programmes include advanced manikin-based simulation and virtual reality training that mirror real-world patient care scenarios, building life-saving skills and confidence.

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# FIRE

## UNITED STATES

**CALIFORNIA:** San Diego is spending \$21M on a new Bell 412EPX to operate as a firefighting helicopter to return the city's aerial firefighting capability back to recommended levels. It will operate alongside a Bell 412EP purchased fifteen years ago and a Sikorsky S70i Firehawk helicopter the city bought in 2018. The new machine will replace a 43-year-old helicopter that was withdrawn from service last July when structural cracking was found.

The new Bell has a 375-gallon capacity, far less than the Sikorsky which offers the ability to carry up to 1,000 gallons, but rarely carries more than 775 gallons due to weight and ground pressure concerns.

City officials have announced they've also secured nearly all the approvals needed to build a long-delayed hangar to house the city's three firefighting helicopters. Delays in the planning for the 33,000-square-foot hangar at Montgomery-Gibbs Executive Airport in Kearny Mesa have increased the cost of the new hangar far beyond the \$20M approved six years ago.

Construction of the hangar has been delayed by the need to get approvals from the Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Federal Aviation Administration.

# SEARCH & RESCUE

## IRELAND

**NEW SAR CONTRACT:** Artwork depicting the new colours for the SAR contract aircraft that Bristow and 2Excel will be assigning to Ireland has been issued.

The primary feature is the green stripe and the Irish registration.

In addition the Irish Aviation Authority has issued the Air Operations Certificate to Bristow to cover the contract.

To gain AOC approval, Bristow Ireland was required to demonstrate that its AW189 aircraft will meet the Irish regulator's requirements for safe and compliant operations; submit detailed documentation to show that it can safely manage continued airworthiness; demonstrate that it can safely operate the AW189 to the required standards; and carry out a proving flight with the AW189 in Ireland.



Bristow state that the next phases of preparation for this critical new service are well in hand. 2Excel Ireland Limited - the fixed wing partners on the UK and Ireland contracts - are working in parallel for the award of a fixed-wing AOC, which will in turn enable Bristow to deliver the capability enhancements. There will be further progress reports as they move forward to report on more progress as they move towards the initial transition to the new service later this year.

Bristow now has Air Operating Certificates covering 11 jurisdictions.



## UNITED KINGDOM

**MIGRANTS:** It seems to have been a long time arriving but there are moves towards undertaking light aircraft patrols of the beaches in France.



British Home Secretary James Cleverly and French Minister of the Interior Gerald Darmanin set up the latest agreement [AFP]

The UK Home Secretary James Cleverly is said to have arrived at a deal for 'eyes in the sky' to be deployed against small boats. The Home Office is now talking of routine air patrols that would be a 'game changer' in the Channel crisis.

The aircraft – potentially including drones and helicopters – will be funded by the British taxpayer as part of an existing £500M deal agreed a year ago by the British Prime Minister and the French President. Intelligence on the movements of migrants and people trafficking gangs will be passed from the air to French ground-based teams, so they can sweep in and stop the boats.

It promises to dramatically improve surveillance of hundreds of miles of French beaches but simply reflects what experts have been advising for years. British officials are thought to be concerned the major security operation around the Olympic events will draw resources away from the Channel, handling smugglers a bumper summer.

Meanwhile, Home Secretary James Cleverly has sacked the UK government's immigration watchdog after details of critical reports began appearing in newspapers.

The Home Office said David Neal had "breached the terms" of his role. Mr Neal was quoted in the *Daily Mail* about the lack of security checks on private jets while sources close to him said he was responsible for details of a report, critical of the visa system for care workers, in *The Times* (London).

The comments attributed to Mr Neal triggered questions within government circles and an immigration minister addressed the House of Commons to reject claims that hundreds of high-risk flights landed in the UK without security checks.

A Home Office spokesperson said: "We have terminated the appointment of David Neal, the independent chief inspector of borders and immigration (ICBI), after he breached the terms of appointment and lost the confidence of the Home Secretary.

*Ed: It is noteworthy that this is a government that had hitherto applauded the principle of 'whistleblowers' - clearly not so much when the government is being embarrassed by its own shortcomings!*



### STORMY WEATHER....

The English Channel on a 'nice' day. Unfortunately for the would be migrants and their escorts and boat providers the weather has been decidedly winterish in the last few weeks and as a result the number of arrivals is down. As PAN closes in February there were less than 400 able to make the crossing. No doubt this success will be claimed by the politicians rather than the gods that rule the sea! [TC]

There appears to be a change of direction in relation to British use of Tekever drones over the English Channel (primarily in support of searching out migrant boats). The prime drones used in the task are the Tekever AR5 Evolution Mark 2, a fixed wing landplane with twin engines, and the Tekever AR3 a fixed wing single engine design.

Currently there appear to have been few flights over the English Channel this year. The AR5 G-TEKR serial number E507 was registered on October 15, 2020, and de-registered on October 25, 2023, as 'permanently withdrawn from use'. The other main AR5 was G-TEKV this serial number E505 and was registered in the UK on October 22, 2019.

At the end of December 2020 this airframe was preparing to land when both of its engines quit unexpectedly. The External Pilot took control and landed it without further incident, 29 December 2020. On January 17, 2023, this same Tekever temporarily lost communication when flying over the English Channel.

This airframe remains registered in the UK but there have been few flights recorded in the last few months of last year. There are no flights recorded for it since early January. It flew for just 8 minutes from its usual base at Lydd on January 4, but a flight of January 6 appears to have been cut short.

Also still registered in the UK are the new 2023 registered AR5 G-TEKE serial number 513 and AR5 G-TEKG serial number 514. The former flew in three short flights January and the latter is only noted to have been flown on February 12 this year.

Because they are not registered under the normal system by the UK CAA it is less easy to follow the fortunes of the single engine Tekever AR. We know that one example ditched into the English Channel on July 2, 2022. That airframe was recovered and an AAIB report produced.

The report stated that during a Beyond Visual Line of Sight (BVLoS) flight over the English Channel, the engine stopped. The aircraft descended on a parachute into the sea and was subsequently recovered. Investigation revealed an issue with the Low-Pressure fuel pump which caused it to fail and trip its associated electrical fuse. This fuse also provided electrical power to the High-Pressure fuel pump and, with both pumps stopped, the engine was starved of fuel.

*Ed: These craft are owned and operated on behalf of the government departments by Tekever Ltd., in Chilworth, Southampton. Tekever have been asked whether they wish to comment but so far have not. Now we do not know whether the operation has ceased or simply taking winter downtime. Meanwhile the manned fixed wing flights continue from Lydd.*



#### MEANWHILE....

Over in Malta on January 31 it was reported that SE-MAA a DHC-8- 311Q Dash 8 MSA operated by the Swedish Coast Guard was obliged to return to the islands after it suffered a mechanical problem with its hydraulics just after take-off.

The Aircraft had departed Malta International Airport, Luqa, Malta GC en-route to Stockholm-Skavsta Airport, Sweden.

It is assumed that the aircraft was in the region undertaking FRONTEX patrols. [ASN]

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# INDUSTRY

**Britten-Norman Aircraft Limited**, which is part of the wider B-N Group, is looking to appoint an administrator – with staff now awaiting news on the future of the company. Last month the company started moves to protect the future of the business at the King's Bench Division of the High Court in London. The firm – which operates out of Bembridge Airport on the Isle of Wight and at Solent Airport [formerly RNAS Lee-on-Solent] on the mainland – is responsible for the design and manufacturing side of the business in respect of airframes and spares.

Expectations of a statement on the position of the company debts have been expected for several days but they had not materialised by the time PAN went to press.

The business is not expected to collapse but the recent plans for the development of the business announced in September 2023 are now on hold. Companies House shows that the BN accounts, due at the end of December, are now overdue. [Island Echo]

The preparation for the sale of **Gloucestershire Airport**, Staverton continues with the new leadership team being formed to oversee the (presumed) eventual sale. [Glos Live]

Meanwhile, on the airfield, the assets of Specialist Aviation Service were sold to **Gama Aviation (UK)** on February 1 in a deal through London based advisory firm FRP Corporate Finance. The early sale was to ensure that the substantive business of SAS continues through Gama.

On February 2 FRP announced they had completed the sale of the business and assets of Specialist Aviation Services Ltd (the Company) to Gama Aviation – an AIM-listed business aviation specialist headquartered in Farnborough.

Headquartered at Gloucestershire Airport, Staverton, near Cheltenham, Specialist Aviation Services Ltd provided helicopter emergency medical services (HEMS) to numerous Air Ambulance Charities, primarily across the South of England. It also provided fleet management and servicing for a range of private organisations both in the UK and in the Middle East where it had operations in Kuwait and in Bahrain.

The Company had incurred operating losses for a number of years and had taken significant steps to address these financial challenges, including seeking new funding.

FRP were appointed in October 2023 to run an accelerated M&A process with a strategic priority of finding a solution that facilitated the continuation of vital air ambulance operations without disruption.

Following an exhaustive sales process, Restructuring Advisory Partners were appointed as Administrators of the Company on January 31, 2024, and immediately completed its pre-pack sale to Gama Aviation plc. As part of the deal, all but two of the Company's 184 employees will transfer to Gama Aviation.

Meanwhile FRP have been contacting the many potential creditors of the company in administration setting out their recourse to clawing back any monies owed. No figure has yet been given for the level of debt.



*Ed: As stated in last month's edition of PAN, the staff not transferring included CEO Luke Farajallah. Luke remains in the industry as Chairman of the Board at recruitment agency TARCG and in recent days has been confirmed as the CEO of Loganair, branded as Scotland's Airline, and the largest regional airline in the UK by passenger numbers and fleet size. He was previously Chief Operating Officer for the Flybe PLC Group when that airline failed. He had been CEO with SAS for 3 years and 8 months when he stood down in December last year.*

*Specialist Aviation Service grew out of Police Aviation Serves and Medical Aviation Services, a private commercial company set up by Mark Trumble, Paul Hannant and Steve Bidmead forty years ago in 1984. The company destined to assist a number of British police helicopter units into aviation, was born out of work with the Devon & Cornwall police operations in the mid-1980's. Initially intended to service the requirements of the police helicopter unit in Exeter, as time passed a greater number of police forces entered contracts and PAS grew accordingly. Although primarily a helicopter operator, initially the Bolkow BO105, in the early years they flew fixed wing BN-2 Islanders on police missions.*

*Over the years PAS took over other operations and broadened their impact on the market. In many ways they brought aviation to many British police forces – mostly going head-to-head with other smaller operators and uniquely offering a training school at Staverton. They were well regarded for their various innovations brought to market, but equally renowned for the mistakes they made in what was a developing industry.*



*It was PAS that introduced the MD 900 Explorer to the emergency services market. One of the last projects of the former McDonnell-Douglas Corporation to fly and already rejected by the US military it nearly failed with the demise of the company name. In many ways PAS rescued the project by placing significant orders in the mid-1990s. It finally settled down as a viable product when PAS ownership passed to the Dutch RDM Group.*

*See the Obituary to Paul Hannant in this issue.*



**Loft Dynamics**, a leading virtual reality (VR) flight simulation training device (FSTD) manufacturer, announced last month that EPNER, the world-renowned and highly selective test pilot school in France, will acquire one of the company's EASA-qualified simulators. EPNER will use Loft Dynamics' Airbus H125 VR FSTD to safely and efficiently train their students in executing and evaluating maneuvers uniquely required for their job function. The school is the latest organization to harness the power of virtual reality to make pilot training safer, more affordable, accessible and sustainable.

EPNER (L'École du Personnel Navigant d'Essais et de Réception), the prestigious test pilot school in France operates under the Direction générale de l'armement (DGA), the French government agency responsible for acquiring and developing military equipment and technology. EPNER trains highly qualified test crews, including pilots, engineers, air traffic controllers, and parachutists, to conduct and manage ground and flight tests for military and civilian aircraft.

Now, with the incorporation of Loft Dynamics' Airbus H125 FSTD, the first and only VR FSTD to achieve FTD Level 3 qualification from EASA, EPNER can ensure the highest level of simulation quality for its students and their distinct requirements.

[www.loftdynamics.com](http://www.loftdynamics.com)

Canadian avionics manufacturer, **Anodyne Electronics Manufacturing Corp.** (AEM), has announced a partnership expansion with Texas Aerospace Technologies, a subsidiary of Texas Aerospace Services, to add AEM's new MTP136D modern panel-mount P25 VHF FM Forest Service radio to its lineup of product offerings for their Latin American customers.

Texas Aerospace Technologies adds AEM's P25 aerial firefighting radio to the suite of special mission communication products it's already representing for the manufacturer, further strengthening customer access to industry-leading avionics solutions in the region.



The MTP136D is a modern panel-mount P25 VHF FM Forest Service radio set to modernize tactical aerial firefighting communications and help operators successfully complete some of their harshest missions.

The MTP136D is available for pre-order. Contact Texas Aerospace Technologies at [sales@txaero.com](mailto:sales@txaero.com) for information on AEM products in Latin America, or email AEM at [sales@aem-corp.com](mailto:sales@aem-corp.com).

In Germany **ESG Elektroniksystem- und Logistik-GmbH** has been commissioned by the procurement authority for the Brandenburg police force to supply its pioneering visAIRion laser safety glasses to the pilots and flight technicians of the Brandenburg police helicopter squadron. The laser safety glasses were handed over to the future users at the Ahrensfelde site. The police helicopter squadron now has laser protection equipment that meets the special challenges of police missions.

ESG's visAIRion laser safety glasses for aircraft crews, which are now also used successfully by the German Armed Forces, not only offer optimum, customisable ergonomic features and maximum wearing comfort, but a broadband protective effect while at the same time ensuring sufficient transmission for external vision in poor weather or night vision conditions. With the initial equipment of its pilots and flight technicians, the Brandenburg police force is taking on a pioneering role in the police environment worldwide about optimising the operational capability of





its helicopter squadron by sustainably increasing protection against the increasing dangers of laser attacks.

The visAIRion team at ESG is responding to the changing threat situation posed by the possibility of attacks with new laser pointer models by continuously reviewing the protection spectrum and optical performance of the laser safety glasses and developing them further where necessary. Among other things, ESG is currently working on variants of laser safety glasses that are also suitable for non-ballistic cockpit windows and whose filter technology can be used to replace visors, as well as mask goggles for dust-intensive environments. [www.esg.de](http://www.esg.de)

**MD Helicopters, LLC** (MDH) has announced two new additions to its growing global network of MDH service providers. Clemens Aviation of Wichita, Kansas, is now an MD Helicopters Authorized Service Center (ASC). Additionally, Seaside Helicopters of Mesa, Arizona, became an MD Helicopters Authorized Spare Parts Retailer. With a wealth of MDH service experience and knowledge, these new network additions further deliver on MD Helicopters' commitment to increasing support options and reducing service response times for customers.

"We made a commitment to our customers to reduce response times by increasing and expanding the geographical location of our MDH service providers," says MD Helicopters President and CEO Brad Pedersen. "As we continue to deliver on that promise, we are thrilled to welcome these two extremely reputable companies with proven track records of superior service to our service network."

#### **Clemens Aviation**

Clemens Aviation built its reputation through a focus on excellence and innovation in aircraft service, sales, support, and management, including its own fleet of MD 500E and 530F model helicopters. With the launch of its MDH Authorized Service Center, the company is extending its helicopter operations expertise into a niche category that provides numerous benefits for its customers.

The Clemens Aviation MDH Authorized Service Center will specialize in E-to-F conversions, being one of four ASCs currently performing this upgrade. Additionally, Clemens Aviation has developed an innovative cockpit panel upgrade, set to receive an STC for broader market availability.

#### **Seaside Helicopters**

With more than 30 years of experience serving the MDH community, Seaside Helicopters brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to the MDH Parts Retailer network. The company's expansive customer base includes several large law enforcement agencies that require fast, reliable service for mission success, including Pasadena and Mesa police departments.

Seaside Helicopters recently relocated to Mesa from San Diego to enhance its regional and geographical strategic position to support MD Helicopters customers.

**Indra** was awarded a contract for the development and production of an EASA Level D qualifiable H225M FMS for the Republic of Singapore Air Force. The contract includes post-delivery support, technical assistance, and options for future expansion.

The simulator will be equipped with motion and vibration platforms. It will enable training in normal and emergency helicopter procedures, with special emphasis on training in all missions to be performed by the RSAF, such as search and rescue, aeromedical evacuation, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations, among others.

Indra's simulator will ensure safety during training, replicating realistic operational scenarios and complex manoeuvres. It will simulate both day and night operations, under all possible challenging environmental conditions.

It will also include advanced training analytics capabilities using biometric sensors to assist instructors in evaluating pilots and for more insights during debriefing.

One of the most outstanding features of this simulator is its Ro-Ro capability, which allows future potential helicopter cockpits to be interchanged in a single simulator, optimizing the use of the system.

**Pratt & Whitney Canada** announced it will expand its maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) capabilities by creating a new overhaul line in Singapore for its PT6C-67C engines, which power the Leonardo AW139 medium-twin helicopter. The Singapore facility was chosen as the location for the new overhaul



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line in response to a growing demand for advanced maintenance solutions for the P6TC-67C engine and the evolving needs of customers around the world. A new modular test cell will also be established at the facility as part of the new capability setup. The new overhaul line and test cell are expected to be fully operational by 2025.

Pratt & Whitney Canada's Singapore facility currently provides overhaul-level services for the PW100 family of regional turboprop engines, repair capabilities for a variety of the company's other turboprop, turbofan, and turboshaft engines, and for its APS3200 auxiliary power unit for the Airbus A320.

**StandardAero** has completed the stand up of its Pratt & Whitney Canada PW200 helicopter engine MRO capabilities at its Winnipeg, Canada Helicopter Center of Excellence (COE), including support for a new test cell. The company is in the process of transitioning the test cell from its facility in Dallas to Winnipeg, an investment of more than \$1M. StandardAero has also ramped up operations with new tooling and resources and received Transport Canada approval last December.

**Coptersafety** announced that they are upgrading their TRU Odyssey H AW169 Full Flight Simulator to Avionics phase 8. The simulator is estimated to be ready by the Q4 of 2024. Coptersafety is an independent helicopter pilot training provider for commercial, government, and private organizations. With a mission to improve safety in the rotor-wing industry, Coptersafety provides simulator training for pilots from around the world.

The TRU Odyssey H AW169 full flight simulator is Coptersafety's most recent simulator, installed in 2020 and operational since early 2021. The simulator has extended Coptersafety's options of training scenarios and operational training for AW169 helicopter operations. Coptersafety is continuously working to improve and standardize training, while fulfilling demands and exceeding expectations of their customers. With the increasing use of the AW169 aircraft by operators, the upgrade to Avionics phase 8 will provide a higher-level of training for current and future customers. Due to the lengthy process of upgrading the avionics in a full flight simulator, Coptersafety's AW169 full flight simulator will be unavailable for training starting from April of 2024. The AW169 full flight simulator with Avionics phase 8 is scheduled to be ready by Q4 of 2024. The upgraded full flight simulator will initially be authorized by EASA and UK CAA, followed by the FAA and Transport Canada, and others as required.

**Priority 1 Air Rescue (P1AR)**, a world leader in helicopter Search and Rescue (SAR) and Tactical mission operational training and support, is pleased to announce the award of a multi-year contract by French Ministry of Armed Forces Command to provide virtual SAR, Tactical, Aerial Use of Force/ Gunnery, and NVIS simulation and training support services for helicopter aircrews operating the H225M, AS532, SA330, NH90, AS565, H125M, and AS342 Gazelle. The training will take place at the P1AR Search and Rescue Tactical Training Academy (SART/TAC) located in Bordeaux, France. Training will incorporate pilot and rear-crew SAR mission synthetic sessions using two Advanced Aircrew Mission Simulators (AAMS) that will be integrated with tactile learning on three multi-aircraft configured hoist/fast-rope training towers to provide technical and procedural hoist operations practice.



Smith Myers and **AgustaWestland Aviation Services (AWAS)** have formed a partnership to bring Smith Myers award-winning ARTEMIS mobile phone detection, location and communication systems to existing Leonardo's helicopter users in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Regions. Abu Dhabi-based AWAS provide a combination of engineering and maintenance expertise that will offer current Leonardo's helicopter users a one-stop-shop for the procurement, integration, certification, commissioning, training and support of ARTEMIS onto existing Leonardo's helicopter offering retrofit programs in the region.



Most recently selected for major UK, European and North American SAR and Coast Guard Programs. The National Search and Rescue Centre (NSRC) of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) also selected ARTEMIS for installation across their fleet of Search & Rescue Helicopters. ARTEMIS is also deployed around the world in Maritime Patrol, Border Control, Aerial Firefighting and Natural Disasters.

ARTEMIS has been designed to accurately locate mobile telephones in the challenging airborne environment using only two small antennas. ARTEMIS can detect a phone at extended ranges up to 35Km and provides unique capabilities such as mass-mapping and geofencing to minimise crew workload. The system is automated, quick and accurate. Leading to more rapid positive outcomes, even in low light/IMC conditions and operates stand-alone with no requirement for involvement of the Mobile Network Operators.





# ACCIDENTS AND INCIDENTS

**11 January 2024 Beechcraft King Air 200 N634B.** Air ambulance of Air St. Luke in Boise, Idaho. Undertaking a transport from Boise, Idaho to Rochester, Minnesota. The journey was, as was the landing on the runway at Rochester. During the taxi phase, the aircraft made a turn out and the pilots noted a wobble coming from the front landing gear. Once they cleared off the runway and got onto the taxi way, the crew stopped and contacted the tower. The tower was able to get a tug to bring the aircraft to the ramp. The front landing gear tyre was flat. The pressure dropped due to the extreme cold temperatures and the tyre was dislodged from the wheel during the turn out. After investigation it was found that the tyre was not damaged, and after putting back on the rim it was re-inflated and able to hold pressure. The aircraft was placed back into service and the crew returned home without any further incidents.

**31 January 2024 Eurocopter AS 350B3 Ecureuil CC-ETF** of Policía de Investigaciones de Chile (PDI) crashed and caught fire at Pichidanguí Airport (SCDI). Some of the five occupants suffered serious injuries, the helicopter was partly consumed by the post impact fire and the co-pilot of the aircraft was confirmed as dead because of her fire injuries.

**31 January 2024 de Havilland Canada DHC-8-311Q Dash 8 MSA SE-MAA** of the Swedish Coast Guard. Aircraft departed Malta International Airport, Luqa, Malta GC en-route to Stockholm-Skavsta Airport, Sweden. Shortly after leaving it suffered a major hydraulic leak and had to return to the departure airport. [Times]

**3 February 2024 Sikosky S-70i Blackhawk EM-708** Turkish Police Aviation Department. The helicopter was written off when it crashed under unknown circumstances Kartal, Nurdagi District, Gaziantep Province. Two pilots aboard, Police Chief Cemil Gülen, Contract Pilot Levent Öztürk, were killed and the passenger, a technician, was injured.

**4 February 2024 Mil Mi-8MTV-1 RF-32755** Ministry of Emergency Situations Russia. The helicopter from the North-Western Aviation Rescue Center of the ministry with three persons aboard disappeared in the northwestern republic of Karelia, during a training flight on the route from Petrozavodsk-Vytegra. The last communication was around the village of Derevyannoye in Karelia. The wreckage of the helicopter was found under the ice in Lake Onega, Karelia at a depth of 50 metres.

**17 February 2024 Bell 407 N.** Air Ambulance undertaking a patient transfer suffered engine problems and made an unscheduled landing in a field near the junction of Loop 202 and McClintock Drive, Tempe, Arizona USA. The landing was upright with no reported damage. Crew and single patient on board reported no injuries. [KTAR]

**22 February 2024 Sikorsky UH-60A Blackhawk PNC0614** Anti-Narcotics Directorate of the Colombia National Police. On a flight from Medellín to Tulua, communication with the Black Hawk helicopter of the police was lost near the San Pablo Road, in the municipality of Caramanta, southwest Antioqueño. The wreck was found crashed under unknown circumstances near Caramanta, Colombia All four aboard were killed. The dead are given as Mayor, Juan Carlos Morales, Captain, Cesar Andrés Rodríguez, Deputy Superintendent, Feder Alejandro Celis and Deputy Superintendent, Rafael Antonio González. [Boyaca Noticias/Media/ASN]

**22 February 2024 Sikorsky S76 N.** Air ambulance of Monroe County Trauma Star suffered an undercarriage malfunction. The aircraft had departed to transfer a patient to the HCA Florida Kendall Hospital in Miami at the time of the incident but had returned to the Trauma Star at Florida Keys Marathon International Airport after crew realised that the helicopter's landing gear had malfunctioned. The three helicopters, operated under the name Trauma Star, were temporarily grounded. The patient was then collected via a ground ambulance, which then completed the transfer. Monroe County is currently replacing the S76 with new build AW139 helicopters.

## SAFETY

A dead goose was found in part of the flight control system of a medical helicopter that crashed in western Oklahoma, killing all three people on board, according to a preliminary report by the National Transportation Safety Board.

The report does not cite a suspected cause of the crash, but noted one goose was found in the helicopter's flight control system and others were found in the debris field.

A report on the probable cause could take up to two years to complete, according to the NTSB.

Last month an Emergency Airworthiness Directive (AD) 2024-04-51 was sent to owners and operators of Pratt & Whitney Canada Corp. Model PT6A engines.

The AD was prompted by reports of second-stage power turbine (PT2) blade failures and was instigated by Transport Canada, the aviation authority for Canada to correct an unsafe condition on a number of P&WC PT6A sub-types including the PT6A-64, PT6A-66, PT6A-66A, PT6A-66B, PT6A-66D, PT6A-66T, PT6A-67, PT6A-67A, PT6A-67AF, PT6A-67AG, PT6A-67B, PT6A-67D, PT6A-67F, PT6A-67P, PT6A-67R, PT6A-67RM, PT6A-67T, PT6A-68, PT6A-68B, PT6A-68C, PT6A-68D, PT6A-68T, PT6E-67XP, and PT6E-66XT engines.

There has been a recent in-service report of a PT2 blade failure on a model PT6A-67 engine and two reports of PT2 blade failures during testing at the manufacturer's facility. The PT2 blade failures were contained. The manufacturer is investigating the root cause of the PT2 blade failures, but the preliminary investigation determined that the affected power turbine modules contained PT2 blades with part number 3056693-01, which were newly manufactured from the same raw material. In all cases, the PT2 blades had accumulated less than 25 hours airtime since new.

Transport Canada Emergency AD CF-2024-05 specifies removal of the suspect blades prior to the next flight and prohibits installation of the suspect blades. These are interim corrective actions until the root cause investigation is completed. This emergency AD is intended to prevent the failure of PT2 blades.

## UNMANNED

Wedgetail Aerospace, supported by Schiebel Pacific, successfully obtained the approval from the Australian Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) to operate the Schiebel CAMCOPTER® S-100 Unmanned Air System (UAS) in civil airspace. It is the first large (>150 kg) Vertical Takeoff and Landing (VTOL) UAS to attain this civil approval from the Australian authorities.

Wedgetail Aerospace, in close cooperation with Schiebel Pacific and the Australian authorities, completed the process to achieve their experimental approval with a series of flight demonstrations in Western Australia. This endorsement enables the S-100 to operate in Australian civil airspace. Applications now being pursued include fire and disaster monitoring, cargo delivery, as well as inspections and surveillance.

## PEOPLE

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) graded **Northamptonshire Police's** performance across nine areas of policing and found the force was outstanding in one area, good in one area, adequate in six areas and requires improvement in one area. HMICFRS said the force has improved in most areas, but the matter of the suspended Chief Constable remains an outstanding issue.

In the lead up to the inspection, there was instability in the chief officer team due to several vacancies and chief officer appointments, and shortly following the inspection, the chief constable was suspended pending the outcome of a misconduct investigation.

The death of **Paul Hannant** has been reported. Hannant was at the forefront of providing air support to the police in the 1980s and in 1984 he was one of the three co-founders of Police Aviation Services (PAS), using leased helicopters to fly for Devon and Cornwall police and later other forces throughout England and Wales. The company was destined to assist a number of British police helicopter units take their first steps into aviation. The naming of the company was in many ways inspired, many uninformed observers and many professionals in America thought that that PAS was an official government organisation born out of the police and accorded it greater deference than it deserved.



Paul Hannant was born in Wakefield, West Yorkshire, in 1950, the younger of two sons of James Hannant, a member of RAF Bomber Command who was instrumental in igniting an interest in flying. He was commissioned in the Army Air Corps in 1970, trained as a pilot at Middle Wallop and was deployed to both Cyprus and Northern Ireland, attached to the Royal Anglian Regiment.

Hannant left the army in 1977 to fly commercially in Norway, Nigeria, Brunei, Oman and the South China Sea supporting the oil industry. In 1988 Hannant joined the Sultan of Oman's Air Force. On one occasion he was asked to try out the latest generation of night-vision goggles on operations in Oman and subsequently took the knowledge he had learned from that to work with the Home Office in the UK on NVG procedures for police aircraft. He flew the first UK police air operation using night-vision goggles, over Woodbury Common, Devon, on November 15, 1993.





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In 1984 the three creators of what would be P.A.S., Mark Trumble, Paul Hannant and Steve Bidmead, three ex-military pilots were trading exclusively in the support of police aviation mainly using leased helicopters. Trumble had flown on the Devon & Cornwall contract with Colt Executive Aviation which had started in a small way in 1978. By 1984 Devon & Cornwall had purchased their first helicopter, a Bolkow BO105 and were still supported by the three men. In 1987 further opportunities presented themselves and led to the creation of P.A.S. and its initially less successful offspring Medical Aviation Services (M.A.S.) to support further police air operations.

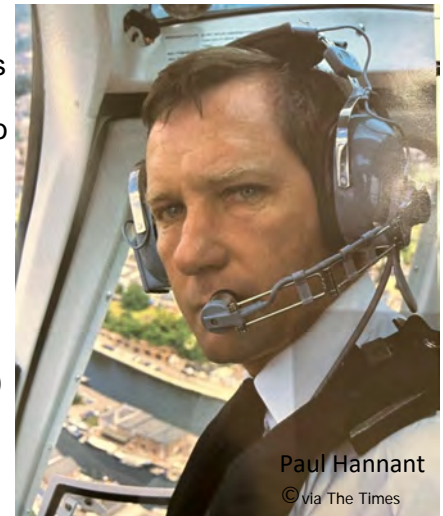
Hannant was involved in the formulation of the first ever UK Police Air Operator's Certificate (PAOC) from the late 1980s and the initial form was issued to PAS in February 1995. Other leading programmes for UK police aviation included working with manufacturers to add EO/IR sensors to helicopters, introducing electronic moving maps and produced detailed flight operations manuals for police helicopters and planes.

Moving on to the Air Accidents Investigation Branch in 1999, Hannant undertook inquiries into 418 incidents including the Shoreham air show crash in which a former military Hawker Hunter aircraft crashed on to a main road during an aerial display killing 11 people in August 2015. He was also involved in the international hunt for Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 that disappeared the previous year.

As an expert witness in several inquiries, his painstaking investigations helped to debunk some of the more outlandish conspiracy theories about aircraft crashes, often producing evidence that pointed to a sad but straightforward explanation of what had gone wrong.

Hannant, who retired in 2021, had a keen interest in military history and was an accomplished artist, drawing cartoons from the observations he made of the absurdity of life. He continued to enjoy target shooting, flying and looking after his golden retriever.

Paul Hannant, police aviation safety expert, was born on July 8, 1950. He died after a short illness on January 1, 2024, aged 73 [The Times/PAR]



Paul Hannant  
© via The Times

Bracknell based **Kenyon International Emergency Services**, a leading full-spectrum provider of disaster response services, and part of the global aviation services group, and **Air Partner**, have announced the appointment of six new emergency planning and crisis communications experts to enhance the company's global disaster response and crisis communications services.

**Shabita Sumaraj** [right] has been appointed Kenyon's Head of Humanitarian Services. Based in the company's UK headquarters in Bracknell, Shabita has extensive first-hand experience of Emergency Response Planning. In her previous role as Head of Operations at a GP Federation in Surrey, she successfully led the roll out of a vaccination programme which delivered over a million vaccinations while also running the daily operations at multiple sites. Shabita also has over 18 years' experience in the aviation industry, having worked with Cathay Pacific in a variety of roles including overseeing emergency preparedness for 14 ports across 11 countries in Europe.



Joining Shabita in the UK headquarters is **Dean Trussler** who will serve as **Kenyon's Head of Crisis Management Centre and Preparedness**. A former Marine, Dean has spent the last 20 years as an Emergency Planner, Consultant and Business Continuity & Resilience Manager, working with a number of Local Authorities, media organisations and Gama Aviation. Dean brings significant experience of designing and operating emergency planning, policies and management. He moves to Kenyon from his most recent position as Head of Emergency Planning and Operational Resilience at the George Eliot Hospital, Warwickshire.



Bolstering the company's crisis communications team is the appointment of **Susan Brown** [left] as **Kenyon's new Vice President of Crisis Communications**. Based in California, USA, she will work in partnership with UK-based Vice President of Crisis Communications, Donald Steel, to drive the team's full range of crisis communications services around the globe. Susan is a seasoned communications specialist, having worked internationally in corporate communications with a focus on issues and crisis response, as well as risk and con-



tingency planning for more than 25 years.

Her long-standing career includes work in the aviation industry having held worldwide responsibility for public relations and crisis communications for Emirates Airline and Group of 50+ subsidiary companies in Dubai, as well as for aviation IT technology company SITA, based in Geneva.

To further support and develop the crisis communication team's capabilities in the United States, Kenyon Emergency Services has also appointed three new Associate Crisis Communications Directors.



**Rick Martin** [left] joins the team with a distinguished journalistic background, having served as a Senior News Editor and a Field Producer at CNN, working with the likes of Anderson Cooper and Wolf Blitzer. He has since worked in local emergency planning, making him an experienced communicator in emergency and crisis situations.

**Arielle Skylar** is a Senior Communicator at Yale New Haven Health System. Her work in different healthcare settings has been focused on public health, research and patient-centred narratives. She has worked closely with families of patients facing life-changing events, making her a strong addition to the team.

UK-born **Eleanor Bancroft** [right] has served in many communications roles throughout her career. Beginning her career at the BBC in London, she was also Communications Manager at OFCOM, the UK media, telecoms and internet regulator. Since moving to the US, Eleanor worked in financial crime analysis as well as non-profits before joining 3AM Innovations, a tech company specialising in solutions for first responders.



The appointments come as Kenyon Emergency Services unveiled its newly innovated [website](#), making it even easier for potential clients to access the company's leading consultancy services and training programmes.

In the Philippines, the Sandiganbayan (a special appellate collegial court in the Philippines that has jurisdiction over criminal and civil cases involving graft and corrupt practices and other offenses committed by public officers and employees) has denied a bid by former Senior Police Officer Linda Padojinog to dismiss the graft case against her that stemmed from the **Philippine National Police's** (PNP) purchase of allegedly overpriced, second-hand helicopters in 2009.

The court's Seventh Division, in a minute-resolution dated February 21, said that the Supreme Court (SC)'s dismissal of an administrative case against Padojinog in connection with the same helicopter purchase deal is not a valid ground for dismissing the criminal case against her.

Among the key pieces of evidence in the criminal case, was a special audit investigation report on the direct negotiation for the helicopters as well as on the "perceived anomaly" in the inspection and acceptance of these helicopters.

The court pointed out that the criminal case against Padojinog and the 10 other former police officers involves the allegation of conspiracy, so the appreciation of facts must no longer focus on her liability alone. Aside from Padojinog, also accused in the case were former PNP chief Jesus Verzosa and nine other former police officers: Avensuel Dy, Romeo Hilomen, Roman Loreto, Claudio Gaspar Jr., Ronald Roderos, Leocadio Salva Santiago Jr., Ermilando Villafuerte, Job Nolan Antonio and Ruben Gongona.

The case stemmed from the PNP's purchase of three Robinson helicopters from Manila Aerospace Products Trading Corp. in 2009, which included two standard R44 Raven I light police operational helicopters and one fully equipped R44 Raven II LPOH.

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A resolution issued by the National Police Commission in 2008 required that the three helicopters to be purchased by the PNP should be brand new. The ombudsman said its investigation revealed that only the Robinson R44 Raven II was brand new while the two Robinson R44 Raven I were pre-owned.

The ombudsman said the respondent police officers, who were then members of the PNP's inspection and acceptance committee, conspired to make it appear that all the delivered helicopters were brand new.



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# HIGH SKILL, HIGH ALTITUDE

## *The Gendarmerie Mountain Flying Training Centre*

Situated in the French Alps, the town of Briançon houses the Gendarmerie CVM, or Centre de Vol en Montagne, the mountain flying centre. Mountain training is a part of the overall training of the Gendarmerie Air Forces (FAGN) pilots and flight engineers.

Deputy head of the Gendarmerie National Helicopter Training Centre Major Orain and Lieutenant Juste gave the authors, Roelof-Jan Gort and Bjorn van der Flier of FlyHighAeromedia, a deeper look on the tasks and operations of the CVM and its international connections.

### **The Mountain flying Training Centre itself.**

The CVM has existed in its current location since 2014 and shares it with the SAG Briançon, but training has been conducted from the previous operational base. In service with the FAGN since 2012 and a mountain flying instructor since 2019, Major Orain is not based at Briançon, but he is currently assigned to the CVM and he is present every quarter to participate in the mountain training courses, he explains: "I have to ensure, under the directives of my chief, the good progress of the training courses followed by the pilots and the flight engineers of the gendarmerie in all the fields and on our three types of helicopters". These types are the AS350 Ecureuil, EC135, and the EC145.

But it's not just helicopter pilots they train at the CVM, the modern age also requires drone pilots to be trained in the mountains, all with the highest standard of safety in mind.

Each FAGN pilot begins its initial training at Dax flying school of the Army aviation in southwestern France, alongside pilots from the army, navy, and air force, where they learn to fly the helicopter on the EC120. The training to become a military helicopter pilot at the Dax air school takes about a year and a half and the students must fly about one hundred and thirty hours in real time and twenty hours in the simulator. When they come to the Gendarmerie Air Forces, the pilots also receive their qualification training at BA120 Cazaux on one of the three types of helicopters the FAGN operates (AS350, EC135, EC145). This depends on the unit they are going to. The training is about five weeks during which they fly for twelve hours. After this initial training, they go to their environmental training for the Gendarmerie.

As mentioned previously, at the CVM there is training four times a year, to ensure every season and weather condition are covered, and usually takes about two weeks to accomplish. There is only one instructor pilot permanently assigned to the CVM, which is Lieutenant Arnaud Juste, once a course started, the CVM is supplemented with additional instructors to make total of ten. The team is then composed of personnel with a range of different experiences, and most of them are operational pilots assigned to other FAGN Mountain bases, this is in order to impart as wide a range methods and experiences as possible to the students. A week after the pilots have performed their technical qualification on the aircraft, they attend

the CVM to fly additional flying hours on their respective type and to do initial training in the mountains, not a full qualification.

### The Fleet

The CVM has one AS350 and one EC145 on strength and although they are part of the Gendarmerie Air Forces, they are trainers not normally assigned to operational sorties. Only in exceptional circumstances, where the normal SAG fleet is under pressure and in need of reinforcement, might the CVM fleet be used. This was the case in the aftermath of the Germanwings Airbus A320 crash in March 2015. The crash site was hardly reachable by land and there was a high demand for flying officials and investigators to the crash site.

The helicopters used by the CVM are equipped like any other unit of the FAGN, the only modification undertaken is in winter when they are equipped with snow skids. Flying in higher altitudes does have an impact on engine performance and when there is a compromise required between aircraft weight and performance, the helicopter goes on a quick diet. The crews often land at a base camp to offload equipment and personnel not required for the mission, just to reach the rescue point, making as many round trips as required to undertake the mission.

### Course and instructor

There are two different types of training at the CVM, the initial training of two weeks a full qualification course of up to eight weeks, Lieutenant Juste gave us a closer look on the complete training process.

"We train Pilots and flight engineers not only to fly in the mountains but also to fly at the limited power of the aircraft they use. They also train the method to make a safety decision to land in confined airspace", Lieutenant Arnaud Juste stated. Every pilot comes to the CVM for a week after their technical qualification on the AS350 Ecureuil or the EC145. "We make them fly in confined airspaces and apply the method to make a safety decision to land according to the aircraft limits and the specification of the terrain. It makes them also flight hours on the helicopter and have more experience on it. So, it is not a mountain qualification but only an initiation", he commented.

For this training they fly about eight hours with an instructor in the range of terrain they have near Briançon. After this intense week of flying in the mountains, they go back to their unit. If they are still willing to fly in the mountains and are assessed as having the required skills, they must spend a specific rating week at the CVM. The pilots who pass, begin the training course of mountain flying. The total of eight weeks is undertaken at a rate of two weeks per season.

### Training to fly in the mountains at night.

The pilots must perform sorties flying with Night Vision Goggles (NVGs) before they are cleared to fly with a mountain air unit. They need to have a minimum of seventy hours of NVG flights and two hundred hoist operations in daylight and then pass training which five hours flying over a period of one week. To be able to operate in the mountains they are required to train as a crew a minimum of twelve hours.

"We train the pilots in night flying by training as we do by day. We make about the same analysis method for landing, and we perform these training flight in every kind of terrain (high and low altitude, snow, dry, very dark night, and full moon conditions - the light conditions are quite different by night and through the NVGs. We need to train regularly to get used to them (no relief through the NVGs)," Lt. Juste explains.

### Different training phases.

Lieutenant Juste explained the selection process: "The selection is performed before the training which is one week of flying and a motivational interview with our instructors. The candidates are volunteers, and they must let us know by informing their hierarchy and they must hold at least thousand flight hours".

The mountain flying training course is made up of four stages after the rating week. The first phase is the elementary phase. During this phase, the pilots are learning the basic mountain terrain and work on honing their flying skills without any horizon reference, security of the paths, aerologic analysis. The second phase is the fundamental phase. During this phase they will learn the analysis methods in all types of areas and hardening on the EC145 C2. The third phase is the development phase. During this phase, the pilots will analyse methods in rough terrain, snow landings, working in areological and in degraded (unfavourable) weather conditions. And the fourth and the latest phase is the synthesis phase. During this





phase they learn operational rescue management. As said before, this training takes eight weeks plus the qualification rating on the EC145 C2 helicopter.

### **The difficulties of flight in the mountains.**

For a pilot without experience, it is not easy to fly in the mountains.

“As a pilot in the mountains you have to consider the perfect knowledge of the performances of the helicopter, analysis of the situation, you can make a safety decision and that you have to engage when it is necessary”, Lieutenant Juste commented.

There are also circumstances they cannot fly. Extremely poor weather at the departure or the rescue locations give the pilots a reason to abort their mission.

After the completion of training at the CVM, pilots can fly in the mountains, but they are still required to train with the crew members and rescuers of their future unit. They also need to make reconnaissance flights to learn the obstacles, the dropping zones, and the difficulties of the area.

### **Training hoist operators at the CVM**

The hoist operators are also trained at the CVM, in a course that takes about two weeks. All the candidates are volunteers, and they face a selection process during three days of security briefing, knowledge, hoist operations, ease or ability to work in confined spaces at high altitude.

### **The diverse types of missions**

In the mountains, the pilots of the FAGN perform about five diverse types of missions. The first is the law enforcement mission which involves surveillance, searches for missing persons, and border security. Next are the judicial missions, during which they are searching for criminals, or transporting investigation or intervention groups. The third type are the rescue missions focused on rescuing mountain hikers, mountaineers, people buried under avalanches and patient transport. The fourth type of mission is the training mission intended to hone the interaction between the crew members by day, night (with NVG's) and in operating the hoist. Finally, there are technical flights designed to ensure the mechanical integrity of the aircraft.

### **Undertaking a rescue mission in the mountains**

If a 112 (emergency) call comes in, it is forwarded to the Departmental Fire and Rescue Operations Centre. They undertake the task of getting concise information about the informant, the need and the location of the emergency. The Centre then passes the information to the air unit of the gendarmerie (SAG) of Briançon.



Major Orain (rear left), Lt Juste (rear center), mountaineer of the PGHM (rear right) and two of the instructors in front



When the DAG at Briançon get this rescue alert by phone or radio they will brief the duty crew on the need and the crew will research the location, weather situation, degree of urgency, number of people involved. After the briefing they fly first to the hospital which is a few hundred metres away to pick-up the doctor and fly from the hospital directly to the specific location. During the flight they undertake further briefings between the crew members, rescuers, and doctor and continuously update all information.

During a rescue mission they fly with one pilot, hoist operator two rescuers and one doctor. The tasks of the crew members are the security of the flight, the paths, the hoist operations, and the people they carried with them during the flight. The tasks of the rescuers are to secure the involved people and undertaking the management of the rescue operation. The prime task of the doctor is to stabilise any patients during the return flight to the hospital.

To fly at high altitude the helicopter's do not need any modifications. "It is only a compromise between the helicopter performances and the height of the rescue spot. We often need to land in a base camp to lose weight like rescue equipment, rescue people or the doctor. Without this equipment or people, we can reach the rescue point. We will perform as many return flights as needed", Lieutenant Juste explained. "And yes, we wear appropriate suits and jackets to fill with the weather situations and there is also a rescue bag in the helicopter in case of an emergency landing. It contains everything needed to spend some days in complete autonomy like winter clothes, food, water, etc. To land on the snow, the helicopters is additionally equipped with snow skids".



The AS350 JCK flies over the beautiful terrain.

### International relations

The CVM doesn't just train French Gendarmerie crews (pilots and flight engineers), there long-running international connections with the air elements of the Spanish Guardia Civil and the Moroccan Royal gendarmerie; in the past there have been exchanges with Chile, Peru, and Ecuador.

The corporation with the Guardia Civil started back in 2020 and once per year they travel to Spain to train with them and once per year, the Spanish travel to the CVM. For them it was the application of a method for landing in the mountains and winching. They know these techniques because they normally train in the South of the Pyrenees for the mountain rescue, but they came to France to seek the expertise in mountain flying that the French Gendarmerie has set up at the CVM in Briançon which has an incredibly unique training in the world. The training of the pilots and flight engineers takes about fifteen days. The Moroccan connection goes even back further to 2012, and up to today, it is still highly active. The instructors travel to Morocco to train the pilots several times per year, and they also welcome them at the CVM. The main goal is to adapt to their needs, but they give them the same training as they would do in France.





The authors of this article, thank Major Orain, Lieutenant Juste from the CVM, and Captain Lahri from the HQ of the Gendarmerie Air Forces for their help in accessing information for this article.

As FlyHighAeromedia, Roelof-Jan Gort and Bjorn van der Flier are official photographers for RotorHub International magazine. A version of this article was published in the August/September 2023 edition of that magazine. RotorHub International has agreed to the republication of the article in other magazines.

*Editor: The two aircraft featured in this article are an AS350BA serial 1953 F-MJCK 'JCK' built in 1986 and now approaching a service life of 40 years and a Eurocopter/MBB BK117C-2/EC145 c/n 9035 F-MJBF 'JBF' that was introduced to service in 2003.*



## EVENTS

This month, 12-14 March, sees the return of the Home Office Security & Policing event to Farnborough, Hampshire UK.

This year the organisers [nominally the Home Office] are introducing a new zone highlighting the vital service of the fire and first response industry and supported by the National Fire Chiefs Council, NFCC National Resilience and International Search and Rescue. The Fire/First Response Zone will bring together professionals and capabilities in a dedicated area.



The official UK Government global security event is held at Farnborough International Exhibition and Conference Centre, is hosted by the Home Office's Joint Security & Resilience Centre (JSaRC). For a limited sector of people Security & Policing offers an opportunity to meet and discuss the latest advances in delivering national security and resilience with leading UK suppliers, UK and overseas Government officials and senior decision makers across the law enforcement and security sectors.

*Editor: The first strapline that the organisers state to promote the attendance of exhibitors or visitors is "Does your product and service cater to the UK's security and resilience sectors?" Unfortunately, that simplistic requirement is not enough by far or PAN would have been able to report direct from there in the past. If you meet the strict criteria (check out the website) it's a good show to be at – or you can go to DSEi where most of the same exhibitors will be displaying their technology next year with far less restrictions. [www.securityandpolicing.co.uk](http://www.securityandpolicing.co.uk)*



**APSA Safety Seminars** are offered free of charge as a benefit of membership to all active association members (a fee applies for non-members) and cover a wide range of topics through informative training classes as well as roundtable discussions.

APSA's first Safety Seminar of 2024 will take place in Gainesville, FL, April 2-4. Registration is open via the APSA website.



This, the first event of 2024 will have as the host hotel, the Hilton University of Florida Conference Center, It is offering attendees a discount rate of \$149 per night until March 18. Don't miss this opportunity to participate in top-notch training, see the industry's latest products and technology displayed in the exhibit area and network with your public safety aviation peers.

Also, any member desiring to attend the Water Survival Training class on April 2 during the Safety Seminar will need to first register through Survival Systems USA by calling 860-405-0002 Ext. 25 or emailing [registrar@survivalsystemsinc.com](mailto:registrar@survivalsystemsinc.com), complete a medical waiver and pay a \$395 fee in advance. The class is limited to a minimum of 20 participants and a maximum of 30 participants. Registration deadline to meet minimum registration for this class on March 5.



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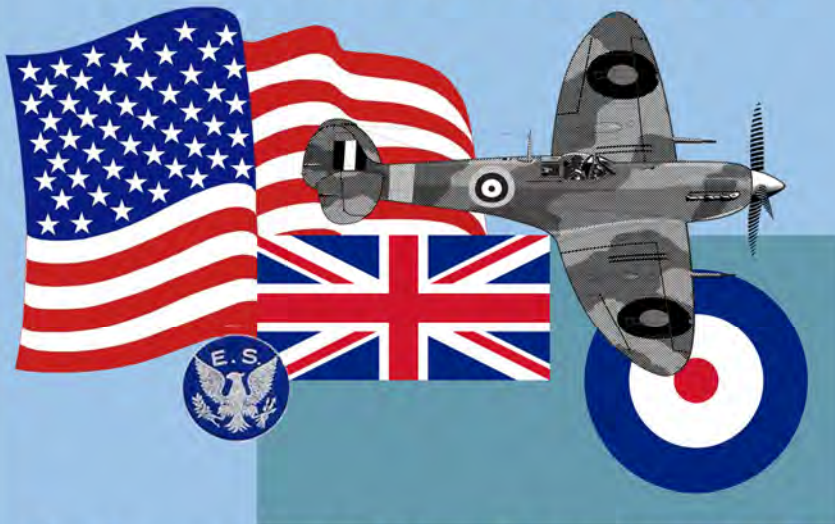
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