

Police Aviation News

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EVENT REPORT

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

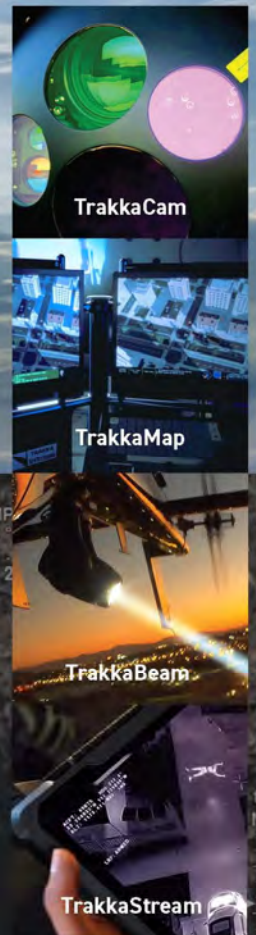


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30

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PAVCon Europe 2026

La Axarquía airfield

Malaga, southern Spain.

May 28-29.



For the first time in 20 years of the European Police Aviation Conference, PAVCon Europe 2026, was held in the south of Spain at the coastal resort of Malaga.

The event, which embraced the PAVCon name in 2009 originated in London during the mid-1990s and was organised under the direction of *Police Aviation News* from 2006. That gave the 20 years being celebrated in Malaga, but the whole series of International Police Aviation Conferences set up as a commercial venture by the Shephard Conferences group dates from September 1993 and was originally co-located with the now defunct Helitech Show in Sussex. That was 33 years ago. The instigator was the late Alexander Shephard (1938-2025).

The event brings together professionals dedicated to law enforcement and the other emergency services from police and law enforcing military units across Europe, as well as industry representatives, who sponsor the training workshops and presentations by various experts from the public and private sectors.

This year marked the third time this highly specialised gathering has convened in Spain, having previously been held in the Basque Country at the Ertzaintza Aeronautical Section facilities in 2011 and 2023.

This year's event hosted in the hangars of World Aviation Group located at La Axarquía airfield was a resounding success – an outcome publicly endorsed in verbal exchanges, e-mails and on social media during and after the several days of the PAVCon Europe event.

Police officers from more than 15 countries, along with over 30 leading companies in the aviation sector, shared experiences, presented new systems, and discussed the global challenges facing police aviation.

PART OF THE STATIC: For Trakka Systems an Airbus Helicopters AS350B EC-JAQ was leased in from BG Helicopters, Barcelona and kitted out with a temporary sensor and searchlight role fit during the afternoon before the event started. It saw some use on the opening day but had to return to the lessor before Day 2. [PAR image]

Airbus Helicopters brought to the event one of the newer H160 demo fleet F-WWON 0098 for inspection, although it was not role configured. For Airbus the main buzz in the background remains the extraordinary success of the H145 in European policing now that the type has 'arrived' in its five MRB and Fenestron form. Airbus were major sponsors and held a delicious barbeque for all-comers on the beach in Malaga on the first day of the exhibition. [PAR]



At the core of the science of air policing is aerial surveillance by use of a range of electronic aids as well as the human eye. For more than a hundred years now the 'eye in the sky' has been an important aid to surveying both legal and illegal activities on the ground, undertaking rescues and controlling illegal immigration. In more recent days the activities have encompassed the employment of technical aids to those activities ranging from the simple gyro-stabilised binoculars and handheld film cameras to modern digital EO/IR cameras, searchlights and radars. This year's PAVCon event drew the attendance of half the western world's manufacturers of EO/IR cameras, and a broad selection of communications and display suppliers.

The busy GA airfield ensured that there was a constant backdrop of aviation to add to the event flight line of three helicopters from Airbus and Bell, with one of them available for flight demonstration. The only unusual lack was among the drone product lines but that appears to be more the ebb and flow of interest in them and their perceived use to policing in general at a time when the Russia - Ukraine war has left everyone contemplating what the future of all drones and warfare might be. They were not absent, just a muted presence as police come to terms with how they can fit them into policing alongside manned aviation.



As is customary, the Training Day, a limited access, operational personnel only, class, was held in the main event hotel on the Malaga seafront on the day before the conference and exhibition opened its doors at La Axarquía airfield. This year the numbers at the Fay Victoria Beach in Victoria were very good and drawn from aircrews across Europe. Some 40 individuals were involved including a range of countries including each of the three entities from the United Kingdom (NPAS, PSNI and Scotland), Denmark, Scandinavia, the Netherlands and Spain.

All the activity included the US based Airborne Public Safety Association (APSA) who maintain an ongoing interest in the European aviation scene and were at the exhibition to network with the international audience attending PAVCon.

SEA Southeast Aerospace based in Melbourne Florida has received EASA validation and TCCA acceptance for both the Camera/Sensor Provisions Mount and Mission Console installations developed under our Cessna 206 ISR Special Mission Solutions programme.

These approvals represent another important milestone in expanding the global accessibility of SEA's modular ISR solutions for the Cessna 206H/T206H platform. SEA's engineering and certification teams continue to advance mission-ready capability sets that support government, public safety, and special operations users worldwide.



These combined approvals allow SEA's ISR provisions to be installed on European and Canadian-registered Cessna 206 aircraft, supporting operators with a validated structural foundation for EO/IR sensor systems and mission equipment integration. European policing has little long-term interest in aircraft with single engines and we might assume that SEA will widen their product lines to embrace larger twin aircraft in the near future.



Teledyne FLIR

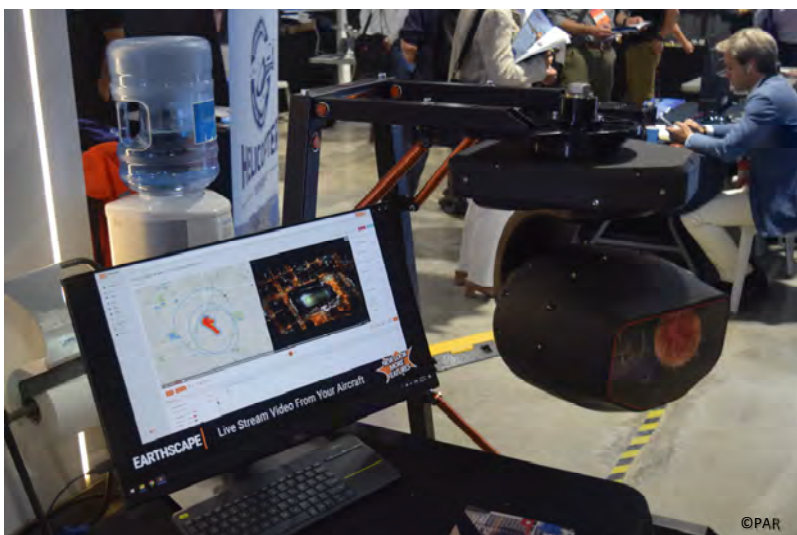
As exhibited by the gratifyingly varied range of representatives gracing the show there is an ongoing tussle for business between the traditional suppliers and manufacturers of EO/IR sensors (Hensoldt, L3 Harris/Wescam, Safran, Teledyne FLIR and upcoming would-be replacements such as Trakka – other suppliers are available). With the threat of war looming there appears to be plenty of business for all but it does put pressure on the sales teams.

Trakka, one of the leading aerial sensor and searchlight manufacturers, were displaying their equipment in the exhibition hangar but also arranged for the option of flight demonstrations. An Airbus Helicopters AS350B EC-JAQ was leased in from BG Helicopters, Barcelona and laboriously kitted out with a temporary sensor and searchlight role fit during the afternoon before the event started.

The equipment fit was mainly clamping aerials onto the skids, but it was inevitable that the sensor turret was attached underneath thanks to one of the many Meeker solutions that industry has embraced.

It was in place for demo-flights on the first day of the event but was unfortunately recalled by the owners before day 2 dawned.

PAVCon has yet to entice Cal Meeker and others to the event, this year Cal was in Europe with his wife at the right time, but the attractions of the motor racing circuits and even tennis in Paris have something of a greater attraction for him at times! As a result, the police aviation event simply has to make do with the Meeker kit. He promises me there will come a day, but I suspect that will only apply if the date of the conference is decided to sit around motor racing and sport!



Erin Spurling of Shotover was again supporting PAVCon with a full promotion of the unique format EO/IR turret derived from the movie industry specification. It is now gaining traction in the law enforcement market with a number already sold to discerning purchasers who seek its unique features.

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Exhibitors SVP Aerospace are in a strategic partnership with General Atomics AeroTec Systems GmbH (GA-ATS) to provide modern comprehensive mission equipment solutions for reliable data transmission between the recently flown updated Dornier Do228 NXT special mission aircraft and various ground targets, including ships, vehicles, ground stations and other aircraft. The Dornier model seems to have been around for half my lifetime but, several changes of ownership later, it clearly still has much to commend it in delivering an efficient ISR vehicle.

Nearly every exhibitor faced the often-intractable problem of what give-aways to bring to the event. We have all seen the useful pens, pencils, rulers, memory sticks, various clips and more recently the less useful in Europe Challenge coins but it is often difficult to stand-out from the crowd.

The Challenge coins look great, but they rely upon a very different US culture for their very existence. As the PAVCon event shows us year on year, each nation is different and there is little incentive in the coins in most European countries to decide who pays the bar bill. I seem to recall that at earlier iterations of the conference it was always 'Bryn', but those days are waning as the Editor/President does not seem to have quite the bar culture resilience of earlier years. The late nights in the bar are out, probably permanently!

Even if a magic product is found it can be difficult to meet the shipping requirements. ECS ran into the shipping problem with its popular yo-yos and they had to be brought to the venue hand luggage - they were therefore scarce, Teledyne FLIR brought with them a, unique to the event, small Velcro backed PAVCON 2026 flight suit patch that must have been very popular because it quickly disappeared from view! That patch is probably the most unique item I have encountered at a PAVCon in the last 20 years. Full marks to their marketing team.



One of the main sponsors of the event, FlySight, an Italian company specialised in advanced geospatial situational awareness and mission management solutions for Aerospace, Defence, Security, and ISR operations, announced a new strategic partnership with Rapid Imaging Solutions for the distribution and promotion of the OPENSIGHT suite in the United States market around the time of PAVCon Europe.

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

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

As part of the collaboration, the companies will begin joint technical and operational evaluation activities, including demonstration environments tailored to U.S. operational requirements. For more information, check out their website at www.flysight.it (also available from the links on the magazine advert and on the PAN websites) or use the link on Linked In: <https://it.linkedin.com/company/flysight-s-r-l> or Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/user63133759>

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







The conference programme, located in the hangar next door to the exhibition, ran over a day and a half. After the usual welcomes from the event Chairman (Luc Stremersch) and the Conference Chairman (Ollie Dismore) the editor gave a brief overview of the events history in his status as Life President to the event. The conference proper commenced at that point.

After an effective absence of several years the National Police Aviation Service (NPAS) rejoined PAVCon this year and brought to the event a presentation on their operations at a time when the range of their services looks set to embrace a much more varied and positive future.

On the first afternoon of the conference, the Accountable Manager and Chief Operating Officer, Ch Supt Fiona Gaffny MSc., took to the lectern for what was promoted to be, and proved to be, an insightful session. Entitled "Policing from above: How NPAS delivers strategic value and future capability" it covered pretty much all aspects of the operation.



She looked ahead at how the service is evolving - covering modernisation, innovation, and future capability, and how aviation continues to adapt to meet changing operational demand.

Ultimately the future appears to lie with a National Police Service (NPS) – a self-contained police service that has yet to see the light of day but is projected to be formed in the 2027-2029 timeframe. This is not the first time there has been a plan for the future, but unfortunately not all of the plans see the light of day (although NPAS itself did). There is also the plan to trim the number of police services down from the present 43 to some lower value but all this trimming costs a great deal of money, ultimately it may be a choice of spending £10M on a new helicopter or using the money to reprint the headed paper and remanufacture the signage of 43 police operations across the land! A very wasteful and costly process.

If a NPS does come about it is probable that all law enforcement aviation assets will fall to the Air Service (NPAS) and such as the aircraft currently operated over the English Channel in Home Office colours along with the various covert assets might come under it. That might also see the current fixed wing assets redeployed – even to undertaking migrant patrols over the English Channel. They would certainly be cheaper than operating the current DHC fleet leased in from PAL in Canada.

The maintenance contracts for the NPAS fleet expire next year (in March and September) and there are many aspects to think through. The current venerable Airbus fleet is no longer covered by the original power by the hour agreement, where the new aircraft will have cover under warranty for a while at least. There are decisions to be made on whether to sell off the aged and very high hour fleet at a pittance or to break them up to supply spare parts for the remaining older helicopters. The latter option has much to be favoured and parking the 'Christmas Trees' at North Weald would make good use of excess space there.

The fleet replacement by the H135s already on order is scheduled to run through 2027 and then it will be time to undertake the fleet wide acceptance of the much-delayed Emergency Services Network (ESN) into 2029. This is just one aspect of an ongoing schedule of work installing various upgrades into the old fleet.

The BVLOS drone programme is still running but presently there is no clear candidate for a drone that might meet the UK CAA requirements of twin-engine power (admittedly through a single gearbox) for such a drone. The Schiebel undertook its valuable proof-of-concept work for NPAS, but it remains in the back-



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ground as a final solution. It will continue its work over the sea as operated by Bristow on the civilian Coastguard contract.

A week prior to the event Ch. Supt Gaffney posted an update to her colleagues and staff on a public forum that effectively addressed the world at large. This was published in the June issue of *Police Aviation News*.

From recent observations it is clear that Ch. Supt Gaffney has every intention of reaching out to the international world of emergency services aviation. In UK terms this has resulted in contacts with the air police in Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Garda Síochána in the British Isles but, through the options provided by PAVCon Europe, these contacts have widened to include meaningful conversations with numerous entities in Europe and the United States.



Not for the first time or the last we hope, the conference was tail ended by a presentation from Sergeant Joseba Mendizabal, a former legionnaire and now a pilot with the Basque Police—he is also near enough a founder member of the team. He has been absent of late due to his part in the introduction of new aircraft and learning how to fly them. His irreverent presentation for 2026 followed a long standing tradition at numerous PAVCon events.

The Basque Police new air craft acquisition process has been a fine example of just how much pain the process can entail!

The unit started with the oldest Eurocopter EC135T1s in police service and worked its way through the aircraft it desired to provide them with the best rescue helicopter they could acquire (the AW169 or the H145) only to end up with two examples of the latest version of the Airbus H135. As fine an example of failing to progress the move forward as might be achieved by the best of men.

All beautifully presented by Joseba in his vastly improving 'Combat English'. There was a time when his version of English was difficult to follow but no longer, he has got the hang of it all and is able to inject dry humour to the process.

The annual hosts for PAvCon Europe vary between industry and police air operations. In recent years this has tended to have fallen on industry, with this year's event host being regional Bell agent World Aviation Group who cleared space in their hangars at the remote La Axarquía airfield outside Malaga.

Global facilitated the hangar space, the main hotel and caterers and, as is usual, the organisers of PAvCon Europe, Dynamic Range (UK and France), looked after the organisational and financial aspects of the event. World Aviation Group also brought along their Bell 429 GlobalRanger EC-OFS c/n 57489 but it was not a role configured airframe.

Dynamic Range has a long history of involvement with the European Police Aviation Conferences and must therefore take a major part of the credit for its long success story. Alexander Sheppard (who died in 2025) set up police aviation conferences to complement the now defunct Helitech Show south of London, UK., in the mid-1990s. From the second such event at Heathrow airport in 1995, Dynamic Range were the IT providers for the police and other events run by Alexander. When Police Aviation Research was brought in to undertake contracts at police aviation conference twenty years ago (Olympia, London, 2006) Dynamic Range ran the sound and vision systems. Apart from 2009 and 2010 they have been contracted to support the PAvCon brand. They took over the whole organisation of the event from Police Aviation Research in 2024 and the style of the event logo changed to signify the change.



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Enterprise Control Systems news item

Intelligent network switching for uninterrupted airborne communications.

Demand for reliable onboard communications across security, policing, intelligence, and emergency services is intensifying. In response, Enterprise Control Systems has launched an intelligent network-switching solution designed to keep rotary-wing operations connected without interruption. With mission requirements and environments becoming increasingly complex and unpredictable, seamless connectivity is now a critical factor.

Mission success now depends on a team's ability to collect, share, and act on information in real-time, even when operating in the most complex, unpredictable or remote locations. Whether coordinating a large-scale security operation, supporting intelligence gathering, or enabling rapid response for first responders, every second counts. As a result, organisations are seeking new technologies that can deliver reliable, uninterrupted communications.



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Having brought NPAS back to the PAVCon event may be considered something of a victory but there are others that have yet to be reconnected with and moulded into regular attendees including the German Bundespolizei and the Czechs. All things may happen in time.



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