

Police Aviation News

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Issue 356

December 2025

2026 PAvCon Europe Venue - Spain
Great North AA face a fleet change
Strensham now rebuilt
All at sea in the 'Channel
News from European Rotors Cologne





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EDITORIAL

Sixty years ago, as a nineteen year old, and very 'wet behind the ears' the editor presented himself at a long given up police training establishment in Pimlico, London to be turned from an ordinary and very naïve citizen with a none-too-extensive education into a defender of the law.

That they achieved this seemingly impossible task speaks volumes in favour of the training staff of the day and still amazes me these many decades later.

That the following thirty years and three months of service to Queen and Country in enforcing the law of the land whilst firmly on the ground also produced the middle aged man that put together *Police Aviation News* each month, is an added surprise that no-one could have predicted.

It is fair to say that we can often exceed our own expectations and those of others.

Even today there is a healthy mystique about how the content of *Police Aviation News*, and to a lesser extent the PAvCon Europe conference, comes about. Perhaps it is smoke and mirrors? Perhaps I have no answer to the mystery myself and that may be a good thing.

Bryn Elliott

LAW ENFORCEMENT INTERNATIONAL

PAvCon EUROPE - POLICE AVIATION CONFERENCE: As predicted the first day of the recent European Rotors event in Cologne was the venue for the announcement of the location for the 2026 PAvCon Europe.

The dates of the event in May (Wednesday 27 to Friday 29th) were announced some time ago but the location was held back pending a hardening of the confirmation. It is being marketed as Malaga, the seaside holiday resort in southern Spain with excellent access lines although the location is not the resort or the airport.



The hosts are World Aviation who have facilities in Madrid, Girona and Malaga. In Malaga they have facilities on the International Airport and a line maintenance facility at the small private GA Aviation flying field of Aeropuerto de la Axarquía located a few kilometres east of Malaga.

World Aviation undertakes support of some of the assets for the maintenance for several manufacturers types at this location including Airbus and Bell, the shortness of the runway restricts fixed wing access to aircraft up to the size of the Diamond, King Air and Twin Otter. To date the PAvCon event has only attracted aircraft up to this size so it is ideal.

Initial reactions of the attendees at the European Rotors event was positive, the location feels good and a refreshing change to most of the people spoken to at the event and hopefully that will feed up the line to



COVER IMAGE: European Rotors 2025 was held last month in Cologne. One of the numerous static exhibits was this Airbus Helicopters H135P3H D-HXCH Christoph 65 of the motoring club ADAC.

The aircraft was used as a backdrop for safety and rescue equipment demonstrations.

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those who will have to make decisions on the financial viability to the individual attendees.

The networking continues and there have been a few image changes to the logo instigated by the new management team.

As ever the details of the event and registration forms are to be found at www.pavconeurope.eu

BELGIUM

NEW FLEET: The first of the Airbus Helicopters H145M due to be assigned to the Belgian military and the Federal Police has been delivered.

The delivered airframe is not one that will eventually operate the police mission but the fleet will be the same. Currently two H145s are on order for the law enforcement mission. They will initially supplement the current rotary fleet of MD902 Explorer's and two MD520N.

BOSNIA & HERTZOGOVINA

MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR: Airborne Technologies in Austria and SHOT d.o.o. are working together to bring into service a Bell 412 that will be the first helicopter for the Interior Ministry.

SHOT is an established aerospace player in the country. Funding has been an ever present problem and added to this is a general lack of infrastructure to support and maintain any aircraft operated. Keeping the level of any advances up to EASA level has been an added problem.



The maximise the worth of the asset in the hands of the Ministry of the Interior SHOT worked with Airborne Technologies to integrate the specialised role equipment suited for a multi-role airframe capable of being utilised in various law enforcement, rescue and fire missions.

Delivery of the Bell 412 is imminent [SHOT]

CHILE

CARABINIERI: The Chilean Carabinieri have a further H145 on order, seen in Germany in the middle of November marked as C-34. This aircraft apparently joins another H145 marked C-32 and a H135 marked C-33 as 2025 deliveries to the Carabinieri. [Parapex]

FRANCE

GENDARMERIE: In late October the Air Force of the French National Gendarmerie took official possession of the new Airbus Helicopters H145-D3 intended for Gendarmerie “public safety” use. This marks a key step in the renewal and modernization of the helicopter fleet.

The result of close collaboration between the French National Gendarmerie, Airbus Helicopters and the DGA, the H145-D3 combines innovation, performance and crew safety to meet the multiple missions of the Gendarmerie including public safety, assistance to people, support for investigators, counter-terrorism.



This first example will soon be entrusted to the National Training Centre of the FAGN (CNIFAG) which will be responsible for establishing the operational employment procedures, before welcoming the first crews to implement it in the northernmost region of France (Hauts-de-France).

According to a new contract signed with France's Aeronautical Maintenance Directorate (DMAé), Airbus are to support entire French Sécurité Civile and Gendarmerie H145 fleet for the next 10 years.

This latest agreement covers 46 H145 helicopters (40 for the Sécurité Civile and six for the Gendarmerie Nationale) and will be executed by Airbus Helicopters in a co-contracting partnership with Babcock.

This new contract for the H145, combined with a previous support agreement for their fleet of EC145 helicopters signed in May 2024, also in a co-contracting partnership with Babcock, completes Airbus Helicopters' support responsibility for all H145 family helicopters operated by these two key French public safety agencies. This unified support structure ensures maximum fleet availability and operational efficiency for their critical missions.

Airbus Helicopters and Babcock will ensure that the Sécurité Civile and Gendarmerie Nationale H145 family helicopters are available for their critical missions serving the French population. The Sécurité Civile and Gendarmerie Nationale H145s are used for search and rescue, emergency medical services, fire fighting and law enforcement missions. The comprehensive contract covers a large range of support activities from training, technical support, supply of spare parts, logistics solutions (transport of spares and stock management), technical data management, software support and MRO activities.

The Sécurité Civile currently operates 13 new Airbus Helicopters H145s and the Gendarmerie recently received their first new H145 following the orders placed by the French Ministry of Interior in 2021 and 2024.

Readers may recall that the first production batches of the 'original' EC145 development were funnelled into Securite Civile and the Gendarmerie way back in 1998 when it was announced that the French Ministry of the Interior had selected a dedicated version of the BK117C-1C with which to replace its fleet of helicopters. The order for 32 machines was originally scheduled to commence from 1999 as the EC145. Only after the domestic deliveries were satisfied were airframes sent to others.

In 2023 the French Armement General Directorate (DGA) ordered 42 new H145 – the latest development of the venerable 1977 vintage BK117 design - on behalf of the Ministry of Interior, with deliveries set to start in 2024. It remains an MBB BK117 at heart, but it has finally reached the heights its German and Japanese designers may have aspired to some 40+ years earlier.

SOUTH KOREA

NATIONAL POLICE: They have ordered a single Airbus H225 helicopter, the first Airbus type to be ordered by this operator. The heavy twin will be used for security and emergency response missions.

Key types in use by the police are twelve modern Korea Aerospace KUH-1 Surion, a type which was developed fifteen years ago with the assistance of then Eurocopter, several Agusta A109s, the surviving examples of the Bell 206 and MD Helicopters MD500, types which are now well over 30 years old and the Russian Mil Mi-172.

SWEDEN

POLICE AIR SUPPORT: The Swedish Police Air Support Unit is enhancing its fleet of nine Bell 429 helicopters with Trakka's TM100-PC fixed-mount computers. A part of planned mid-life systems upgrades, the TM100-PC is an RTCA DO-160 approved aerial computer system that acts as a nexus for mission-critical systems, enhancing the Swedish Police's aerial law enforcement and critical response public safety operations.



The Swedish Police Air Support Unit, organised by the National Operations Department, operates its nine Bell 429 helicopters from five bases located throughout the country, ranging from Boden in the north to Östersund, Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Malmö in the south.

The Air Support Units man their helicopters around the clock to execute missions as varied as aerial surveillance, vehicle pursuits, and search and rescue. The helicopters are also used for rapid response transportation to reduce transit time during critical interventions by bomb technicians and officers of the National Task Force.

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UNITED KINGDOM

IN PARLIAMENT: Andrew Snowden asked the Home Secretary a series of questions relating to its operation.

what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of Police Air Service in meeting its strategic objectives since its establishment.

what the total budget allocation for the National Police Air Service was in each of the last five financial years.

how many aircraft are currently operated by the National Police Air Service by (a) type and (b) operational status.

how many operational bases the National Police Air Service maintains; and what changes to the base network are planned for the next two years.

On November 7, the reply was given by Sarah Jones a Minister of State for the Home Office.

As NPAS is a police-led collaboration, it is their National Strategic Board which is responsible for setting and evaluating the strategic direction of NPAS, as well as for all operating and financial decisions. Policing leaders are best placed to determine their requirements for air support and how to meet this using the resources available. However, Home Office officials remain closely involved and continue to monitor and support NPAS and each year agree objectives and deliverables for NPAS within the funding envelope available.

The NPAS Strategic Board is responsible for setting the strategic direction of NPAS, the terms of the Collaboration Agreement arranged through section 22A of the Police Act 1996 agreed between forces, and for all operating and financial decisions within the scope of the grant funding agreement, such as the number and location of NPAS bases.

The total budget allocation for NPAS in each of the last five years was as follows:

FY25/26: £10,672,695

FY24/25: £10,276,503

FY23/24: £10,470,000

FY22/23: £15,478,437

FY21/22: £11,500,000

NPAS currently operates a fleet of 24 aircraft, comprising 20 rotary (8 EC135 T2, 8 EC135 P2, and 4 EC145 models), and 4 fixed wing. NPAS is in the process of partially replacing this fleet.

NPAS operates a network of 15 strategically located bases across England and Wales, providing vital air support to police forces nationwide. In addition to these regional bases, NPAS also operates a 24-hour service from Lippitts Hill in Epping Forest, supporting the Metropolitan Police Service and ensuring continuous air coverage for London. There are currently no changes to the base network planned for the next two years.

ACTIVITIES IN NOVEMBER: Last month NPAS were working on the fleet replacement project with Blue Light Commercial and Airbus Helicopters to finalise the design for the seven new H135 helicopters. Meanwhile they remain aware that the long-delayed Emergency Services Network (ESN) sits in the background and has yet to be integrated into any operational aircraft.

In addition, there is work being undertaken on the new rotary and fixed wing maintenance contracts.

Meanwhile David Walters and his team continue their trials of the S100 at Avonmouth and will be moving towards data analysis as they work through the day-light operations phase of their trials. The operation hosted four police officers from police air support in Chile as part of a fact-finding visit to NPAS air units including Lippitts Hill, London. (more images see overleaf)





More images of the visit to UK police air units by a group of four members of the air police in Chile. Above at Lippitts Hill in Epping Forest with the EC145 and below with the EC135P2+. The Carabineros de Chile operate both the EC135 and the EC145.



NPCC DRONE TRIALS: Following a serious injury to a child in Kent in August on November 7, Richard Ryan who describes himself as a Barrister, Mediator & International Arbitrator, wrote to The NPCC UAS Lead (not stated by name, but assumed to be NPCC Drones Programme strategic lead, Superintendent Taryn Evans) requesting information on the incident and other matters related to the DFR/BVLOS trials ongoing across Britain.

He focussed on the safety and governance of aircraft working under State-aircraft status. In particular he sought access to documents covering Safety Management System (SMS) occurrence reporting standards and NPCC UAS safety management documents.

It appears from reports circulating about this incident that detail relating to it is being suppressed by the police and that even the Air Accidents Investigation Board were not aware of it more than two months after the injury was caused.

Editor: This previously unknown incident might go some way to explain why the UK CAA was 'interfering' in the setting up of the over London DFR programme on the eve of their launch last month. Details currently available on-line suggest that Kent Police have admitted that officers were called to reports of an assault on the Isle of Sheppey at just after 16:00 BST on 2 August 2025 and deployed a drone to search for a suspect. While in operation it struck an overhead cable and fell to the ground, hitting a child and injuring their hand."

The age of the child involved has not yet been ascertained but a BBC report claims that the type of drone involved in the incident was a £8,000 Chinese DJI Matrice 30T model - a high-performance drone weighing about 4kg (9lb) and designed for professional use. It is equipped with a thermal camera as well as wide and zoom cameras. Other sources suggest that the resultant injuries were serious.

The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) confirmed this was the first time it had ever investigated a civilian being injured by a police drone, and that its inquiry continues.

As part of the investigation the IOPC have served a misconduct notice on a special inspector.

The Air Accident Investigation Branch (AAIB) said the incident happened in Sheerness and it was conducting a safety investigation.

There have been fatal accidents relating to members of the public in the past but hitherto these have been the result of crashes involving large military drones and the events have been hushed up with the judicious distribution of compensation.

WEST MIDLANDS: On November 7 the West Midlands Police (WMP) corporate communications team issued an invitation announcing it was taking part in the NPCC DFR scheme trials. The invitation was to an official launch event on November 14 at Aston, Birmingham.

The invitation revealed that the WMP scheme was in its third phase, with remotely controlled drones operating from a secure rooftop in Coventry city centre. It also revealed that over the past 18 months, the devices have operated from National Highways at the side of the M6 in Walsall and University Hospitals Coventry & Warwickshire NHS Trust.

The demonstration was to start with a briefing from the NPCC Drones Programme strategic lead, Superintendent Taryn Evans. This will be followed by a demonstration of DFR in use from the WMP control room, where drone operators are now based, and one of the drone boxes up close.

There are currently four DFR trials being overseen by the NPCC; Norfolk Constabulary in Norwich, Thames Valley Police/Hampshire & Isle of Wight Constabulary in Southampton; Metropolitan Police in London and WMP in Coventry and Walsall.

WMP currently has 15 drones and 23 dedicated pilots, three of whom are conducting DFR trials. The force's 24/7 Drones unit was formed in April 2023, although the force started using drones in 2017. Since then, they have played an important role in the security operations for major events such as Birmingham's Frankfurt Christmas Market, political conferences and the 2022 Commonwealth Games.

WILTSHIRE: Philip Wilkinson OBE, a former army officer, was re-elected as Wiltshire's Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) in May 2024 for a second term. In recent weeks he has been expressing his opinion that he feels that the service being offered by NPAS to the people of Wiltshire is inferior and would be better entrusted to drones.

It is nothing to do with this campaign but last month the government has decided that the post of PCC, some of which also embrace Fire Commissioner will be abolished and replaced by Mayors as soon as practicable. A major shake-up of local government is set for 2027 and it is expected that the two will happen together.

UNITED STATES

NATIONAL: As reported in a recent issue the gloves are off in the US war against drug trafficking by sea. In September a vessel, which President Trump said was transporting illegal narcotics and heading to the U.S., was hit by a missile fired by the U.S. military in the southern Caribbean. The impact and explosion of the unidentified ordnance blew up the boat, its load and killed eleven persons.. Since that strike in excess of 80 people have been killed in further incidents. The attacks by US forces appear to place the actions by US Coast Guard Hittor helicopters in the realms of a kindergarten activity.

The latest ominous threat to leaves Trump's lips comes from a November 29 post on X.

"To all Airlines, Pilots, Drug Dealers, and Human Traffickers, please consider THE AIRSPACE ABOVE AND SURROUNDING VENEZUELA TO BE CLOSED IN ITS ENTIRETY. Thank you for your attention to this matter! PRESIDENT DONALD J. TRUMP"

I suspect that the people of the Ukraine might prefer him to be a mite more verbally aggressive to Putin at this time. The allies of the USA – primarily Europeans – are said to not be happy with the development and are both protesting and standing back from the US activity. Experts have argued that the attack was illegal, despite the terror designation. The US is not engaged in a recognised armed conflict with Venezuela or the Tren de Aragua criminal organization.

KENTUCKY: Kentucky State Police have taken delivery of Bell 429 N285SP on 31st October. This adds to their 407 (purchased from US Dept Justice) in April 2022 and two old lags - OH-58 military handouts they acquired in 2009. Certainly, upping the state of the fleet which is based at Frankfort "Capital City Airport" [Parapex]

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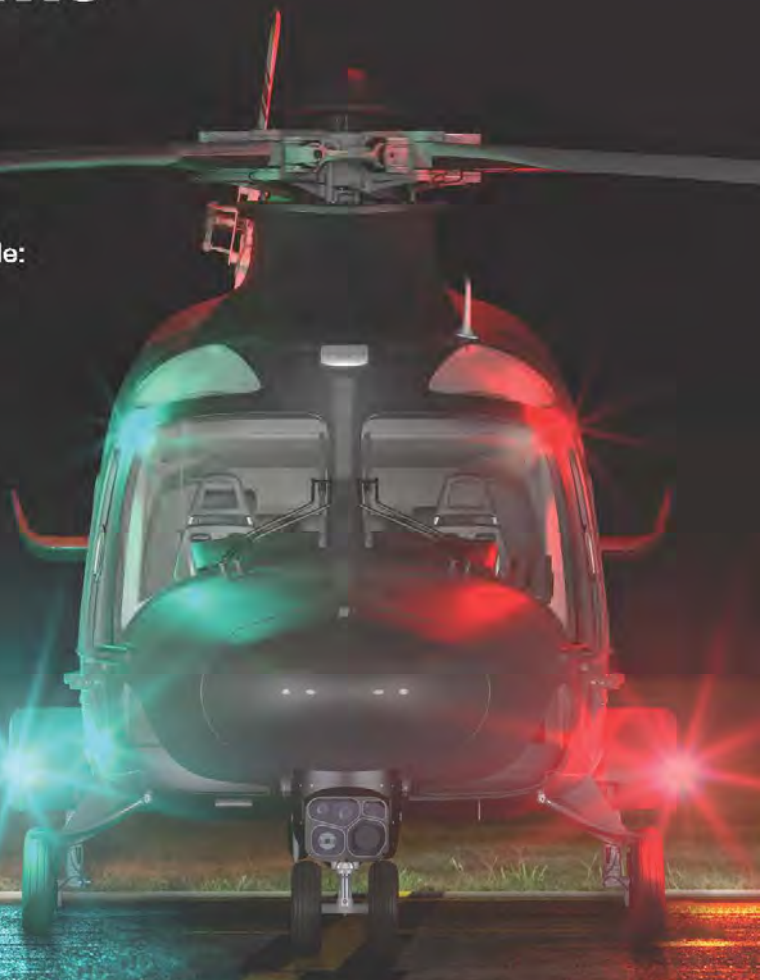
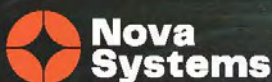
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AIR AMBULANCE

BELGIUM

LIEGE: The Bra-sur-Lienne Helicopter Emergency Medical Service (HEMS) will relocate by early 2027 to its new buildings, currently under construction outside the village. The new site is particularly well-suited to the area and, we are assured, will not cause any disturbance to local residents.

Bra-sur-Lienne is a village in the municipality of Lierneux, located in the Liège province of eastern Belgium, known for its location in the Ardennes region.



The HEMS responded to 1,372 calls in 2024, where the helicopter is faster than a road ambulance in saving lives. Its importance in emergency medical care is undeniable. The new site, located 1.5 km from its historic centre in the heart of the village of Bra-sur-Lienne, and still within the territory of Lierneux, will allow for further development of helicopter operations, with improved staff comfort, while being integrated into the surrounding environment. It will also be closer to the E25 motorway, for example. Construction began a few weeks ago, and the new buildings will be operational in about a year.

BULGARIA

HELIMED SERVICE: Leonardo has delivered the fifth AW109TK Trekker helicopter to the operator. The airframe, c/n 22770 wore the manufacturers test registration I-PTFG for delivery. The eventual identity in the LZ-HM* series is currently unconfirmed. Deliveries to the Bulgaria Heli-Med Service EAD commenced last year against a 2023 order for six Trekker's with the expectation that eight might eventually be in service. [web]



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CANADA

STARS: The air ambulance operator has donated one of its retired BK117 helicopters to the Hangar Flight Museum in Calgary, Alberta.

It is now on permanent display to mark the launch of the STARS air ambulance in 1985. The helicopter was part of the initial fleet, forty years ago.

Calgary Herald reported on the STARS BK117 donation to The Hangar. The helicopter was not only operational in the STARS fleet, but is also serial number 002, suggesting it was the second BK117 ever made.

The museum sees about 50,000 visitors each year, which includes about 13,000 students who come to learn about the science of flight and Alberta's rich aviation history.

SLOVAKIA

During the recent European Rotors Show, Bell Textron Inc., announced that Slovakian-based HEMS operator, Air Transport Europe, has signed a purchase agreement for its fifth HEMS-configured Bell 429. With the purchase of its newest Bell 429, Air Transport Europe has earned its spot as Europe's largest Bell helicopter operator in the Helicopter Emergency Medical Service (HEMS) field.

Air Transport Europe provides rotary air ambulance services across Slovakia and the Czech Republic and has completed more than 33,691 HEMS missions, specializing in missions focused on remote locations. The HEMS company positions its headquarters in Poprad - a strategic location near the High Tatra Mountains in northern Slovakia. Since its inception, Air Transport Europe has expanded its operations to seven bases throughout Slovakia and two locations in neighbouring Czech Republic. With the addition of its fifth Bell 429, Air Transport Europe plans to expand its operations in region.

There are now more than 500 Bell 429s operating globally and they have accrued over 735,000 flight hours.



An earlier Bell 429 of the fleet in Poland for the PAVCon Europe: Adrian Harrison

UNITED KINGDOM

AIR AMBULANCES UK: The national charity supporting the lifesaving work of the UK's air ambulance charities, has announced a new partnership with NHS Supply Chain, an organisation responsible for sourcing, delivering and supplying healthcare products, services and food to NHS trusts and healthcare organizations across England and Wales.

Together, they will help fund and raise awareness for the lifesaving work of air ambulance charities across the UK, which collectively respond to over 48,000 emergencies every year, delivering hospital-level care directly to those in urgent need — often in remote or hard-to-reach areas. Each helicopter mission costs on average £4,165 and is funded almost entirely by public donations. Through fundraising initiatives, awareness campaigns, and staff engagement, the partnership will help ensure air ambulance charities can continue to deliver critical pre-hospital care and save lives across the UK. [Helihub]

EAST ANGLIA: The HELP Appeal, the only charity in the United Kingdom dedicated to funding NHS hospital helipads, has donated £516,000 to cover the entire cost of a new helipad to serve a new Queen Elizabeth Hospital King's Lynn NHS Foundation Trust hospital near Kings Lynn in Northern Norfolk, which will be located by the B1145 road which runs for about 52 miles through the county between King's Lynn and Mundesley. The current building is beside the intersection of the B1145 and A145 in Kings Lynn.

With planning permission approved, construction work by the appointed Pentaco Construction Limited contractors of progressing well. The helipad is expected to be ready for use by the end of the year. The replacement and relocation of the helipad is an essential part of the journey towards a new hospital for King's Lynn and West Norfolk – which is part of the NHS' New Hospital Programme – as the area of the current helipad will be used as part of the site for the new multi-storey car park. The HELP Appeal's funding of a replacement helipad ensures that the hospital will not lose this vital, lifesaving facility.



The national HELP Appeal charity has funded 55 lifesaving hospital helipads around the country for over 15 years. Of these, 32 have been brand new helipads, which have seen over 30,000 landings. It has also made several donations to support the East Anglian Air Ambulance.

Robert Bertram, Chief Executive of the HELP Appeal visited the hospital to present a cheque for £516,000. He said: "We are incredibly proud to be funding this project which is just one of seven helipads in the region the HELP Appeal has or is funding, plus our support for East Anglian Air Ambulance airbases."

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Keeping up with Emergency Services News



ESSEX & HERTS: Essex & Herts Air Ambulance Trust (EHAAT) has successfully implemented Web Manuals as part of a strategic shift towards operating under its own Air Operator Certificate (AOC). As one of the UK's leading Helicopter Emergency Medical Services (HEMS) providers, EHAAT is among a growing number of UK air ambulance charities choosing to manage aviation operations internally. Web Manuals is playing a key role in enabling the transition, supporting compliance with UK Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) regulations through its unified digital document management system.

EHAAT uses Web Manuals to manage and distribute all aviation documentation, including operational manuals, aircraft flight manuals and navigation system user guides. With around 15 readers – predominantly made up of pilots – the tool ensures vital flight information is accessible both in flight via Electronic Flight Bags (EFBs) and on the ground for training and reference.

Web Manuals is increasingly supporting UK-based HEMS providers transitioning to independent AOC operations, promising to save costs and improve safety oversight.

GLOUCESTER: Two new Airbus Helicopters H145 (BK117D3) have been noted arriving at Gloucester / Staverton Airport near Cheltenham last month. Both appear to be for role fit for the air ambulance market.

On November 13, helicopter G-CNAH c/n 21435 was delivered to Babcock with the pilot using the radio callsign "Redhead 59 " inbound from Le Touquet, France .

Late in the month, on November 28, a second helicopter flew in from Oxford Airport wearing the marks G-XSAS and was delivered to Gama Aviation who took over Specialist Aviation Services and their air ambulance operations. [MJ]

GREAT NORTH: An air ambulance service has warned it may need to scale back its operations unless it can raise enough money to prop up its ageing fleet. The Great North Air Ambulance Service (GNAAS) has traditionally operated older airframes and favoured use of various examples of the Eurocopter AS365 Dauphin series and currently flies two of the AS365N3 model. They respond to more than 2,000 critically ill or injured people in north-east England, Cumbria, North Yorkshire and the Isle of Man in the Irish Sea. The third helicopter was dispensed with over a year ago in March 2024 as being no longer viable.

The charity says it needs to raise £2.5M for a deposit for a newer third helicopter as its current fleet was coming to the end of its "economically viable life".



Joe Garcia, CEO at GNAAS, has said that returning to a three-helicopter fleet means that when one aircraft is undergoing essential maintenance, two more are ready to answer the call over the large area they offer air ambulance services to. Garcia revealed that the entire fleet needs changing over the next ten years to secure a "more modern, sustainable aircraft that is still in production." The Dauphin now raises significant maintenance issues. Recently one of the aircraft was out of action for nine weeks in due to a problem with its main rotor shaft. The spare part cost £181,000 and was eventually found in America.

When the helicopter fleet is grounded by maintenance issues or bad weather the service to the public is maintained with the use of fast response cars, but they are facing up to the need to consider changing the entire fleet.

Editor: Unlike the majority of other UK air ambulance operations, GNAAS has long fund raised to operate on this cheaper model with older airframes that have also been role equipped to a less cutting-edge specification. They also operate from cheaper bases. This laid-back attitude has served them well for many years but appears to be struggling as demand for its service continues to grow. It is not a reflection of the giving nature of its local population either as adjoining operations including Yorkshire operate brand new up to the minute airframes and have major infrastructure programmes which are well supported by generous charitable giving. It would appear that GNAAS never properly developed the capability of its fund-raising mechanisms from the start and as a result will be obliged to upgrade its efforts to meet the future financial needs.


LINCS & NOTTS: The air ambulance charity primarily serving about 3,500 Square miles of the counties of Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire uses one AgustaWestland AW169 helicopter based close to the RAF airfield at RAF Waddington south of Lincoln. In addition, it has used other landing grounds to provide a local service to other parts of the two counties.

The charity has applied for planning permission to create a new base serving the City of Nottingham some 40 miles southwest of RAF Waddington. It plans to set up the new facility on land located just south of the A52 and A606 roundabout in Edwalton after its current base, Tollerton Airfield, south of Nottingham was sold for development. Edwalton is slightly closer to the centre of Nottingham.

Brian Wells - who used to own the airfield - pledged the site in Edwalton as a gift to the LNAA - subject to securing planning permission. Reliant entirely on donations, the LNAA said the proposed development for the gifted land was a "rare opportunity". Tollerton Airfield closed in the summer after its current owners, The Vistry Group, which plans to build 1,600 homes and a school at the site, served notice on the operators. Meanwhile the Vistry Group have said it would provide a landing zone for the air ambulance during the initial phase of development.

The charity said it responded to 1,724 incidents in 2024, with demand on the rise. It has reported an average of "1.5 missed missions" daily due to the crew being out on other missions. This suggests the charity sees a need for future expansion into a second facility and aircraft that a second facility at Edwalton would support.

In June they announced an intention to acquire a new £7M Leonardo AW109 GrandNew to supplement their existing AW169 from 2027.



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LONDON: London's Air Ambulance Charity has announced the appointment of Dr Anne Weaver as its new Medical Director. Anne takes over from Dr Tom Hurst, who has held the post since 2019.

For more than 25 years, Anne has been driving pre-hospital care across London and last year celebrated her 20-year anniversary with London's Air Ambulance.

In 2004, she became the youngest female doctor in the UK to qualify as a helicopter emergency medicine consultant. She co-founded the UK's first pre-hospital care programme for medical students and played a pivotal role introducing blood products to trauma response. Her work has changed countless lives, with now approximately three quarters of all UK air ambulances carrying some form of blood product on board.

As Medical Director, Anne will oversee all clinical operations, ensuring that the service evolves to meet the needs of the future and we continue to serve the over 2,000 patients a year served by the operation.

MIDLANDS: The extensive refurbishment to the Strensham Air Base located alongside a motorway service station on the M5 is complete.

Strensham, one of three bases operated by Midland Air Ambulance serves the southern region of the charity's coverage area — including Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, and Worcestershire — the upgraded facility has been designed to enhance operational efficiency, improve crew wellbeing, and optimise the delivery of pre-hospital emergency care.

The much-needed redevelopment project was funded by a donation of £2M from County Air Ambulance Trust HELP Appeal charity and undertaken by Halesowen-based A & H Construction and Developments Plc. This is the third time that HELP has funded the Strensham air base — first when it opened and again in 2012.



Midland Air Ambulance at Strensham

The upgraded facility features state-of-the-art infrastructure, including expanded hangars, modern crew quarters and accommodation, and enhanced operational spaces, all designed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the charity's critical services.

UNITED STATES

NEW YORK: LifeNet of New York, a leading air medical provider serving communities across the Northeast of the state, announced a major upgrade to its Pilatus PC-12 fixed wing aircraft N658PC based in Potsdam, LifeNet 7-9.



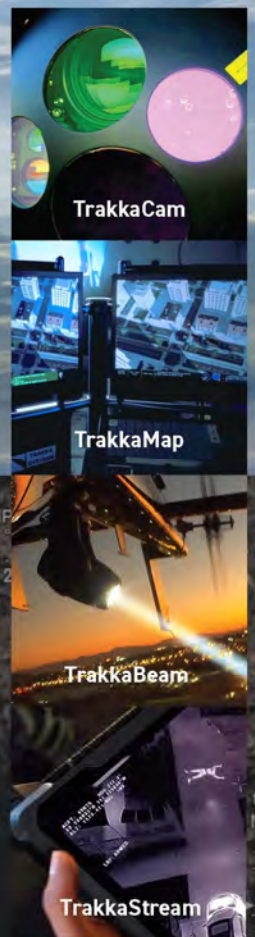
LifeNet of New York

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DDE MED
AGC ON

ACFT: 56KTS HDG: 157.2°
32.748398°N 117.075257°W
ALT: 13243ft NAV: INS

TRGT: 9MP
32.750058°
ELV: 358
RNG: 12.22

LRP: AR

Tc301
CAM: HD-EO
MODE: G-TRK
2022-FEB-26
46120 00:00



The aircraft now features a state-of-the-art Garmin flight deck, a redesigned medical interior, and operational enhancements, making it one of the most advanced air ambulances in the region. These investments ultimately improve the speed and efficiency of life-saving patient care across the region.

The interior has been transformed with a Hillaero air medical crew cabin conversion. This means more space for medical teams, better lighting, and improved ergonomics, making it easier for clinicians to care for patients during flight. There is also a wide cargo door for easy patient loading, integrated oxygen and suction ports, and a dedicated cargo area for equipment. The cabin can accommodate up to four medical crew members, plus a fifth in the co-pilot seat, and even allows a family member to accompany the patient when needed.



The upgraded PC-12 is equipped to handle the most critical and fragile patients including traumas, cardiac emergencies, strokes, pregnancy complications, paediatrics, and even neonatal transports. It carries advanced equipment, such as the Zoll AutoPulse CPR device for in-flight mechanical CPR. Flight clinicians also carry blood that can be administered in-flight for patients at risk of haemorrhagic shock.

An additional upgrade includes the latest Garmin avionics in the cockpit, replacing older systems with cutting-edge technology. This upgrade gives pilots a clearer view of their surroundings and has advanced autopilot features. The system can even guide the aircraft to the safest nearby airport in an emergency. These enhancements mean pilots have better tools to fly safely and efficiently, reducing their workload and improving overall flight performance. The aircraft can fly over 1,000 miles without refuelling, reach speeds over 300 mph, and operate from short or unimproved runways, making it ideal for reaching patients in rural or remote areas.

The programme is in-network with most major insurance providers, and its dedicated patient advocacy team works directly with patients and families to ensure that financial concerns never stand in the way of receiving care. No prepaid membership is ever required.

IOWA: Air Methods opened its LifeNet 1-4 base in Sioux City, Iowa, on November 4. The new base expands access to lifesaving care across western Iowa, eastern Nebraska and southeastern South Dakota.

The base operates in an Airbus H130 aircraft fully equipped with advanced medical equipment and medications required to function as a flying ICU. The industry-leading flight nurses and paramedics carry blood on board, allowing them to administer this lifesaving resource at a trauma scene or in flight.

As part of the Nebraska-Iowa ecosystem, the new base joins LifeNet rotor-wing bases in Columbus, Kearney, Norfolk, North Platte, Omaha, and the StarCare base in Crete, as well as fixed-wing aircraft in North Platte. Air Methods is also partners with Children's Nebraska, adding an additional rotor-wing and fixed-wing aircraft in Nebraska, as well as Unity Point LifeFlight, MercyOne AirMed and the University of Iowa AirCare, adding another 10 aircraft across Iowa.

The advertisement features the Smith Myers logo on the left, which includes a stylized 'S' and 'M' above the text 'smith myers'. To the right of the logo is the tagline 'TURNS ANY MOBILE PHONE INTO A LOCATION BEACON' in all caps. Below this is a horizontal line with the text 'DETECT - LOCATE - COMMUNICATE' in all caps. Underneath is the website 'artemis.smithmyers.com'. To the right of the text are three images of the Artemis hardware: a small black device, a larger black device, and a black device with multiple ports. On the far right is the Artemis logo, which is a stylized 'A' inside a circle with radiating lines, and the word 'ARTEMIS' below it.

PENNSYLVANIA: Air Methods has renewed its partnership with Temple Health for Temple MedFlight, Temple Health's air medical operation based at St. Mary Medical Center in Bucks County, Pennsylvania.

Air Methods began operating Temple MedFlight in 2013, providing the aircraft, pilots, aviation operations, and maintenance, while Temple Health supplies the program's highly skilled flight nurses and paramedics. This collaboration brings together aviation excellence and clinical expertise to deliver seamless critical care transport across multiple states.

Temple MedFlight operates an Airbus H135 aircraft equipped with advanced aviation and medical technology, including weather radar, night vision goggles, terrain awareness systems, and satellite tracking. The aircraft's medical interior enables complex in-flight care, such as invasive line management, pacing, ventilatory support, advanced airway procedures, high flow nasal cannula therapy, and advanced cardiac support devices —providing ICU-level care in the air.

TEXAS: Halo Flight Inc. added a Bell 407GX in October 2025. They took delivery at their base outside Corpus Christi, Texas of the new 407GX N765HF msn 56461 on November 21. As the fifth and final Bell 407GX to deliver in HALO-Flight's fleet renewal, a ceremony was held at the Air Medical Transport Conference (AMTC) in Omaha, Nebraska to mark another milestone in the long-standing relationship between Bell and HALO-Flight; a premier nonprofit air medical service provider committed to delivering critical care and rapid emergency response across South Texas.

Founded in 1987, HALO-Flight serves a 28,000-square-mile region throughout South Texas, providing life-saving air medical transport for residents in underserved and rural communities. With a fleet of Bell aircraft, HALO-Flight's highly trained medical and flight crews respond to emergencies ranging from accident scenes to hospital transfers, ensuring patients receive the fastest route to advanced care.

FIRE

CZECH REPUBLIC

MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR: Česká letecká servisní (ČLS), part of the Helicopter Alliance holding, has been awarded both parts of the tender issued by the Czech Ministry of the Interior for the supply of medium category helicopters. Representatives of ČLS and the Ministry of the Interior signed two framework agreements with a total value of up to 4.9 billion Czech crowns for the procurement of up to three modernized UH-60L Black Hawk helicopters and up to three factory new Sikorsky S-70M Firehawks.

These advanced helicopters will serve with the Czech Police in standard service roles, as well as support search and rescue operations and aerial firefighting efforts, enhancing the country's aerial capabilities and public safety.

The 2025 wildfire season in Europe has been the worst on record, with over 1 million hectares burned, highlighting the urgent need for effective and reliable aerial firefighting solutions. Supported by the European Commission's RescEU programme, these aircraft will be based in the Czech Republic and available to enhance aerial firefighting and emergency response missions throughout Europe. Under the agreement, the Czech Republic Ministry of Interior has the option to acquire a third FIREHAWK helicopter at a future date.





The quiet waters of the English Channel are no place for unseaworthy rubber craft

SEARCH AND RESCUE

FRANCE

After a lengthy period where no attempts to cross to the United Kingdom were observed, on the morning of November 6, 2025 multiple small boats were seen making the journey across La Manche (the English Channel).

At 9.20am, it was reported that one of the boats had broken apart four nautical miles off the French coast near Dunkirk, with the 94 occupants being thrown into the water.

A number of SAR resources were involved in the rescue operation, including a French Dauphin helicopter, a twin-engine Home Office contracted aircraft dispatched from the UK and The Minck a French rescue boat. The vessel was joined by a boat from the VB Abeille Normandie, the SNS 276 Notre-Dame des Flandres from the SNSM station in Gravelines, and the ESMP 04 of the Maritime Gendarmerie based in Dunkirk. Three of those rescued and returned to France were reported to have been suffering from hypothermia like symptoms.

NETHERLANDS

COAST GUARD: The PAL Aerospace hangar at Schiphol East (the original terminal and now the business aviation area of the airport) was visited by John Hannaford the Canadian Prime Minister's personal representative to the European Union last month.

The occasion was to mark 5,000 flight hours with the Dash-8 Maritime Patrol Aircraft in support of the Netherlands Coast Guard. The milestone reinforces the operations commitment to delivering reliable capabilities in Maritime Security, Search and Rescue, and Law Enforcement within the Dutch Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). This achievement reflects the strength of the public-private partnership between the PAL Aerospace team and the Netherlands Coast Guard, combining technical expertise and operational proficiency to support mission objectives effectively.



The coast guard aircraft 5,000 hour milestone was reached on November 19 during a patrol flight. The Dash 8 aircraft has been flying for the Coast Guard since November 2022 having replaced the earlier operation using the Dornier 228. The coast guard aircraft flies daily over the North Sea for control and observation flights. The crew can search for missing persons, provide support in emergencies, supervise and ask falsely flagged ships for documents. The crews and support staff work hard every day to ensure that we can carry out these tasks safely. Thank you for that! [Michel Versteeg]

UNITED KINGDOM

Nothing much changes on the western edges of the North Sea – better known as the English Channel to those on the north coast or La Manche in France – it is a wonder that anyone finds the place.

But unfortunately they do in increasing numbers and as ever the politicians and those tasked with protecting the borders are still in despair as they blindly try to stem the flow north. As the uninvited alien masses continue their flow across the cold seas to the illusory nirvana that is Britain in unseaworthy vessels Tony updates us on the latest position.

ENGLISH CHANNEL UPDATE

In November the number of days, those days when illegal migrants were able to cross the English Channel in large inflatable boats, starting their journey from the beaches of northern France, were severely limited by adverse weather. Nevertheless, in 5 good weather days the new generation of large, albeit unseaworthy inflatable boats, described as 'death traps' by the UK National Crime Agency, continued to rendezvous mid-Channel with the UK Border Force and the volunteers of the national lifeboat service, the RNLI. There was a surge lasting 4 days, 6-9 November, when 2,121 migrants were landed from 30 boats, followed by 217 arrivals in 3 boats on the 14 November. In 5 good weather days, a total of 2,338 illegal migrants, an average of 71 migrants per boat were landed at Dover. The current annual total for 2025, with one month remaining, is 39,294.

In November, in just 5 days of good weather, 2,338 illegal migrants were landed at Dover from 33 very large, unseaworthy inflatable boats.



AFP

THE NUMBERS

In addition to the publication of the daily figures, the number of illegal migrants, together with the number of boats, collected and brought to the UK by the Border Force, the Home Office also publishes a weekly figure, one week in arrears, which includes the number of illegal migrants 'prevented' from leaving France by the Gendarmerie and the Police Nationale. In the week ending 9 November, when 2,121 illegal migrants were landed in the UK the French 'prevented' 784 migrants. Then, in the week ending 16 November, 217 migrants were landed in the UK from 3 boats whilst the French 'prevented' a further 208 migrants from leaving France.

Despite numerous requests, the Home Office refuses to release the figure for the number of inflatable boats stopped and destroyed by the French. However, if we assume the average is 71 migrants per boat, then it would seem that in 2 weeks in November the French 'prevented' 992 illegal migrants from leaving France and, most probably, destroyed 14 boats. Moreover, there are reports that the French are now disabling those boats carrying illegal migrants by deploying nets ahead of the boats to obstruct the propeller and stop the engine, before the boats reach deep water. However, according to the national media, the BBC, this instruction has since been rescinded and the French police will now only stop those boats that

are not carrying passengers, the so called 'taxi boats'. This follows a request to President Macron of France from the British Prime Minister, Sir Keir Starmer, quoted in the French national newspaper, 'Le Monde' that, *"It's essential that we deploy these tactics this week.....We have no effective deterrent in the Channel."*

The French police were reported to be using nets to stop boats, those carrying illegal migrants, from leaving France by obstructing the propeller and stopping the engine before the boats reached deep water. However, it's reported that this instruction has now been rescinded.



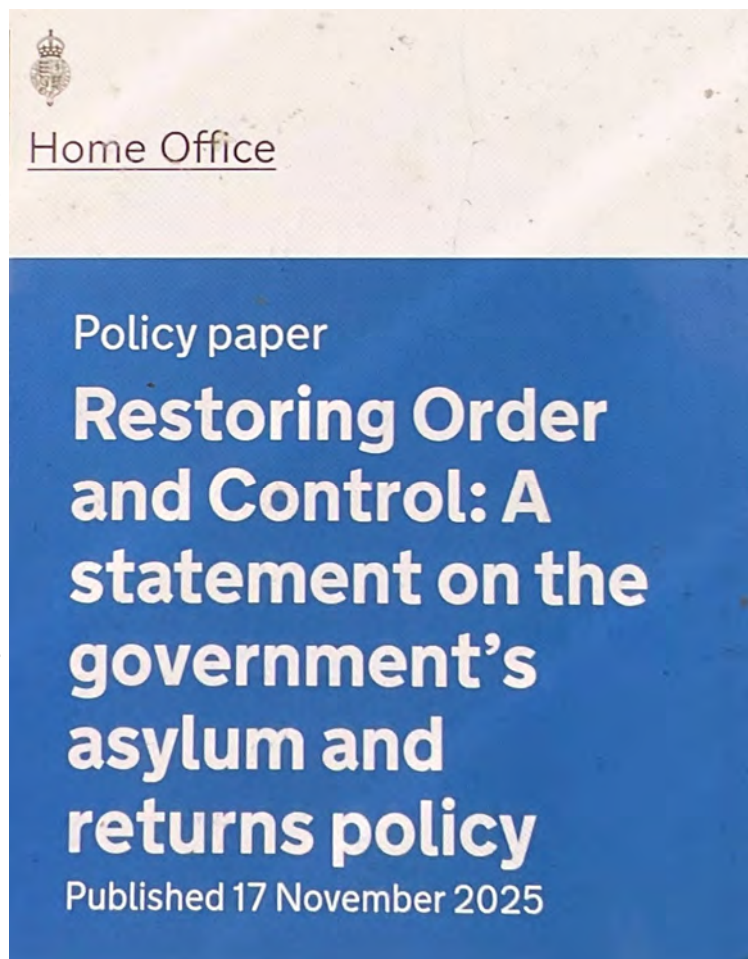
AFP

NEW INITIATIVES

Although it's adverse weather that has prevented many more illegal migrants from leaving France in November, the new Home Secretary, the Rt Hon Shabana Mahmood MP, who has described her department, the Home Office as, *"not yet fit for purpose"* has, nevertheless, moved quickly to gain control over a chaotic immigration system, a system which she inherited from her predecessor. In 2 months she has achieved more than her predecessor achieved in the previous 12 months!

Nevertheless, in the 12 months ending September 2025, there were 110,051 applications for asylum, an increase of 13% in 12 months. In the same period 45,661 illegal migrants arrived in small boats, an increase of 53% in 12 months. This total is very close to the record of 45,774 illegal migrants landed at Dover in the year, 2022. New initiatives, modelled on the experience of Denmark with its strict immigration laws, will now address the 'pull factor' which attracts migrants to the UK; both illegal migrants, those who cross the English Channel in inflatable boats, and those migrants who claim asylum after their visa expires. These new measures are listed in Government policy paper, *'Restoring Order and Control: A statement on the government's asylum and returns policy'*.

The UK Government has published a new policy paper, 'Restoring Order and Control: A statement on the government's asylum and returns policy'.



These new initiatives include, temporary asylum status; reduced financial support for those asylum seekers who can support themselves, or break the law; also, a more robust approach to remove failed asylum seekers. In addition, the government plans to reform those laws, both international and domestic, that have been used to frustrate removals. Additionally, the *'Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill'*

2025' is expected to become law in 2026. This new, primary legislation is expected to give the Home Office Border Security Commander additional powers to deal with organised immigration crime. Nevertheless, a leaked Home Office document highlights that as of October 2025 there are 53,298 migrants in the UK who are missing, whose whereabouts are unknown!

The new Home Secretary, Shabana Mahmood MP is reported to have achieved more in 2 months than her predecessor achieved in one year.



Photo Credit: Tony Buckingham

GAMING THE SYSTEM

Recent figures show that the country which has the worst record for its citizens 'gaming' the system, arriving in the UK with a visa and then claiming asylum, is Pakistan, followed by India and Bangladesh. Although some migrants may be fleeing wars and persecution, the majority, those who arrive by an irregular route, crossing the English Channel, or arrive with a work, student, or holiday visa, and then claim asylum, are economic migrants who will face detention and removal. Those countries which refuse to accept the return of migrants who have their asylum applications refused will now face visa restrictions.



Transporting illegal migrants to the UK, rather than returning them to France, a safe country, is perceived as supporting a criminal operation. The foredeck of BF Hurricane is crammed with migrants whilst more migrants board at the stern.

Sky News

Nevertheless, despite the promise of tougher measures, to make the UK less attractive to economic migrants and to deport those migrants who don't qualify for asylum, the Home Office, together with the Ministry of Defence continue to shy away from direct action at sea. With a more robust response, with positive action at sea, the UK Border Force, supported by the Royal Navy, would 'rescue' migrants, those travelling in grossly overloaded, unseaworthy boats, at the earliest opportunity, in French waters and before they enter the busy shipping lanes. Then land the rescued migrants in France, in accordance with international maritime law.

CONCLUSION

Policing the UK border, stopping illegal migrants from entering the UK, rather than 'meeting and greeting' the illegal migrants in mid-Channel before taking them to Dover, would certainly gain the support of the public. Moreover, this would minimise accommodation costs and also avoid protracted, expensive court cases. The 'lefty', human rights lawyers will, of course, disagree. Nevertheless, the Border Force, together with the RNLI, are currently seen to be supporting a criminal operation rather than preventing illegal entry into the UK. The British public will not tolerate this incompetence and the Home Secretary, the Rt Hon Shabana Mahmood MP, who is trying bring about change, must now take urgent action to secure the UK's borders, to 'stop the boats', those carrying illegal migrants, from crossing the English Channel to enter the UK without permission.



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How is it even possible that the Royal Navy can deploy HMS Prince of Wales with a Carrier Strike Group to the other side of the world, but can't stop a rubber boat, full of illegal migrants, from crossing the English Channel? [MoD/RN image]

When the British Prime Minister admits that, *"We have no effective deterrent in the Channel"*, it's time to call in the Royal Navy, together with the Royal Marines, the majority will agree. How is it even possible that the Royal Navy can project sea and air power, with a Carrier Strike Group deployed to the other side of the world, to the Indo-Pacific region (Operation Highmast), but it can't stop a rubber boat, full of illegal migrants, from entering the UK without permission?

James A Cowan MBE

Note: The author is a former member of the Royal Air Force, Durham police as well as a former police and air ambulance pilot.



Dubai Police presence at last months Dubai Air Show [Helian]

INDUSTRY

Nova Systems expands further into Europe with its First Completion Centre for Special Mission Aircraft in Partnership with AIR LLOYD Aerotechnics.

The endorsement of Nova Systems' first Completion Centre in Europe has been announced through a strategic Teaming Agreement with AIR LLOYD Aerotechnics.

AIR LLOYD Aerotechnics, a highly respected aerospace services company and EASA Part-145 Approved Maintenance Organisation based in Germany, will become the first Nova Systems approved completion centre, enabling the integration and delivery of fully configured special mission aircraft platforms.

This partnership brings Nova Systems - a leading European provider of airborne mission systems - closer to its European customer base and enhances its ability to deliver bespoke, end-to-end solutions. The agreement is a significant milestone in Nova's strategy to expand its Special Mission Aircraft Solutions offering across the continent.

Bell Textron Inc., hosted a special signing ceremony during the Air Medical Transport Conference (AMTC) with Air Methods announcing the signed purchase agreement for three Bell 407GXis to be added to their fleet along with celebrating a recently accepted delivery of a Bell 429, further expanding their air medical capabilities. This announcement comes on the heels of an announcement made earlier this year at VAI Verticon with Air Methods signing a Master Purchasing Agreement for up to 27 aircraft.

With nearly 300 bases serving 47 states, Air Methods transports more than 100,000 patients every year, clocking over 150,000 flight hours. With the addition of their newly acquired Bell 429 and upon the future addition of the Bell 407GXis, they anticipate a decrease in response times, allowing them to better support the communities they serve.



Bell has appointed **Tangmere Aircraft Sales** as a Bell 429, SUBARU Bell 412EPX, and Bell 525 authorized sales representative in the United Kingdom and Ireland.

Tangmere Aircraft Sales specializes in the acquisition and sale of fixed and rotary wing aircraft. With years of sales experience and extensive industry knowledge, the company is positioned to be a leading sales organization in the region.

As an authorized Bell twin-engine sales representative, Tangmere Aircraft Sales will provide aircraft demonstration flights and work to promote Bell's rotary solutions as the premier aircraft of choice in the United Kingdom and Ireland.

Editor: Bell have been poorly represented in the UK for many years and this has caused many difficulties for the manufacturer in selling into the region and supporting customers.

Rapid Imaging Solutions based in American Fork, Utah has announced the delivery of the first US Sheriff Agency-owned Diamond DA-62 MPP. This marks a milestone for state or federal agencies looking for a dramatic increase in statistical effectiveness in their law enforcement program. With the addition of the Trakka TC-375 to this platform, we bring greatly increased range, necessitated by the DA-62 MPP's higher altitude capabilities. This provides a cost effective, fuel efficient, silent and stealthy, "Unblinking Eye in the Sky" platform.

Using less than 10GPH of JetA during loiter, the DA-62 MPP has the endurance to remain airborne for an entire shift, eliminating bingo fuel issues with long duration missions. With a combination of twin engine



Bell Helicopter

safety, low operational cost per hour, speed and range to cover large regions, and the speed to expedite response times, the DA-62 MPP hits the mark to increase Pro-Active Patrol time per shift. Statistically, this will dramatically increase the overall effectiveness of any Law Enforcement Air Support Program by focusing on providing Real Time Tactical Intelligence from Above.

The Rapid Imaging Solutions team has been working for several years to bring this exceptional platform for Special Mission to the US and has several other successful specialist ALE sales successes in the past including those based on the Cessna 206, 208 Caravan, Beechcraft Textron King Air and Pilatus PC12.

Babcock have been operating Airbus Helicopters (Eurocopter) H135 for 25 years, delivering over 160,000 flying hours in support of critical missions across the UK.

This milestone isn't just about numbers. It's about the people behind them - engineers, pilots, ground crews and support teams – their skill and commitment have kept the H135 mission-ready, every day. From emergency medical services to police air support, they've helped deliver life-saving operations with precision and care.

In Cologne, Germany on November 17 **Smith Myers**, the multi-award-winning UK cellular technology company, were showing two major enhancements to its ARTEMIS Mobile Phone Detection & Location System (MPDLS) at European Rotors 2025: the integration of a Stand-Alone Public Warning System (PWS) and an enhanced SARLOC feature.

Together, these innovations strengthen ARTEMIS as a comprehensive solution for search and rescue (SAR) and disaster response operations worldwide, supporting operational effectiveness of ground and air-based (crewed and uncrewed) assets.

The new Stand-Alone Public Warning System enables emergency alerts to be broadcast directly to mobile phones — even in the absence of network connectivity — ensuring that critical, life-saving messages reach affected populations in disaster zones and high-risk environments.

Public warning broadcasts provide instantaneous, reliable alerts that bypass network congestion and can reach both residents and transient populations such as tourists. The system operates without the need for personal data (e.g., phone numbers), offering a privacy-preserving and scalable solution for public safety agencies. The technology also reduces operational costs compared to traditional mass text messaging and can extend to other civic information services.

Also being showcased was the upgraded SARLOC capability within ARTEMIS MPDLS, designed to enhance two-way interaction with individuals in distress. SARLOC enables operators to selectively contact registered mobile phones in the coverage area, asking if assistance is required and whether users consent to share their location with first responders.

Each selected phone receives an SMS message containing a secure link to a website hosted on the ARTEMIS system. Upon clicking the link, recipients can opt to share their GPS coordinates directly with the SAR team. Once consent is given, the smartphone activates its GPS and securely transmits updated coordinates to ARTEMIS every 30 seconds, providing real-time positional data to aircraft or command centres.

Northampton, UK based **Enterprise Control Systems** (ECS), part of SPX Communication Technologies, has announced ECS Connect to improve data link intelligence across land, sea, and air. ECS Connect automatically switches between communication protocols (including COFDM, SATCOM, LTE, Cellular, and MESH) to ensure reliability, lower costs, and simplify operations.

Designed to meet the growing demand for seamless and secure connectivity in complex mission environments, ECS Connect ensures operators always have access to the most reliable and cost-effective communication channel available without the burden of manual management. Different communication protocols have their own advantages and limitations. Dedicated COFDM links (ECS Evenlode) offer exceptional robustness and are often the primary transmission bearer, but are limited to the coverage available within the ground infrastructure. While alternatives like satellite or cellular can be more cost-effective, they can be less reliable in contested or remote environments.

ECS Connect solves this by intelligently managing and aggregating multiple networks, automatically switching to the optimal connection based on geography, signal strength, and mission demands.

With airborne platforms increasingly required to operate across diverse scenarios from border surveillance to Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR), ECS Connect provides the flexibility and assurance needed to maintain a continuous flow of intelligence data. It effectively acts as a managed service in the air, taking over complex link management and reducing pilot burden and the need for additional onboard operators.

Guided by extensive customer feedback and building on ECS's 30-year heritage of delivering reliable RF technology to defence, security, and public safety organisations, the announcement also marks a shift in

ECS's evolution from a data link hardware provider to a holistic managed connectivity solutions partner. Please visit www.enterprisecontrol.co.uk.

Toll Aviation has established a new partnership with the South Australian Government to deliver the state's emergency aerial fleet from November 2027. The partnership will see the development of a state-of-the-art operations centre near Adelaide Airport, staffed by a team recruited by Gunggandji and IDIC. This marks Gunggandji's first entry into South Australia's aviation sector and sets a new benchmark for collaborative, community led aviation services in Australia.

Leonardo has announced two major steps to further expand the level of proximity and service to its growing customer base in Norway. On top of an existing fleet of over 25 helicopters of various types for emergency medical services, public services, security and long range rescue duties, around 20 more aircraft in a mix of AW139 intermediate twins and AW189 super medium for SAR and energy support missions are expected to be delivered and enter service by 2027 following contracts signed in 2024 and 2025, with a first batch of units already arrived in the country this summer. In order to adequately sustain this growing presence and meet the evolving market requirements, Leonardo is establishing an AW189 Level D Full Flight Simulator (FFS) and setting up enhanced localized logistics support.

The new simulator (the third FFS for the AW189 in Europe adding to the ones in Sesto Calende and Aberdeen), fully designed, manufactured, owned and operated by Leonardo, will be established in Sola – Stavanger Airport, close to the AW101 FFS, and is expected to become operational by the end of 2027.

Prime helicopter training service provider **HeliOperations of Portland**, UK, is set to expand its AW139 intermediate twin-engine fleet with a contract for two units announced at European Rotors 2025. Deliveries are expected to be carried out between 2026 and 2027, bringing the total number of AW139s operated by HeliOperations to six. These aircraft will supply training and logistics/passenger transportation services to its customer base.

This latest acquisition will enable HeliOperations to meet increased tasking under two major long-term contracts:

- The seven-year agreement signed in October 2024 with the German Navy, providing comprehensive AW139 lead-in training for pilots progressing to the NH90 Sea Lion and Sea Tiger fleets. The programme is now underway with successive courses of four pilots each and will reach steady-state with up to 20 students in training at any one time. HeliOperations has trained German Navy aircrew at Portland since 2017 on the Sea King Mk5, before they returned to Germany to fly the Sea King Mk41 – another Leonardo (formerly AgustaWestland) platform – building a strong and enduring relationship with the German Navy.

- The recently awarded Royal Navy Fleet Helicopter Support Unit (FHSU) contract, replacing the Bristow FOST programme, under which HeliOps will deliver aircraft, technical support, maintenance, and flight crews for shipborne logistics and training missions in UK waters. Two AW139s on the UK Military Aircraft Register will be dedicated to this service.



Airbus and **Østnes Helicopters**, the official distributor for Airbus Helicopters in the Nordic countries, announced a contract for 10 Airbus H125s at this year's European Rotors. This order, when combined with four H125s already booked earlier in 2025, brings the total number of H125s ordered through Østnes Helicopters this year to 14 aircraft.

Østnes Helicopters has solidified a strong presence within the region's rotorcraft sector, having successfully facilitated the sale of more than 400 helicopters across both the new and secondary markets. The company's maintenance organisation is approved to deliver full Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) services for the H120, H125, and H130 models. There are more than 130 H125s in the Nordics, which mainly perform utility and aerial work missions. Across the globe, there are more than 4,300 H125 family helicopters flying in the most demanding conditions. The H125 belongs to the renowned Ecureuil family, the absolute market leader in the intermediate single-engine helicopter category, achieving a market share of 73% in 2024.

Exhibiting at shows in November became a bit of a complication in that there were three well regarded shows on at pretty much the same time. Smaller companies were stretched to attend the Dubai Airshow in the UAE, European Rotors in Germany and Milipol in France at the same time. It is a growing problem.



Among the exhibitors at this years Milipol in Paris was **ASMAN TECHNOLOGY** a French company based in Nouvelle Aquitaine. It was their first year of exhibiting at the defence and security show located near Charles de Gaul Airport.

They specialise in modular aerial surveillance and inspection solutions for fixed wing aircraft, drones, and helicopters.

The design and develop mission and communication systems, manage integration, maintenance, and support of aerial platforms, and execute aerial work missions with a dedicated fleet.

They have equipped aircraft and provide turnkey surveillance systems for missions such as border control (FRONTEX), counter terrorism, and air police, conducted aerial missions for experimentation, biodiversity monitoring, wind farm inspections, methane leak detection, and more.

More recently their profile has been raised with the taking on the official distributor of Trakka Systems' TC series as demonstrated in their Vulcanair P68 Observer 2 F-HSVY (528-57-082).



World Mobile Stratospheric, a joint venture between World Mobile and Indonesia's leading digital infrastructure company Protelindo, has acquired a BN2T-4S Islander aircraft as part of a new collaboration with manufacturer B-N. The collaboration advances World Mobile Stratospheric's mission to extend next-generation connectivity from the skies.

The Islander will support the continued development and testing of its proprietary phased-array antenna, a central part of World Mobile Stratospheric's development, capable of broadcasting hundreds of precision-controlled beams across 15,000 sq. km directly to mobile devices.

The acquisition of this aircraft marks a key operational step in the World Mobile Stratospheric roadmap to build and validate airborne communication systems that can provide cost-effective mobile coverage to communities worldwide. Upcoming flight tests will be used to refine the antenna's design, control systems, beam stabilization and 5G network integration ahead of the realization of the first stratospheric flight.

Where ground infrastructure provides local capacity, satellites deliver global reach but at high latency. Between these layers lies the stratosphere, a zone of stable, low-wind conditions suitable for sustained flight and wide-area coverage.

"There's a narrow band in the stratosphere, between 60,000 and 70,000 feet, where wind conditions are benign. You're above weather systems. Above jet stream turbulence. And you're able to serve a very large footprint on the ground." - Gregory Gottlieb, Head of Aerial Platforms.

Aircraft operating in this band can maintain consistent DTD 5G coverage. Because the signal travels a much shorter path than it would to satellites in orbit, latency remains close to terrestrial levels. The stratosphere sits high enough for wide coverage yet low enough to maintain real-time communication with phones on the ground, combining reach with responsiveness in a first for the telecommunications industry.

Once fully operational, the World Mobile Stratospheric aircraft, known as the Stratomast, loaded with the full-scale phased-array antenna, will function around nine times more cost-effectively per gigabyte than LEO satellite solutions, like Starlink. With an initial 20 MHz bandwidth and a planned upgrade to 40 MHz, unit costs will drop further.

Flight testing with the Islander is scheduled to begin in mid-2026, with operations led by World Mobile Stratospheric and system testing conducted in cooperation with BT at Adastral Park near Ipswich.

The data gathered and the lessons learned will shape the next generation of high-altitude aircraft.

Last November **Onboard Systems** purchased the Goodrich Hoist system. Signia Aerospace, a portfolio company of Arcline Investment Management, completed the acquisition of the Goodrich Hoist & Winch business from Collins Aerospace (RTX). Goodrich was rebranded as Onboard Systems Hoist & Winch and operated within Signia's Mission Systems business unit alongside brand namesake Onboard Systems International, Lifesaving Systems, and Meeker Aviation.

Onboard Systems Hoist & Winch remained headquartered at its existing facility in Anaheim, California, with an additional nearby facility dedicated to maintenance, repair, and overhaul (MRO) and spares fulfilment that was, in 2024, expected to be fully operational by the end of 2025.

The annual US Operator Conference was well attended at the start of this year and one directed at operators in the EU was held in the eve of the European Rotors event in the Cologne Marriott Hotel last month.

In the background though there are 'issues' with some operators reporting long delays in maintenance support for the hoists. One cited an 18-month turnaround delay in undertaking a 10-year inspection. Onboard Systems acknowledge challenges inherited from Collins/Goodrich and have solutions and improvements currently being implemented to fix them. [SS.FBLEA]



Last month an updated Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), on the subject of the investigation of **Gibraltar** air accidents, was issued by the Chief Inspector, Air Accidents Investigation Branch (AAIB), and the police in Gibraltar. The 11-page document establishes the protocols in place between the AAIB, and the Commissioner, Royal Gibraltar Police (RGP) as part of the specific "advance arrangements" to be introduced under the requirements of Article 12 of Retained EU Regulation 996/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 October 2010 on the investigation and prevention of accidents and incidents in civil aviation, as it applies in Gibraltar.

At the European Rotors show in Cologne, last month **Bell Textron Inc.**, announced the Bell 525 Flight Simulation training device at the Bell Training Academy received its Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) Flight Simulation Interim Level C Training Device qualification. The Flight Simulation training device was designed and manufactured by Bell affiliate TRU Simulation + Training Inc. This new milestone will allow Bell pilots to earn flight hours on the Bell 525 platform ahead of type certification.

The Bell 525 incorporates fly-by-wire flight controls, industry leading drive system performance and fully integrated vehicle health monitoring. The 525-drive system architecture is also precedent setting; with the high-speed components removed from the main rotor gearbox and incorporated into independent engine reduction gearboxes.

The simulator is equipped with high-fidelity visual systems, realistic cockpit environments and advanced motion platforms, which collectively create a training experience that mirrors actual flight conditions. The simulator is designed to offer pilots an immersive and realistic training experience, replicating the performance and handling characteristics of Bell's 525 helicopters. By leveraging cutting-edge technology, TRU Simulation ensures that pilots can train in a controlled environment, enhancing their skills and readiness for real-world operations.

Bell 525 sales are active, with a major recent sale being a 10-aircraft order from Equinor for offshore operations. The aircraft is priced around \$20 million for a new model.

Babcock Australasia continues a 30 year partnership with the Australian Border Force as part of a \$250M contract to protect Australia's border in the strategically important Torres Strait between Australia and New Guinea. It is 150 km wide at its narrowest extent. To the south is Cape York Peninsula, the northernmost extremity of the Australian mainland and it is the focus of illegal migration into the country.

The 8 year contract with the commonwealth government will deliver 2 new mission modified Airbus H145 D3 helicopters to the Australian Border Force , plus air crews & ongoing aircraft maintenance .

The service provides multi agency capability for a range of maritime security threats inc. illegal fishing , illegal immigration , & maritime pollution.

Babcock will recruit 16 new staff , including pilots , surveillance crews , & engineers to support the new contract . The state of the art helicopters are expected to be in service from September 2026.

In the United Kingdom there has been a recent government budget statement that has resulted in a range of, mainly detrimental, comment.

The **British Airline Pilots Association** (BALPA) condemned the Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves' Budget as "bad news for the aviation industry".

The budget raises Air Passenger Duty (APD), which BALPA says will hit families going on holiday the hardest. It also makes no provision to address the UK's urgent need to train new pilots.

The union - which represents over 10,000 UK airline pilots - warned earlier this week that pilot training, which currently costs over £100,000, is unaffordable for many young people today. This means there will not be enough UK-trained pilots to fill airline vacancies in the future.

SKYTRAC Systems Ltd (SKYTRAC) and Airbus Helicopters (Airbus) have announced the launch of a line-fit, real-time Helionix alerting solution that is available on H135, H145, H160, and H175 rotorcraft. This solution will allow operators to receive operational data from the helicopter while in-flight. The solution, enabled by SKYTRAC's ISAT-200A, integrates with Airbus' Helionix system to transmit the in-flight data captured in real-time to ground crews via the Iridium network. Operators can receive real-time in-flight parameters such as usage monitoring system (UMS) exceedances, helicopter tail number, position, time, speed, and altitude data, one engine inoperative (OEI) alerts, fuel level alerts, caution panel alerts, and chip detection occurrences through this new solution. Optionally, these in-flight parameters can also be offloaded post-flight over the cellular network to streamline operations and avoid manual data offloading.

ACCIDENTS & INCIDENTS

2 August 2025 Light quad drone. Kent Police. Isle of Sheppey. Reported that a police drone hit wires and fell upon a child causing cuts to a hand. This incident only came to public notice on November 7, 2025 at which time it is alleged that the AAIB were unaware of the crash and injury to a child. The Independent Office for Police Conduct has reportedly conformed they are investigating.

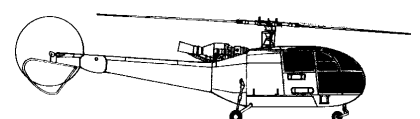
2 November 2025 Mil Mi-17V-5 5Y-SFA A Kenya Police rescue helicopter undertaking rescue work extracting victims of a landslide was forced to make an emergency landing at the St Mauras Academy near Chesongoch, *Marakwet East, Kenya. Reports state that the helicopter came down in a hard landing after it suffered a loss of lift. The plot was reported as* Chief Inspector Ruth Rotiken who has been flying Kenya Police helicopters from the Eldoret Airstrip, making an average of four trips daily to ferry humanitarian aid, the injured, the dead, and officials coordinating the mission.

8 November 2025 Airbus Helicopters EC130 N107VU. Air ambulance of Vanderbilt LifeFlight, operated by Air Methods with three persons on board departed the north side of Music City Executive Airport (Gallatin Tennessee, USA) and flew south to 4,100 ft altitude. About 5 minutes into the flight, the helicopter entered a 180 turn back towards the airport. Two minutes later, the helicopter was 1.90 miles south of the airport when it entered a descending right hand turn towards an open field. The helicopter struck the top of a tree and impacted terrain in a rural area of Wilson County, in the 7100 block of Cairo Bend Road between Gallatin and Lebanon, a field off Cairo Bend Road. There was one fatality, nurse paramedic Alan Williams and two others suffered severe injuries but there was no post crash fire.

13 November 2025 Air Tractor AT-802 Fire Boss (Float Equipped) fire fighting aircraft of the Turkish Forestry Department crashed killing the pilot near Krivi Put, Croatia. Two aircraft departed from Rijeka Airport destination Zagreb Pleso Airport but encountered fog and had to turn back. Unconfirmed information suggests the accident happened on the way back. One landed at an airport on the island of Krk, while the other crashed. ADS-B data suggests the two AT-802's involved were OR-2024 and OR-2025.

13 November 2025 Eurocopter EC135T2+ N911XK Air ambulance of Air Med Services LLC (Acadian Air Med). Departed St. Francis Medical Centre Airport, Louisiana, USA destined for Monroe Regional Airport LA. Suffered engine problems and conducted a run-on landing damaging the underside and skids. No injuries.

14 November 2025 Aerospatiale Alouette III Police Nacional Haiti. The helicopter crashed under unknown circumstances near Croix-des-Bouquets during an anti-gang operation. The helicopter was then subsequently torched by the police. Nobody was reported to have suffered injury in the forced landing. The helicopter was involved in a police operation in the area. The destruction of the aircraft was to ensure it could not be of use to the gangs. The Croix des Bouquets area is controlled by the Viv



Ansanm, which means “Living Together,” a powerful gang coalition that has been designated in the USA as a terrorist organisation.

16 November 2025 AS350 CC-ET? Police helicopter operated aerial patrol by Policía de Investigaciones de Chile, with two persons aboard made an emergency landing 7 miles north of Desierto de Atacama airport with damage on the nose. Aircraft undertook a run on landing under control onto desert sand. No additional damage or injury caused. DGAC Chile investigates. [X]

18 November 2025 Airbus Helicopters H135P3 PH-LLN. Air Ambulance Lifeliner 4 of ANWB MAA departed from Groningen Eelde Airport for a HEMS mission. During the climb-out the pilot declared a PAN-PAN, stating "rotor oscillations, only on instruments, not by sound" and requested a running landing on the runway. The helicopter landed safely and pilot requested to taxi back to the hangar followed by the fire brigade. After inspection no fault was found. [ASN]

23 November 2025 General Atomics MQ-9B Sea Guardian operated by the Japan Coast Guard on maritime patrol. Departed Kita Kyushu-Kokura Airport and on its return landing there it was disabled on the runway after an apparent heavy landing where it suffered damage to all four propeller blades and abrasions to the lower edge of the vertical stabilizer after contact with the runway surface. [ASN]

FLIGHT SAFETY

A UK Police helicopter nearly avoided a collision with what was initially described as a fighter jet over RAF Lakenheath, Suffolk, in November 2024. However, British police logs suggest that it wasn't a fighter jet but a drone-like object that prompted the helicopter to take evasive measures.

On the evening of November 22, 2024, the crew of the NPAS EC135 helicopter encountered what they described as fast-moving, unidentified objects that appeared to “target” and pursue the chopper, forcing them to take emergency evasive action to avoid a possible mid-air collision.

This incident occurred during a three-day spike in drone activity (about 20 sightings) across US bases in the UK, including RAF Lakenheath, nearby RAF Mildenhall, and RAF Feltwell. In fact, the EC135 helicopter was en-route to investigate reports of drones over RAF Lakenheath in Suffolk at the time of the incident.

This event took a mysterious turn when, in June 2025, the UK Airprox Board, which investigates these types of incidents, said the object believed to be a drone was, in fact, an F-15 Eagle.

The board said the pilot likely misinterpreted the red flashing lights of an F-15 and highlighted that RAF Lakenheath had not informed the helicopter's crew of the F-15's presence in the region, which is why the helicopter crew was caught unaware.

However, some newly released police logs obtained under the Freedom of Information Act and published by the UK-based newspaper, the Daily Mail, contradict these official explanations.

UNMANNED

Windracers has showcased its ULTRA autonomous aircraft at the UK Parliament following an invitation from the Ministry of Defence, the organisation stated.

According to Windracers, the appearance in Speaker's Court allowed ministers, parliamentarians and officials to examine the platform and discuss the role of autonomous aviation in supporting Ukraine. The company says it has been delivering ULTRA aircraft to Ukraine since 2023, with further units supplied in recent weeks. The Ministry of Defence framed the event as an opportunity to underline the value of domestic technology within current European security efforts. It was recently announced that the Ultra UAS, based on a type well known for undertaking the carriage of miniscule loads to and from hospitals on trial flights, was now being upgraded to carry up to 200kg of load and to offer extended ranges of up to 2,000km.



Image: Windracers

Sky-Drones Technologies Ltd., a company based in the Archway area of north London are busy promoting their SkyLane-350 air vehicle as a 'solution' for police air support in the UK.

The SkyLane is being promoted by the manufacturers as a strong and valuable addition to the National Police Air Service on the grounds that it fills the gap between ground-based units and full-scale helicopter deployments. They point out that NPAS helicopters provide unmatched capability for critical, high-risk mis-

sions, where the SkyLane can offer a fast, low-cost, and quiet option for routine aerial support.

With long endurance, VTOL launch from almost any location, and high-quality EO/IR sensors, SkyLane can provide continuous overwatch, search large areas, monitor incidents, and deliver real-time intelligence directly to officers on the ground. It can be deployed quickly, stay airborne for hours, and operate discreetly without the noise or expense of a helicopter.



There are some issues of course in that the fixed wing craft does not have twin engines (and how that CAA requirement will apply to drones with multiple electric engines is far from clear) and it may not fit in with its manufactured source.

The SkyLane may carry a UK flag and have a London address located not far from the current DFR trials being undertaken by the NPCC but its manufacturing origins are more aligned with off-shore areas.

In these days of background worries about Chinese content of drones and the little matter of the war in Ukraine the fact that the CEO of SkyDrones is Kirill Shilov from Lausanne Switzerland Yury Stelmakh based in UK should at least raise concerns.

According to the promoters of SkyLane, when used together, NPAS helicopters should handle complex, time-critical missions, while SkyLane covers day-to-day surveillance and intelligence tasks. This combination might increase availability, improve response times, and reduce operating costs making NPAS operations even more flexible and efficient.

Another pie in the sky proposal for the use of policing comes from aircraft developer **Pegasus Aerospace** from Golden, Colorado, USA – although they have an office in Torun, Poland. They have teamed up with Aeroauto to distribute the E Model 'flying car' to customers who it seems include police. The Pegasus comes from Australia and is promoted as the world's first truly drivable VTOL flying car that fits in your garage. No runway required,

Ed: First place have you seen the size of my tiny garage and second how long will such an autogyro stay in one piece in the hands of your average cop! Many years ago there was a significant purchase of Robinson R22s in south America with a plan that the diminutive rotary craft would act as cheap and cheerful patrol craft. Their service life was very short and the outcome was neither cheap nor cheerful but I guess Frank Robinson was more than happy at the outcome.



Image: Pegasus

Many miles away to the south in Sydney, Australia, **Sphere**, a leading technology and services provider with offices across Australia, has been approved by the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) under the Broad Area BVLOS Self-Assessment framework, marking a major milestone for Australia's drone industry and reinforcing Sphere's position as a leader in scalable, real-world BVLOS operations.

The approval allows Sphere to self-assess areas to conduct operations beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS), enabling faster, more flexible, and scalable drone operations across sectors such as mining, utilities, and infrastructure. It reinforces Sphere's leadership in developing and deploying the systems, processes, and technology that make BVLOS operations practical, safe, and accessible for enterprise use. CASA's Broad Area BVLOS Self-Assessment framework introduces a performance-based model that allows qualified operators to self-assess risk and streamline approvals. With only a handful of approvals granted nationwide, Sphere is helping define the next phase of safe, scalable BVLOS operations in Australia.

Since 2014, Sphere have supported over 13,000 businesses, enterprises and government departments with hardware, software, services, operational and compliance support.

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





Image: Adrian Harrison

EUROPEAN ROTORS 2025 wrapped up on November 20 after four days of exhibitions, training, and safety-focused dialogue that firmly established the show as the central meeting place for Europe's rotorcraft and VTOL community. The show, owned and co-organised by the European Helicopter Association (EHA) and the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), managed by European Rotors GmbH, and produced by Vertical Aviation International (VAI), drew 5,478 attendees (17.5% increase over 2024) and featured 266 exhibitors and 23 aircraft at Koelnmesse in Cologne.

EUROPEAN ROTORS 2025 opened with a high-profile Opening Ceremony at Koelnmesse, attended by Federal Minister of Transport Patrick Schnieder, Minister Oliver Krischer of North Rhine-Westphalia, and Lord Mayor of Cologne Torsten Burmester, alongside senior representatives from the European Helicopter Association (EHA), the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), and the German Helicopter Association (DHV). In their remarks, the speakers stressed the vital role of the rotorcraft and VTOL sector in supporting mobility, safety, emergency response, and sustainable aviation across Europe.



Image: Adrian Harrison

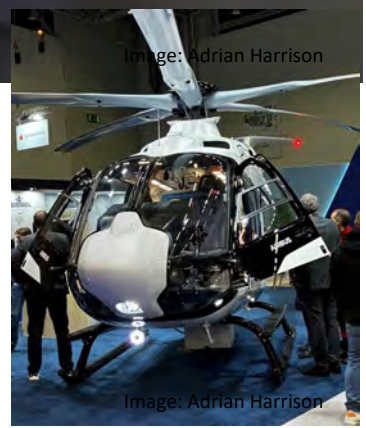


Image: Adrian Harrison

PEOPLE

LifeNet of New York has announced that Flight Paramedic Max Percent and Clinical Base Lead and Flight Nurse Sam Irion of LifeNet 7-2 in Johnstown have taken home the championship cup at the prestigious New York Vital Signs Conference's EMS Games.

In their competition debut, Percent and Irion showcased their exceptional skills and clinical expertise. Their expert handling of a complex neonatal resuscitation scenario—from advanced airway management and intubation to ventilator setup and ongoing critical care—demonstrated why LifeNet of New York is a leader in critical care transport in the Northeast region.

The EMS Games, held annually at the New York State Vital Signs Conference, bring together top EMS professionals from across the state to test their knowledge, teamwork, and clinical skills in high-pressure scenarios. LifeNet of New York's victory highlights the program's ongoing investment in advanced training and its mission to deliver lifesaving care when every second counts. [Air Methods]

POLICE HISTORY

A detective police inspector serving with Glasgow Police in the 1950s, William Kerr, was involved in investigations into the theft of the stone of Scone, an ancient relic, from Westminster Abbey. The Stone of Scone, meaning Stone of Destiny, is an oblong block of red sandstone that was used in the coronation of Scottish monarchs until the 13th century when it was plundered by Edward I and taken to England. It was kept under the seat of the throne.

The thieves were students, and the theft was more political than criminal. Although the Scots effectively took over the English crown many objected to the sacred stone ending up in London.

William Kerr was involved in the case and was there to see its recovery. As the authorities hunted for the sandstone block, Det Insp Kerr worked to uncover the conspiracy and identified one of those involved – only for the artefact to be handed back at Arbroath Abbey in April 1951.

During the taking of the stone it was broken and had to be sent for repair. As a result there were several fragments created and new research suggests that some of these bits of stone ended up being gifted to “important people” associated with the stone.

It is considered an ancient symbol of the Scottish monarchy and the Kingdom of Scotland, with its first recorded use being in 1249 for the coronation of Alexander III of Scotland. The Stone measures 26 by 16.7 by 10.5 inches (66 cm x 42 cm x 27 cm) and weighs approximately 335 lb (152 kg; 23.9 st).



Now, a modern research project has found the Glasgow Police inspector, who went on to become chief constable of Dunbartonshire Constabulary, accepted a small piece of the stone as a gift some years later. Professor Sally Foster, from Stirling University, has been working to trace the stories of more than 34 fragments of the stone created when it was repaired in secret by stonemason and Scots nationalist sympathiser Bertie Gray.

None of the students involved in the raid was ever prosecuted, which may explain why Kerr was confident to accept the gift. That was the story in recent UK newspapers but there was another side to Kerr.

The aviation connection with Kerr took place many years later. On September 3, 1969 continued experimentation with helicopters resulted in the then Chief Constable of Dumbarton, County Constabulary, a small separate police force near Glasgow with a few over 500 men and civilian staff on its strength, undertaking a trial flight in company with his later more famous assistant, David McNee an Assistant Chief Constable of Dunbartonshire County Constabulary.

The force was provided with a free demonstration in a civil Agusta-Bell JetRanger, G-AWRV, from Edinburgh. The flight took place off the lawns in the grounds of the Force HQ, this being a part of the County Hall complex. Kerr and McNee flew out to the west, down the Clyde Estuary and across the Firth of Forth to the Isle of Arran, where it landed for what has been described as a *merry* lunch. The return flight was via Loch Lomond with a landing on the island of Inchmurrin in the middle of the loch.

The helicopter returned to the lawn at the HQ the pilot, John Keepe, set it down and commenced the shut down procedure, fully expecting his passengers to remain in their seats as briefed. Kerr unexpectedly got up from his seat and left the cabin before the rotors had stopped turning. Unfamiliar with aircraft, and helicopters in particular, Kerr turned to the rear of the machine and, before anyone could stop him, walked into the still spinning blades of the tail rotor, directly linked to the main rotor the impact caused horrendous injuries and major damage. Still concentrating on the shut down procedures, the pilot was suddenly aware of a sudden vibration which caused him to brake the rotors immediately, but both the main and tail rotors were snapped.

Chief Constable Kerr OBE, struck down with grievous injuries to the head and right arm, the 61 year old was lucky to survive. David McNee was the first to him but he was not in a position to help. Fortunately among the watching crowd were a doctor and a nurse. The combined efforts of the trained pair and other bystanders was sufficient to stem the flow of blood and ultimately save his life. Once in the Vale of Leven Hospital, speedy action saved Kerr's right arm, but was ultimately unable to avert the loss of his right eye.

Kerr was absent for many months as his injuries healed. Nonetheless he returned, fairly briefly, to again take charge of the Dumbarton Force from McNee prior to his retirement in 1973, an event which coincided with the amalgamation of the small police force into Strathclyde under the leadership of David McNee (1971-77). A decade later David McNee was the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police (1977-1982) when they launched their unit based on the Bell 222 at Lippitts Hill in 1980.

The incident did not get into the archives of the Air Accident Investigation Board. None of this story appears in the official autobiography of the late Sir David McNee QPM (McNee's Law, published by Collins 1983) and it received scant media coverage at the time. [The Scotsman/Police Oracle/PAR]

LETTERS

Hello Bryn,

I am writing about the mention in the latest issue of Police Aviation News about the Met ASU at Lippitts Hill Camp on Page 26.

I was part of the initial set up at Lippitts Hill from 17th November 1980. I can still remember you visiting the unit and having the occasional "familiarisation" flight in the evenings.

The picture on page 26 showing the three pilots in uniform are from left to right, Ron Salt, who was the chief pilot. Gordon Hewitt and Robin Stubbs. The other two in the picture I don't remember.

From November 1980, the unit comprised an Inspector & 3 sergeants all attached to B6 Branch and 16 constables who were still attached to their home stations and were attached to the ASU for one week in four. That system lasted until 24th January 1984 when 8 were selected to transfer full time to the ASU.

The unit was only manned from 7am to 10pm, Monday to Friday, with a call out system for overnight and weekend requirements.

Before I joined in 1980, helicopters were hired in and were crewed from Information room staff.

During the Iranian siege we flew with heletele on the Bell 222 and sent live stream back to GT and the forward control room at Princes Gate.

Regards,

Brian Donovan

Chief constable

Mr. William Kerr, Chief Constable of Dunbartonshire, who was badly injured on Wednesday night by the tail rotor blade of a helicopter, was last night "comfortable" in a Glasgow hospital.

From the pages of the Liverpool Echo 5/9/1969 comes the only real confirmation of the incident.

Even the modern story of the Stone of Scone made use of this 1951 image in the news media. When the disfigured Kerr retired it was very quietly.





EVENTS

17-20 November 2025 European Rotors 2025 Koelnmesse, Hall 8 Cologne, Germany This four-day business-to-business event, stands out in the rotorcraft industry. It offers certified training sessions, seminars, and workshops, making it a hub for industry leaders to conduct business and share knowledge. Co-organised by the European Helicopter Association (EHA) and the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and produced by Vertical Aviation International (VAI), it hosts the prestigious EASA Rotorcraft Symposium.

EUROPEAN ROTORS 2025 wrapped up on 20 November after four days of exhibitions, training, and safety-focused dialogue that firmly established the show as the central meeting place for Europe's rotorcraft and VTOL community. The show, owned and co-organised by the European Helicopter Association (EHA) and the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), managed by European Rotors GmbH, and produced by Vertical Aviation International (VAI), drew 5,478 attendees (17.5 percent increase over 2024) and featured 266 exhibitors and 23 aircraft at Koelnmesse in Cologne.

This year's edition showed real progress — with operators, manufacturers, institutions and service providers aligned around safety, sustainability, competitiveness, innovation, and the future workforce. The show also delivered a broad programme shaped around operational excellence and regulatory advancement.

Planning is already underway for EUROPEAN ROTORS 2026. It will be held from 30 November – 3 December 2026 (Exhibits Open 1 – 3 December) at a new location for the event at the EUREXPO Lyon Lyon, France. For more information on programme highlights, photos, and next year's event details, visit www.europeanrotors.eu.



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