

# Police Aviation News

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Issue 357

January 2026

A police helicopter, primarily white with blue and red accents, is shown in flight from a high-angle perspective. The helicopter is moving towards the bottom left of the frame, with its main rotor blades blurred due to motion. The background is a green field with some brown patches, also blurred to suggest speed.

**QUEENSLAND LINKS TO THE STARS**

**BAHRAIN EMBRACES AIRBUS**

**ESSEX & HERTS AA GO SOLO**

***Happy New Year***



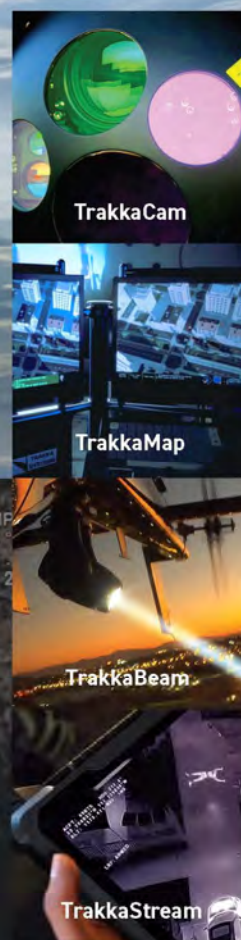


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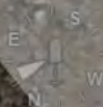
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# LAW ENFORCEMENT

## AUSTRALIA

QUEENSLAND: The Queensland Police Service (Australia) Police Air Operations (POLAIR) has developed a proof of concept for the use of low earth orbit satellite services to support other video downlinking systems installed on the POLAIR Bell 429 helicopters.

The positioning of the satellite transceivers on POLAIR helicopters has been a challenge due to interference from the main rotor disc of the aircraft and with the flight pattern and orbit angle of the aircraft not always being conducive to maintaining connectivity.

The QPS and partner organisations have designed an innovative dual bracket system for the transceiver. Test flights in 2025 included a series of scenario based flights in areas where traditional telecommunication infrastructure was limited. The test flights delivered uninterrupted video downlinking and connectivity for use with the mission role equipment in the aircraft, which validated the bracket design and positioning of the transceivers on the POLAIR Bell 429.

The transceiver bracket is fitted to the aircraft under an Engineering Order in Australia.

Chief Inspector Daniel Bust, Manager, Police Air Operations said of the project “*The development of this innovative solution will ensure the POLAIR aircraft continue to deliver crucial situational awareness to frontline police at all locations across Queensland.*”

*Editor: In August 2024 the Queensland Polair upgraded its fleet of helicopters from a pair of elderly BO105 to three new Bell 429s. Last year an order for three more was confirmed by the contractor Surf Life Saving Queensland (SLSQ). Over 500 Bell 429s are currently in operation worldwide, with more than 735,000 flight hours accumulated.*



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**COVER IMAGE:** Bell 429 of the Queensland Police Service (Australia) Police Air Operations (POLAIR). They have developed a proof of concept for the use of low earth orbit satellite services to support other video downlinking systems installed on the POLAIR Bell 429 helicopters. The positioning of the satellite transceivers on POLAIR helicopters has been a challenge due to interference from the main rotor disk of the aircraft and with the flight pattern and orbit angle of the aircraft not always being conducive to maintaining connectivity. [Kana Photography for Queensland Police Service]

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Last November the QPS celebrated 50 years of police aviation. Operating from a modest office on the top floor of the old Archerfield Airport terminal, the early Air Wing played a vital role in supporting policing efforts. The team carried out a range of critical missions including aerial patrols, transport duties along Queensland's eastern coastline, and search and rescue missions.

Over the past five decades, QPS Aviation has grown to become an indispensable component of modern policing.

Today, aviation operates under QPS Aviation Capability Group (ACG) and comprises of a state-of-the-art fleet, including POLAIR and QGAir. These aircraft are essential in delivering aeromedical support, search and rescue operations, law enforcement, and government support across Queensland.



Now, the aviation fleet comprises of fixed wing aircraft, helicopters, and drones that operate statewide, providing vital support to frontline services.

## BAHRAIN

**POLICE FORCE:** Last month a report on the status of the police and civil defence arms of the Interior Ministry reported that there are ongoing efforts to equip Police Aviation with modern helicopters to enhance its technical capabilities and capacity for public safety, emergency medical services, and law enforcement. The current fleet, now over a decade old, relies on eight examples of the Bell 412EP based at a helipad located at Manama-Diwan Fort. The fleet update plans include obtaining nine H145D3 helicopters from Airbus against an order announced in December 2024. From the latest figures Bahrain Police Aviation carried out 557 flights, amounting to 392 flight hours last year, a modest total.

Despite the apparent move from the Bell 412 to the Airbus type the American manufacturer was actively promoting its latest Subaru Bell 412EPX to Bahrain in the wake of the Dubai Airshow.

In the wider reaches of the force it was stated that the crime rate in Bahrain has declined to unprecedented levels, demonstrating the effectiveness of the Kingdom's security and stability system.

The Emergency Centre (999) receives over two million calls annually, operations patrols handle 27,229 cases, and community services approach one thousand.

During 2025, the Ministry of Interior was consistently engaged in all regional and international security cooperation. It actively took part in the joint international operation led by the International Security Alliance (ISA), targeting traffickers of narcotics and psychotropic substances. The Ministry of the Interior also participated in numerous joint exercises and in the exchange of information and expertise. This involves expanding the use of modern technologies, artificial intelligence applications, and technological innovations to combat organised crime.

In a move which resonates with British policing the Bahrain police state that during the past year electronic reporting of incidents was launched via the "MyGov" application, enabling easy use and rapid response without the need to visit police stations.

## FRANCE

**GENDARMERIE:** The first H160 helicopter for the French Gendarmerie Nationale was handed over to the French Defence Procurement Agency (DGA) during a ceremony held at the Airbus Helicopters headquarters in Marignane last month. Ten H160s were ordered in December 2021 by the DGA on behalf of the Ministry of Interior.

This delivery is part of the Gendarmerie Nationale's helicopter fleet renewal programme, which began with the delivery of the first H145 in November. The two helicopters are complementary in terms of missions and capabilities. They also share numerous features, such as the Helionix avionics suite, communications systems and mission equipment, facilitating maintenance, training and operational interoperability.



© Gendarmerie Nationale

The H160 is the largest rotorcraft ever operated by the Gendarmerie Nationale, providing additional mission capabilities. The delivery of the first helicopter will launch the standard acceptance process, operational integration and entry into service, which will last until early 2027. This step will also include the training and qualification of the crews and technical personnel, as well as the implementation of the helicopter's operating procedures.

The first helicopter of a new generation, the EASA-certified H160 benefits from reduced operating costs and optimised flight safety. With its streamlined maintenance plan, aligned between the engines and the rotorcraft, the H160 optimises operational costs and sets a new standard for availability. The Gendarmerie's H160 will benefit from a global support contract managed by Airbus Helicopters, including technical support, spare parts stock on four of the Gendarmerie Nationale's bases, as well as connected services.

*Editor: It is reported that the delivery schedule is running behind the original plan at this stage.*

Although perceived as less new compared to the addition of the H160 to the fleet, Airbus also posted this image of a new five blade and Fenestron equipped H145 in its news pages. The image shows the updated model of the BK117 for the Gendarmerie in its fully role equipped guise.



## GERMANY

**LOWER SAXONY:** The Bavarian State Police are now receiving their fleet of new H145 helicopters and as a result their fleet of eight Airbus Helicopters, bought as EC135P2+ but subsequently upgraded to P3 standard are up for disposal. The first 135 D-HBPG c/n 0902 dating from 2010, left the fleet. The helicopter is now operating with the Lower Saxony State Police, where she joined two other 135s [D-HPNE and D-HPNF] and two MD900 Explorers. [Johannes Herrman]

## LITHUANIA

**BORDER GUARD:** Two years ago, in November 2023, Airbus and the Border Guard announced the order of three H145s at the European Rotors event in Madrid. The three additional H145s are now in service and bring the total number of Airbus helicopters in operation with the Lithuanian government to eleven. The helicopters will be operated for a wide range of missions including search and rescue, disaster relief and medevac, border patrol, firefighting, transport of donor organs, and operational deployment of the Lithuanian Special Forces. The fleet already included examples of the EC120, EC135 and EC145, some dating back some 20 years.



As one of the eastern-most countries in the European Union, Lithuania occupies an important strategic position.

Amongst the missions flown is a task to follow Russian Federation trains crossing Lithuanian territory from Belarus to Kaliningrad. The only way to monitor these movements is with helicopters.



The new airframes come with advanced cockpit displays and equipment. Compared to older cockpits, it is something new and magical, if demanding. Despite this it was a really quick and smooth transition from the 135 and 145 to the five-bladed H145. The pilots felt quite comfortable with the new machines within a week or two of training.

Lithuania are acting as gatekeepers for the EU. Given the difficult geopolitical situation in the EU and especially at its borders. [Airbus]

## PERU

**NATIONAL POLICE:** As part of the ongoing commitment between the United States and Peru to strengthen the fight against drug trafficking and organized crime, the U.S. government has completed the delivery of three additional UH-60A Black Hawk helicopters to the Peruvian National Police (PNP). The aircraft recently arrived in the city of Pucallpa aboard a Boeing C-17 Globemaster strategic transport aircraft, completing the second batch of a total of nine units. This new shipment represents another step in the bilateral cooperation aimed at providing Peru's law-enforcement forces with greater air capabilities in areas of difficult access.

The first group of three helicopters was delivered in May of this year, marking the beginning of the technical and logistical assistance program promoted by the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) of the U.S. Embassy. According to the agreement, the Black Hawk will progressively replace the veteran Bell UH-1H Huey II aircraft operated by the Police Aviation Directorate (DIRAVPOL), offering a more modern, faster and safer platform.

## SPAIN



**GUARDIA CIVILE:** During early December the Spanish police said they had thwarted a criminal gang that flew helicopters to smuggle hashish into the country from Morocco.

According to the Civil Guard statement the helicopters were capable of transporting between 500 and 900 kilograms of drugs, which were stored in rural estates and warehouses in southern Spain before distribution by road to other European countries.

Police seized one of the helicopters, 1,448 pounds of hashish, five firearms, cash and vehicles during raids in the provinces of Malaga, Almeria and Murcia. The helicopter images posted on X showed an early model Agusta A109. Six arrests were made in the operation, which also involved Moroccan, Belgian and Swedish law enforcement.

The helicopters landed in sparsely populated areas, where several people were waiting to unload the hashish and transport it in vans to various storage facilities, police said.

Spain's close ties with Latin America and proximity to Morocco make it a key entry point for drugs into Europe, but smuggling typically takes place by sea.

*Note: Spanish police have in the past year also uncovered networks that used drones to transport drugs from Morocco.*

*Elsewhere in Spain the Spanish Civil Guard, as part of Operation*

*"Marathon25," arrested three people caught attempting to smuggle 4,200 kilograms of hashish into the Iberian Peninsula via the Alicante coast. They also seized 2,000 litres of fuel used to supply the boats, one of the boats, and four vehicles.*

*The Civil Guard detected three boats heading towards the northern coast of the province of Alicante and also identified four suspicious vehicles on the beach near Cala Granadella that might be linked to the arriving drug-running boats.*

*As the boats were being unloaded law enforcement agents arrived and arrested three of those involved.*



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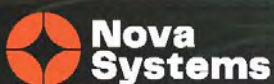
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## UNITED KINGDOM

NATIONAL: Despite many reminders and nudges from other arguably more commanding bodies the Strategic Board minutes only see the light of day grudgingly and way out of date. NPAS have recently slipped out into the public domain the minutes from February and March 2025. No announcement and no delivery so when they came out remains unclear. They are of course nearly ten months old now so barely worth commenting on. That is probably the plan.

Back in the early part of last year the overcrowded forum then had nineteen voting members and nearly 30 others attending either in person or virtually from all corners of England and Wales.

The financial report presented states that way back in November 2024 they were expecting an operational underspend of £698,000 and a forecast was reporting an operational underspend of £391,000. According to the minutes, this was partly due to the high number of vacancies and this has been a matter of supposition in PAN for some time. What is new is that the travel costs are higher because they are faced with having to pay crews to commute significant distances to fill the gaps. It is said that in 98% of the instances a pilot could be found but that is not necessarily the same for the TFO. Nor does it cover the detrimental effect of regular long distance commuting upon all crew members.

What is not stated is that despite the shuffling of crews around the country the rotary fleet remains obliged to operate with a pilot and one observer more times than is sensible. Although this is not unusual across the world it should be remembered that the EC135s are configured for three crew and that results in the sole TFO having to stretch to reach equipment allocated to the missing second observer – if nothing else this leads to distractions from the primary mission and discomfort at times.

As for the new fleet of H135 helicopters (a year ago) it was stated that the revised Business Case made reference to the purchase of 10 aircraft and disposing of 8 but that is no longer certain. When the programme was started the average availability for the EC135 aircraft was 78% and it had fallen to 63%, for the EC145 availability had been 63% but had fallen to 44%. The 135 were 6 days on average when they went in for repair and but that had stretched out to 38 days. The EC145 had been 65 days which had stretched out to 127 days all of which led to a deterioration in the availability of the fleet.

The following meeting in March 2025 clarified that the order was for 7 H135 helicopters signed for on March 5, 2025. The first delivery is expected in March 2027, followed by one aircraft per month between March and September.

Also in the February 2025 minutes are the plans for the ongoing trials of the Schiebel S100 in Avonmouth. This has been covered more fully in information released when the trials started so it is pointless reporting their pre-trial aspirations last year.

Early in 2025 Nottinghamshire Police produced a database and software that records performance data, records all of the flights and outcomes and any safety issues and will look to present it at a future meeting of the NPAS Strategic Board.

The minutes are available on-line on the NPAS website.

*Editor: As this is all about where NPAS were historically I guess we have to assume that the situation has probably worsened – with the fleet now even older it is unlikely to have improved.*

*Undoubtedly the poor maintenance figures were made worse by the decision to save money by taking the fleet off the power by the hour parts guarantee. Old aircraft are always going to struggle to offer the availability they had when new off the line but it is only exacerbated by having to 'wait in line' for spares behind shrewder operators.*

*It will all get better in a years time when London is revitalised by new airframes but that breath of freshness will soon disappear when the manufacturers guarantee runs out – unless the supplier to NPAS avails themselves of the Airbus Flight Hour Services deal - a comprehensive material & maintenance service based on a contractual fixed hourly-rate payment.*



## UNITED STATES

**NEW MEXICO:** Davenport Aviation, ranked No. 3 in the United States as a prime contractor for mission-equipped parapublic and law enforcement helicopters, announced the order of an Airbus H125 helicopter to the New Mexico State Police (NMSP) through the company's General Services Administration (GSA) contract. This marks NMSP's first purchase through Davenport Aviation.

The agency currently operates an Airbus H145 helicopter, and the addition of the H125 expands its fleet with a versatile, high-performance platform designed to provide greater flexibility for airborne law enforcement missions throughout the state.

The completion and mission-equipment integration for the aircraft will be performed by Hangar One Avionics in Carlsbad, California. Davenport Aviation selected Hangar One for this project based on their experience supporting public safety aviation and their reputation for precision, quality, and reliability. [Davenport Aviation].

**NEW YORK:** Davenport Aviation has delivered the first of two new Airbus H125 helicopters to the Erie County Sheriff's Office, marking a significant investment in the agency's aviation capabilities and strengthening its long-term operational readiness.

This aircraft, delivered in green configuration, will be outfitted with mission equipment to support the Sheriff's Office's diverse and growing operational needs across Western New York.

This purchase will allow Erie County to operate a two-helicopter H125 fleet, providing enhanced operational flexibility, increased availability, and expanded capability across its mission set that includes search-and-rescue, law enforcement, aerial patrols, and emergency response, the Sheriff's Aviation Unit operates in some of the most challenging environments in the region.

Buffalo's proximity to the Great Lakes, the Niagara Gorge, frequent severe weather, and expansive rural terrain require an aircraft that can launch quickly, climb powerfully, and perform reliably when lives are on the line.



*The original plans drawn up in Erie County were to acquire a new H135 twin engine helicopter to replace the existing AS350 helicopter (seen here) but subsequent realisation that the training and certification needs of upgrading to the larger helicopter were beyond their means resulted in the reversion to acquiring the H125. (Davenport Aviation image)*





©Bell/Fort Worth

TEXAS: Bell Textron Inc., has delivered a second Bell 505 to the Fort Worth Police Department. Bell executives and city officials celebrated this achievement together in the police department's hangar at Meacham Airport. The relationship between Bell and the city of Fort Worth dates back almost 75 years.

The Fort Worth Police Department Air Support Unit has operated a series of Bell aircraft since 1968 including Bell 47s and Bell 206 Jet Rangers. In 2021, the Department accepted delivery of their first Bell 505 registered N505FW which it flew alongside its existing JetRanger and LongRanger helicopters. The addition of a second Bell 505 to the fleet further enhances the operational performance of the police department and plays a vital role in supporting versatile missions across the city.

*Editor: Noteworthy is that while the original fleet used the Spectrolab SX searchlights the 2021 Bell 505 was fitted with a Trakka searchlight. The latest delivery appears to be fitted with the (Russian derived/ Thommen) Luminator Orion.*

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# AIR AMBULANCE

## UNITED KINGDOM

### ESSEX & HERTS:

Essex & Herts Air Ambulance announced on December 23 that it had received its Air Operator's Certificate from the UK Civil Aviation Authority. The first day of independent operations was Christmas Day. This marks a significant milestone as they transition to operating their own air ambulance service operating two Leonardo AW169 helicopters from bases located at North Weald and Earls Colne, Essex.



Leonardo AW169 at North Weald©AH

The mammoth paperwork task was undertaken by a team led by Will Long formerly of Airbus Helicopters, Oxford (2012-2021) who joined EHAAT as Aviation Director in September 2024 to continue the ongoing work on the AOC project commenced under the lead of former Sussex police officer Cliff Gale (Operations Director EHAA 2007-2025).

**NATIONAL:** Air Ambulances UK has announced the winners of the 2025 Awards of Excellence, sponsored by Babcock International Group and hosted by Dr Dawn Harper at the Telford International Conference Centre.

**Pilot of the Year** Sponsored by: Babcock International Group **WINNER:** Captain Kev Rutherford, Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance

Captain Kev Rutherford (right) has been an exceptional HEMS pilot for five years, recognised for his technical skill, calm leadership, and compassionate approach. A former military instructor, Kev is deeply committed to supporting colleagues, from mentoring new pilots to championing wellbeing through the charity's Welfare Group. He also volunteers as a Community First Responder and has supported humanitarian efforts by delivering medical supplies to Ukrainian hospitals. Kev's dedication, humility, and professionalism embody the highest standards of air ambulance aviation.

Other winners this year included:

**Young Person of the Year** Sponsored by: Sloane Helicopters **WINNER:** An unnamed 10 years old victim from Southport, Lancashire fundraising for the Midlands Air Ambulance Charity

**Critical Care Practitioner of the Year** Sponsored by: Zoll **WINNER:** Stephen Westbrook, Dorset and



©DSAA

Somerset Air Ambulance

**Breaking Barriers Award** Sponsored by: Bell Flight Textron **WINNER:** Nicola Cooper, Magpas Air Ambulance

**Aftercare Supporter of the Year** Sponsored by: HCC Solicitors & Slater and Gordon **WINNER:** Adam Crosby, Thames Valley Air Ambulance

**Trustee of the Year** Sponsored by: Peninsula Global Ltd **WINNER:** Chris Carey, Magpas Air Ambulance

**Charity Staff Member of the Year** Sponsored by: Bee Ethical **WINNER:** Sarah Atkins, East Anglian Air Ambulance

**Campaign of the Year** Sponsored by: Lottery Fundraising Services **WINNER:** 'Sing It Home', Cornwall Air Ambulance Trust

**Supplier of the Year WINNER:** FLT Group, Great Western Air Ambulance Charity

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**Charity Volunteer of the Year** Sponsored by: Wild in Art **WINNER:** Marcus Christie, Air Ambulance Northern Ireland

**Operations Support Staff of the Year** Sponsored by: Stewarts **WINNER:** Abby Lock, Devon Air Ambulance Trust

**Charity Team of the Year** Sponsored by: Aeroptimo **WINNER:** #HELi2 Appeal Team, Cornwall Air Ambulance Trust

**Doctor of the Year** Sponsored by: Leonardo Helicopters **WINNER:** Dr Paul Rees, East Anglian Air Ambulance

**Lifetime Achievement Award** Sponsored by: Airbus **WINNER:** Dr David Zideman, Thames Valley Air Ambulance & Dr Simon Lewis, Magpas Air Ambulance [www.airambulancesuk.org](http://www.airambulancesuk.org)

## UNITED STATES

OHIO: Starting February 2026, Cincinnati Children's will partner with Air Methods to use a dedicated helicopter to improve patient access. The helicopter will provide faster access to specialised care by reducing transport times for children from regional hospitals.

Denver-based Air Methods, which owns and operates medical transport helicopters nationwide, will provide the aircraft and pilot. The Airbus Helicopters model EC145, which includes night-vision capability, has a cruising speed of over 150 miles per hour. The aircraft will have a roundtrip range of 300 miles from Cincinnati Children's Burnet Campus, though longer distances are possible in cases that involve refuelling.

The aircraft will be branded with Cincinnati Children's logo and colour scheme. In alignment with its focus on children, the health system is holding a contest to choose a creative and original name for the helicopter. Participation is open to children 17 or younger who live in Ohio, Indiana or Kentucky. The naming contest winner and finalists will be guests at the official helicopter unveiling event later this year. All entries must be received by 11:59pm EST on January 4, 2026.

Children and families from all 50 US states travel to Cincinnati Children's for care every year, including by airplane or helicopter. Cincinnati Children's has a helipad atop the Critical Care Building at the Burnet Campus in Avondale and another at the health system's Liberty Campus in Butler County.



©Cincinnati Children's

The helicopter crew will include a critical care registered nurse and a respiratory therapist, both employees of Cincinnati Children's. A physician will join when needed due to patient acuity. In all cases, physicians with Cincinnati Children's provide direction while patients are transported.

Flights are to begin next month. They will be coordinated by the Transport Team at the Cincinnati Children's Access Hub, which recently opened on the Burnet Campus to optimise collaboration, capacity and patient flow for the health system's three hospitals and its more than 50 other sites of care.

The Access Hub is staffed by about 100 Cincinnati Children's employees, including the Critical Care



Transport Team, the Admission and Transfer Center, Home Care and Remote Patient Monitoring. The 7,500-square-foot Access Hub, which resembles NASA Mission Control, is equipped with a 29-foot-wide wall of LED video screens that show patient flow as well as ambulance bays and the two helipads.

The helicopter service won't involve emergency response to local traffic accidents or other incidents, which can be handled by other air transport firms or ground ambulances.

# SEARCH AND RESCUE

## CAPE VERDI

**COAST GUARD:** The Republic of Cabo Verde is an island country and archipelagic state in the central Atlantic Ocean off the coast of West Africa. It consists of ten volcanic islands with a combined land area of about 4,033 square kilometres. These islands lie between 600 and 850 kilometres west of Cap-Vert, the westernmost point of continental Africa, after which it is named. Cape Verde forms part of the Macaronesia ecoregion, along with the Azores, the Canary Islands, Madeira and the Savage Isles



In 2023 it was announced that the military resources in the islands were being upgraded with the addition of a Beechcraft King Air 360ER. The new resources for the Coast Guard were financed and backed by the USA and EU. The existing aircraft included elderly Dornier 228s and Russian and Chinese airframes.

On 15 November 2023, the King Air for the Guarda Costeira Caboverdane (Cape Verde Coast Guard) was seen at the manufacturer's facility in Wichita, Kansas. The aircraft, D4-CCL serial [FACV-7101](#) was delivered in a Medical Evacuation configuration with improvements installed to carry out inspection, search and rescue and maritime patrol missions. It is reported that the aircraft went through a process to incorporate ISR (Intelligence Surveillance Reconnaissance) capability.

Delivery of the new King Air, to be operated by the Esquadilha Aérea at Sao Pedro/Cesaria Evora International, slipped some months into the Summer of 2024.

The latest move is that Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, and Cabo Verde have launched cooperation on aerial surveillance flights aimed at tackling cross-border crime and saving lives at sea. The flights aim to enhance situational awareness over the Atlantic, where increasing numbers of people risk their lives attempting dangerous crossings toward the Canary Islands.

The enhanced aerial monitoring helps identify and track smuggling networks that exploit vulnerable people, contributing to the shared goal of preventing loss of life at sea. The flights will support early detection of vessels in need of assistance, providing information to rescue coordination centres on the African coast. This cooperation supports wider regional efforts to strengthen maritime awareness and stability along the West African coast, reflecting the shared commitment of Frontex and Cabo Verde to protecting lives and combating cross-border crime through partnership.

Looking forward, Major Sabino Varela Baessa, the commander of the Coast Guard Command's Air Squadron is seeking to add helicopters to the fleet



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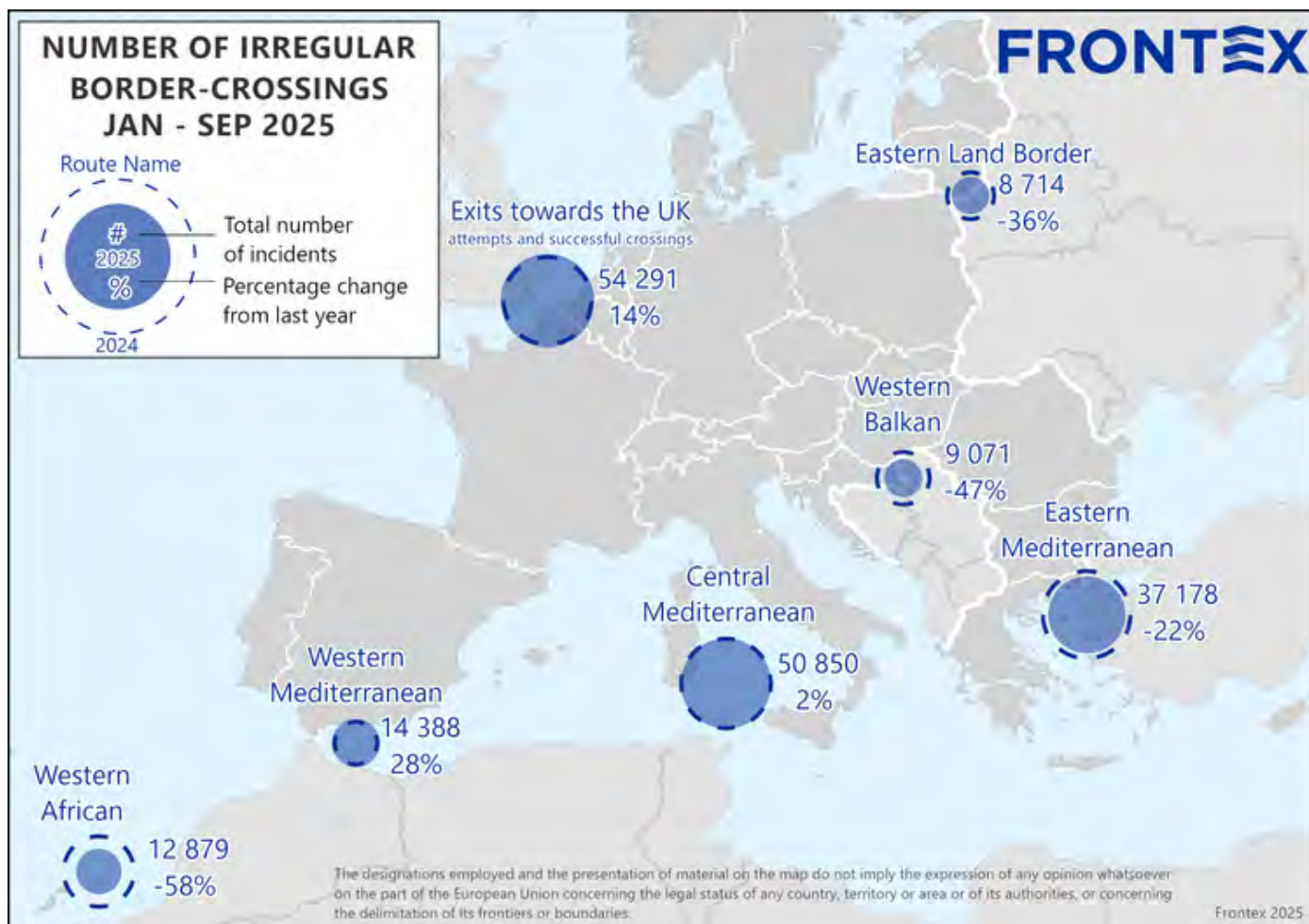


ARTEMIS

## EUROPE

**MIGRANTS:** Irregular entries into the European Union decreased 22% in the first nine months of 2025, reaching 133,400 according to preliminary data from Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency.

There have been significant declines on the Western African (-58%), Western Balkan (-47%), and Eastern Land Border (-36%) routes.



The Central Mediterranean has been the busiest route, accounting for nearly 40% of all irregular entries up to September 2025. The Western Mediterranean experienced a 28% increase in irregular entries. Most frequently reported nationalities have been Bangladeshi, Egyptian, and Afghan.

Crossings towards the UK via the English Channel rose 14%, reaching 54,300 attempts.

In the Central Mediterranean, nearly 50 900 arrivals were detected between January and September, which is broadly in line with the same period last year. However, Libya, the main departure point, recorded a 50% increase in departures compared with 2024. The number of irregular crossings registered in the Eastern Mediterranean decreased 22% to around 37 200. Following a lower number of arrivals in August caused by adverse weather conditions, crossings via the Libya-Crete corridor surged again in September, with detections increasing 280% compared to last year. On the Western Mediterranean route, irregular crossings increased 28%. In September alone, arrivals rose by more than half, with departures from Algeria accounting for almost three quarters of detections this year.

The Western African route recorded the sharpest decline, down 58% to almost 12 900 detections this year, with only 734 in September. Despite the overall decline, the human cost remains devastating. According to estimates by the International Organization for Migration, 1,299 people have died while attempting to cross the Mediterranean so far this year. [Border Security Report]



## UNITED KINGDOM

**MIGRANTS:** Thank goodness for the weather! The UK government and Home Office were saved from another heavy boat people onslaught by the weather in November and December last year. A full 28 days of poor weather halted to steady flow of bodies across the English Channel. The only perceived difference was that both the politicians and the civil servants did not claim that the actions of the weather gods was their doing!

Mind you they were up to their usual shenanigans in highlighting that they had reduced the number of Illegal migrants in hotels through their efforts. It turns out that there are so few effective security measures in place that the largely unwelcome and unregistered foreigners are simply melting away into the English countryside, never to be seen again. Even if they find them they are unlikely to know who they really are.

Tony Cowan gives his latest update on the Europe to UK migrant travel plans later in this issue.

## UNITED STATES

**CIVIL AIR PATROL:** Textron Aviation confirmed an order from the Civil Air Patrol (CAP) for 15 additional piston-engine Cessna aircraft last month. The new order includes seven Cessna Skyhawk 172 and eight Cessna Skylane 182 aircraft, all slated for delivery throughout 2026. This follows recent additions of two Skylane's and one Turbo Stationair HD, bringing CAP's total fleet to over 500 Cessna aircraft.



In 2025, CAP logged over 100,000 flight hours, conducted more than 400 search and rescue missions, and recorded upwards of 200 finds, contributing to dozens of confirmed life-saving outcomes. CAP's network of volunteers supports emergency response efforts and youth leadership development through programs operated in more than 1,400 communities.

## INDUSTRY

In the British Parliament (Westminster) an MP Ben Obese-Jecty who represents the people who live in Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire requested updated information on the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme from the Home Office.

Sarah Jones speaking for the Home Office informed the house that following the completion of two major re-procurements, the **Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP)** awarded the Mobile Services contract to BT/EE and the User Services contract to IBM in November and December 2024 respectively.

The programme has completed a revised Business Case which has been endorsed by the Senior Users of the 3 Emergency Services and those of the devolved nations. It is expected to complete departmental and treasury approvals in early 2026. Early adoption of a service ready solution is on track for 2028 with a further target for complete transition from Airwave, the existing system, by the end of 2029.

The main build of ESN masts to provide mobile coverage is largely complete - of a total of the extra 1047 masts due to be built, 987 are completed and operationally live. This is already providing a benefit to the public by enabling over one thousand





additional 999 calls every month to be made in areas where previously there was no coverage.

The programme's priority is to achieve the right balance between credible plans that ensures user confidence and the need to deliver ESN as quickly and safely as possible to enable the shutdown of Airwave.

*Ed: Assuming it meets the latest dates this system is approximately 12 years late on the original 2017 in service guestimate. Currently there are still areas of no coverage but some well known blackspots with no previous coverage are known to have vastly improved reception.*

In order to attract the Australian market for a next-generation response helicopter the **Airbus Helicopters** H160 completed a major demo tour across Australia in November, seeking to prove its capability to be a genuine lifeline for Emergency Medical Services (HEMS).



Australia's stunning environment: vast deserts, exposed, rugged coastlines, and bush land with ravines and mountains, can prove both inviting and hazardous. The greatest threat however is distance. When disaster strikes, victims may find themselves isolated. Australia understands the necessity for rapid and reliable emergency medical retrieval like few others. The H160 spent a month touring this challenging landscape, visiting major hubs including Melbourne, Sydney, and Brisbane. Local operators were impressed by its capacity to bridge distances quickly, identifying it as a potential lifeline for patients.

A new style of training manikin developed by a company in Corwen, north Wales, UK is set to revolutionise how emergency services prepare for real-life incidents. With support from the Welsh Government's Innovation team, **Ruth Lee** has created RL360 - a mixed-reality technology that combines lifelike movement with digital simulation to help first responders save more lives.

For more than 30 years, the company has supplied realistic training manikins to emergency services, the military and healthcare organisations around the world. Its products are now exported to more than 50 countries through a network of over 40 distributors, with the UK remaining its largest single market.

Ruth Lee began developing RL360 through a two-year Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) with Wrexham University, funded by the Welsh Government and Innovate UK. The project set out to make manikins more realistic and responsive by embedding virtual and mixed-reality capability into their design.





The result is a manikin that can simulate breathing, eye movement, bleeding and medical conditions to replicate complex real-world scenarios. The KTP was graded *Outstanding* by Innovate UK, recognising its exceptional innovation and the strong collaboration between business and academia. [ [Business Wales Innovation](#) ].

In Britain it has been reported that widespread access to illegal number plates and lax rules about who can sell them are threatening national security and putting road users at risk.

The so called "Ghost" plates can't be read properly - often due to a reflective spray or coating - and researchers say as many as one in 15 vehicles could be evading **automatic number plate recognition (ANPR)** cameras. ANPR uses infrared light to check plates against a database. They can highlight a car without insurance, for example, or identify one linked to high-level crime as well as the more mundane traffic management and road pricing aspects.

Police were reporting the problem earlier in 2025 but in December an All-Party Parliamentary Group for Transport Safety (APPGTS), which produced the report, said avoiding ANPR sometimes only requires "nothing more sophisticated than cellophane, leaves, or a marker pen".

So-called 3D and 4D plates - which have raised lettering - should also be banned to ensure legibility, said the MPs - and cloned plates are also highlighted as a serious problem.

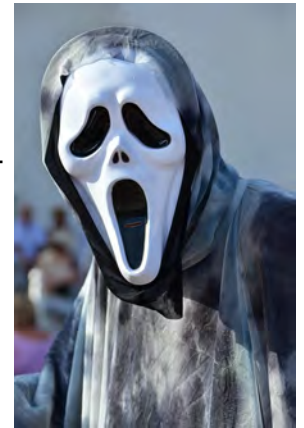
This involves people finding a vehicle of the same model and colour as their own, copying the plate and using it to mask illegal activity.

The APPGTS said many plate sellers are working from private homes or workshops with no background checks and some have convictions for fraud and violence.

It wants the number of licensed sellers "significantly" reduced from the current 34,455 by bringing in higher standards and a more expensive annual fee.

According to the West Midlands Police Crime and Commissioner's (PCC) office, more than 4,000 illegal "ghost" number plates were detected in the West Midlands over a two week period.

*Editor: It may be noteworthy that the comment from the PCC fails to add details about the number of arrests or summons issued as a result of those 4,000 detections. Something to do with "The primary object of an efficient police is the prevention of crime; the next that of detection and punishment of offenders if crime is committed." (RM 1829)*



In early December **Indonesian President** Prabowo Subianto announced in Jakarta that the government has plans to procure 200 helicopters starting this month to boost national air mobility and disaster response capabilities.

The decision coincided with devastating floods and landslides that have killed hundreds of people across Indonesia – they also have reports of hundreds more missing and over 4 million affected. Indonesia is situated in the seismically active Pacific Ring of Fire, and has realised it no longer has the option to try and find assets after the crises strikes.

The procurement, set to begin in January, builds upon the recent delivery of five new helicopters in early December.

The floods in Indonesia are part of a wider regional disaster, with the UN noting over 1,600 fatalities across South Asia, including significant losses in Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Malaysia. (Yeni Safak)

As **Airbus Industries** continues to ramp up production and acquire new production facilities the troubles at Boeing continue to escalate. Last month the U.S. Air Force said that new Boeing Air Force One deliveries have been pushed to mid-2028. The additional delay relates to the conversion of two 747-8 aircraft into the next generation of presidential air transport.

U.S. President Donald Trump has said he wants to utilize the new aircraft before his term concludes in January 2029. The project is now about four years behind its original timeline, with total costs exceeding \$5 billion. The current Boeing 747 based Air Force One aircraft entered service in 1990.

The new fixed wing aircraft project is mirroring the difficult times endured by the replacement of the Presidential Sikorsky helicopter. The first was based on the EH-101, it was scrapped after it flew, to be replaced by a Sikorsky model which is only just entering service.

**Airbus Helicopters** Oxford has been awarded a £33.6M, two-year contract for the initial support and servicing of six additional H145 helicopters to the Ministry of Defence.

The Airbus Helicopters' maintenance contract was announced last month and will support 30 jobs, 12 of which will be based in Oxford.





The aircraft, known as Jupiter HC2s when in military service, were ordered as part of a £122M procurement by the Defence Equipment & Support (DE&S) with Airbus just over 18 months ago.

These airframes are part of the contract intended to replace the now retired Puma helicopters with the RAF in Belize and Cyprus where their use is multi-role including air ambulance work.

In mid-December **Bell Textron Inc.**, sent its Subaru Bell 412EPX demonstrator on a first-ever demonstration tour in the Middle East, following its display at the Dubai Airshow. Stopping off at rotorcraft facilities in the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Qatar, the demonstration tour was seeking to attract prospective customers across the public safety and defence industries to experience the capabilities of this multi-mission aircraft.

With eleven aircraft variants spanning over four decades, the Bell 412 has a longstanding history of supporting critical missions around the world, including firefighting, law enforcement and search-and-rescue operations. Combining its increased maximum internal weight of 12,200 lbs., external weight of 13,000 lbs., and ability to carry 5,000 lbs. with a cargo hook, along with its robust main rotor gearbox with dry run capability, operators benefit from its increased horsepower during public safety operations.

This activity builds on recent orders for the Bell 412 from the Tunisia Air Force for multi-role military and security missions, the Japan Coast Guard, San Diego Fire and Rescue, Sarajevo Canton Ministry of the Interior and the Croatia Ministry of Interior, and more.



The latest Bell 412 in Dubai ©Ian Frain



**Able and Rush**  
(People Solutions)Ltd



**NetJets and Starlink** have entered into an agreement to bring high-speed in-flight connectivity to 600 aircraft across NetJets' global fleet by the end of 2026, unlocking a new level of productivity and exceptional travel experiences in the air.

This multi-year, service level agreement paves the way for NetJets to quickly outfit its aircraft across the U.S. and Europe, with installation having already commenced.

Starlink is an advanced satellite constellation using a low Earth orbit to deliver broadband internet capable of supporting streaming, gaming and more. With over 8,000 satellites in orbit, Starlink offers speeds up to 500 Mbps, coverage across global routes, and availability even in the most remote locations.

Spain is placing orders for 100 **Airbus helicopters** through the Directorate General for Armament and Material (DGAM) of the Ministry of Defence. These four contracts, framed within the National Helicopter Plan announced in May, aim to boost the modernisation of Spain's defence and security assets. The contracts, which represent the largest helicopter purchase by the DGAM, include four different models for the three branches of the Spanish Armed Forces. Specifically, the agreement includes the following programmes:

- 13 H135 helicopters: 12 units for the Spanish Air and Space Force and 1 for the Navy. They will be used for advanced pilot training, light utility, and observation missions.
- 50 H145M helicopters: All for the Spanish Army (FAMET). Their missions cover military pilot training, light attack (equipped with HForce, complementing the Tiger), light utility and disaster relief.
- 6 H175M helicopters: For the Spanish Air and Space Force. These super-medium utility helicopters will be used for governmental missions, including the transport of authorities, replacing obsolete fleets from Wing 48.

31 NH90 helicopters: 13 for the Army, 12 for Air and Space Force, and 6 for the Navy. Destined for tactical transport, manoeuvre, and special operations missions, as well as completing the Navy's amphibious warfare fleet.

2025 was the year the **Airbus H140** stepped into the spotlight, making its grand debut and raising the bar in the light twin category for performance, cost-effectiveness, and passenger and crew comfort.

Three H140s are now in flight and Airbus distributed these images by - Cara Irina Wagner to mark the end of 2025. Seeing these "triplets" airborne together is the perfect way to bid farewell to a milestone year!



Although it first flew in 1994, the **BN2T-4S Islander**, the largest variant in the Islander family, has only now received Transport Canada Civil Aviation (TCCA) type certification. The story came along with a notice from BN announcing that the smaller turbine version of the standard aircraft had received its TCCA Type Certificate Data Sheet (TCDS) as an approved type for operations in Canada. The Islander is one of the world's most successful and enduring designs, its success being attributed to its exemplary performance as a multi-role, high frequency, short-haul platform. Most publications focussed on the larger type with its greater range, increased payload, higher operating ceiling and longer fuselage allowing for 12 seats, subject to local air operation regulations.

The Islander already serves in a variety of interesting roles in the wider region and is viewed by many as the backbone of operations into remote strips in areas from Alaska through to the Yukon and as far east as Quebec to Labrador. Canadian certification of the more powerful Turbine Islander will give operators the option of benefiting from the Islander's characteristic rugged reliability with the added benefit of an increased payload.

The original piston-based BN2B Islander variant, which has been approved for use in Canada for some time, is renowned for its excellent performance and high operating reliability and offers an effective, dependable and low-cost solution for operators.



The approval, granted under the TCCA Type Certificate A-92, also incorporates several additional modifications, including an increased Maximum Take-Off Weight of 8,925 lbs.

This certification complements existing approvals with the UK CAA, EASA, and FAA, providing operators in one of the world's largest remote and regional aviation markets access to a proven, rugged short-field aircraft capable of year-round operation.

The newly approved Islander is powered by two 320 SHP Rolls Royce B17 turboprops with Hartzell 3-bladed propellers and features a number of enhancements including low drag fairings, updated interior with ergonomically designed. Leather club seating options and a state-of-the-art cockpit centred around the Garmin G600TXi family of avionics. Other standard options include enlarged baggage bay door and a sliding door to the main cabin which may be opened in flight.

Last month 50 years of aerial surveillance over the North Sea was marked at the commencement of a two day gathering of the Super CEPCO - **Coordinated Extended Pollution Control Operation** in The Netherlands.

In an impressive hangar at Schiphol-East, with a Netherlands coast guard aircraft as the centrepiece, crews from various partner countries, former pilots, former employees and cooperation partners came together to mark the milestone.

In the Super CEPCO operation, six North Sea countries, under the Bonn Agreement and HELCOM, work together continuously for 48 hours to observe the North Sea from the air for environmental contaminants. In this way, contamination can be identified early and dealt with effectively. This year the six attending nations brought together aircraft flown in from Norway, Spain and Sweden and well as locally based aircraft.

The half century milestone focussed on what was originally pioneering work by Rijkswaterstaat that has now grown into a mature operation in collaboration with Kustwacht Nederland and many (international) partners with whom we contribute to a cleaner and safer North Sea on a daily basis.

The international visitors to the event were assisted by AviaVIP, a leading FBO network in continental Eu-

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





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You have to be ready for anything. That's why Bell has been an unwavering partner to law enforcement agencies since 1948, delivering a range of trusted platforms for varied missions. Backed by our industry-leading global support, your team remains ever-prepared for any call that comes your way.



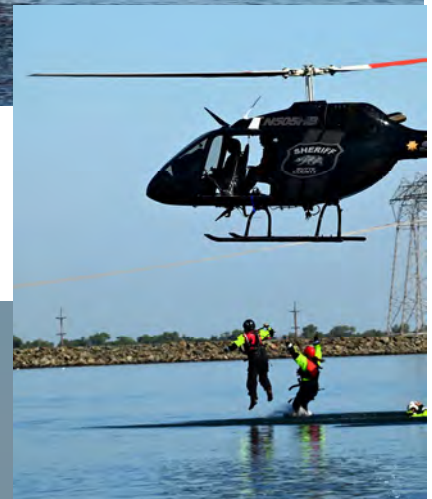
[bell.co/publicsafety](https://bell.co/publicsafety)





Lifted from a December social media post by BD Smith, three images of the Butte County Sheriff's Office Bell 505 JetRanger X N505HB in training.

The unit is based north of Sacramento operating a Bell 206B3 and the 505 from Oroville Municipal Airport in Oroville, California.







©CEPCO

rope. The team in Amsterdam was there to make sure the ground operation went smoothly, ensuring that every crew got to start and end their mission with professional and friendly service. Next year the CEPCO event will be at a different location.

The 45-year anniversary of **Safran Helicopter Engines** at Grand Prairie was observed during a celebratory event that brought together employees and company leaders, along with representatives from Airbus Helicopters Inc. and Grand Prairie Mayor Ron Jensen.



©Airbus Helicopters

## ACCIDENTS & INCIDENTS

**2 December 2025 Airbus Helicopters H145 D-HYAG** Air ambulance of ADAC, Christoph 67, based Schleswig-Holstein, Germany. The helicopter landed in the parking area of a dairy plant in Hohenwestedt to attend an incident. All the crew left the H145 to deal with the patient. During that time, one of the helicopter blades was struck by a truck on the road. As the blade was damaged, the helicopter was not able to resume operations. There were no personal injuries. [ASN]

**4 December 2025 Air Tractor AT-802 VH-LIM.** Fixed wing aircraft on fire fighting operations operated by Pay's Air Service, Scone, NSW was taking off from Linga Airfield, Linga, Victoria Australia in support of a fire at Patchewollock. when it crashed and burned. The pilot was injured but survived. [ASN]

**15 December 2025 Bell 407 N404LL** Air ambulance of TriState Careflight operated by Air Methods . Aircraft departed Sunrise Hospital and Medical Centre in Nevada US for Las Vegas Harry Reid International Airport. On a post flight inspection, damage was found to the tail Rotor.

**16 December 2025 Pilatus PC-12/47E NG N667LF** Air Ambulance of Life Flight Network LLC on flight from Spokane to Renton, Washington USA encountered severe turbulence which resulted in structural

damage. There were no injuries among the four occupants. ADS-B data suggests the event occurred as the aircraft was descending through 7,000 ft. The autopilot was turned off and there were some serious vertical speed fluctuations noted. [ASN]

**22 December 2025 Beechcraft B300 King Air 350I ANX-1209** air ambulance operated by Armada de Mexico from Merd to Galveston, Texas, USA crashed in West bay, North West of Galveston Scholes Airport, Texas. Eight occupants of whom six died in the crash. The point of impact is c 1 NM short of the runway 14 and slightly to the right of the extended centreline. Heavy fog was reported at Galveston.

**24 December 2025 Airbus Helicopters H125 5H-KMA** air ambulance of KiliMedAir Aviation, Nepa with five persons aboard. The helicopter was on a rescue mission when it crashed at Barafu Camp, Mount Kilimanjaro, at an elevation of about 4700 m. All on board died including a guide, a doctor, the pilot and two tourists from the Czech Republic. [ASN]

## FLIGHT SAFETY

France has responsibility for the security of the mainland and islands off the Mediterranean coast but it also looks after several other areas including colonies in the Caribbean, including Reunion.

In addition to police aircraft they operate or contract maritime patrol air operations which come under the BEA when things go wrong.



On 12 December 2021 Vulcanair P68C F-ORET of Reunion Fly Services suffered a double engine power loss event off the French Indian Ocean island of Mayotte. The aircraft was not a dedicated ISR resource, it was operated by Reunion Flying Services on a mix of operations including the security flights for the Ministry of the Interior and commercial transportation. On this occasion it was conducting a border patrol mission for the Prefecture of Mayotte so the investigation into the engine problems was conducted by Le bureau s'appelle désormais Bureau Enquêtes Accidents pour la sécurité de l'aéronautique d'État, the French state aircraft accident investigators, the BEA-E,

Shortly afterwards Airborne Technologies completed another P68C for Reunion.

The aircraft took off from Dzaoudzi Pamandzi airport Mayotte at 07:26 Local Time. Mayotte is midway between Madagascar and the Comoros islands. On board were a pilot and an observer and the aim was to conduct a maritime surveillance mission at 500-1,200 feet.

Shortly after, c12 nm to the southeast, at an altitude of 800 ft, the pilot heard an abnormal noise from the left (no 1) engine and observed an "oscillatory movement of the propeller spinner". Concerned at the possible release of debris the pilot initiated an in flight shutdown of that engine and a return to base.

Shortly after, 11 nm from the airport at 450 ft, the right (no 2) engine suffered a loss of power and cut out. Four attempts to restart that engine

failed to achieve more than a brief period of running and an attempt to re-start the left engine also



©BEA



failed. The pilot ultimately successfully glided to Dzaoudzi Pamandzi airport and made a safe landing. The BEA-É comment that the pilot was experienced on twin-engine aircraft, also an instructor and was used to demonstrating and carrying out engine failure exercises. The investigators note that this experience may have paradoxically encouraged early shut down of the no 1 engine before gaining more height. In contrast, the failure to restart the left engine was, in the opinion of the investigators, most likely due to an surprisingly hurried attempt but crucially without use of the checklist that may have resulted in omission of one of the series of steps necessary.

The report gives no detail on what sea survival measures were in place for this operation.

### No 1 Engine Failure

Investigators concluded that the origin of the damage was misalignment of the low pitch thrust bearing tightening nut, in turn causing longitudinal misalignment of the spinner resulting in the damage found. This failure is not further elaborated upon.

### No 2 Engine Failure

The aircraft had been parked outside for the 12 days since it arrived on the island. On the first 11 evenings it had been refuelled from 195-litre AVGAS 100 LL drum stock. Only on the evening prior to the accident was the fuel not topped up. That evening the aircraft was parked overnight facing east on an apron with a slight slope to the south, with c300 litres of fuel evenly distributed in the two wing tanks (the maximum capacity is 538 litres). Each engine is usually connected to the corresponding wing tank. It is possible to modify this configuration flight by connecting an engine to the opposite tank by means of the fuel selector valve.

Post flight fuel sampling detected the presence of water. At that time 200 ml was recovered.

No defect was found with the aircraft that would have allowed water ingress environmentally. Chemical analysis determined the water most closely matched local tap water (rather than rain water or condensation). The BEA-É do not opine of the origin of this water but indicate in the preamble to a safety recommendation that the tap water may have been introduced as a “voluntary act” (implying sabotage).

### Safety Recommendations

The operator should: put in place a system to secure the aircraft's access points and vital systems. Perform pre-flight purges on a flat surface. In addition the Ministry of the Interior should: include a clause in outsourcing contracts aimed at having the BEA-É notified of events that must be the subject of a safety investigation.

## UNMANNED FRANCE

Schiebel has completed the first CAMCOPTER® S-300 flight test campaign in France, marking an important milestone in the programme's progression. The flights were conducted at the CESA Drones test site in Sainte-Hélène near Bordeaux, where the S-300 further expanded the operational envelope, reaching a total of 100 flight hours.

The flight activities in France build on previous experience gained with the CAMCOPTER® S-300 and represent a further step in expanding the aircraft's operational flight envelope. Conducted in a military environment, the flights focused on verifying key flight characteristics and overall system performance.



The CAMCOPTER® S-300 builds directly on Schiebel's extensive experience with the more familiar S-100, a maritime-proven unmanned helicopter with several hundred thousand flight hours accumulated worldwide. Drawing on this operational heritage, the S-300 is designed to deliver increased payload capacity, extended endurance and enhanced mission flexibility for demanding military and government applications.



## UNITED KINGDOM

The NPAS Strategic Board minutes released recently state that last January (2025) there were 3,981 drone tasks attended and they produced 1,575hrs flown – an average of 23.5minutes on scene at each task. They attended 87% of requests with 12% being cancelled or abandoned and 1% not deploying. These were predominantly search and imagery, public order and public engagement. 153 missing persons and 139 suspects were located. At that time there were 1,039 drone pilots across England & Wales, 83% flew missions in January 2025, deploying 625 drones.

By March 2025 parachutes had been fitted on each of the drones flying over Norwich Centre as overflying people with BVLOS and have built iPads into Public Order shields so they can control and get an overview of a broad public order location.

Notwithstanding the publicly sourced (and significantly more recent) information about some friction between the CAA and police over DFR trials in north London, it was claimed in March last year that if work continued at the pace they were experiencing DFR will be a capability available to forces by April 2026.

In an article published by UAS Vision they point out that Russia has no plans to use drones for peaceful purposes.

Since the start of the invasion of Ukraine, Russia's drone production has increased many times over, and the industry is now seen as one of the most promising for the coming years. But, as [Verstka](#) has learned, drone manufacturers and operators have no clear idea of what will happen to the sector in peacetime. Funding for the civilian unmanned-aerial-vehicle (UAV) segment is being cut, with money even being pulled from the Ministry of Emergency Situations.

Developers of civilian drones say they are forced to produce military equipment in order to survive — it's the only segment in demand because of the strict regulations that restrict civilian use of drones. Other risks include the rise of an illegal UAV market and the growing use of drones for criminal purposes. Verstka spoke with engineers, developers, and military personnel about the state of the industry today — and what they expect after a possible truce.

[Russia has No Plans for the Peaceful Use of Drones – UAS VISION](#)

Not so long ago PAN was reporting (somewhat scathingly) on several National Health Service (NHS) drug and sample delivery trials taking place in the United Kingdom. The critique was potentially well founded at the time, in that the reports were of tiny disposable loads of medical objects being transported across the sea to hospitals and laboratories.

Now the worm has turned and the lion is roaring for the main drone involved – the British developed Windracer. The news is that this craft is now carrying significant loads over extended ranges and that it is in production as an important weapon for the Ukraine army in war under taking resupply missions and delivering ordnance on the enemy. They are also in service in the British Army.

Windracers' performance has been transformed into an Ultra heavy lift cargo drone, a rugged, autonomous aircraft now capable of carrying 150kg up to 1,000km, BVLOS operations, and proven in Antarctica, Ukraine, and the UK. Another aspect of the Windracer is that it has two 50hp off-the-shelf Hirth F23 two stroke engines and therefore might meet an important element of the British police BVLOS requirement.

But I got it wrong on those puny light medical loads so perhaps we will have to park that idea for the time being!



Many in the UK who unwrapped a new drone this Christmas may face a rude awakening next week, when they will have to take a theory test before being allowed to fly outdoors.

From 1 January, those intending to fly drones or model aircraft weighing 100g or more outside must complete a Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) online theory test to get a Flyer ID - something previously only needed for heavier drones.

The regulator believes up to half a million people in the UK may be impacted by its new requirements. CAA spokesperson Jonathan Nicholson said with drones becoming a "common Christmas present" it was important people knew how to comply with the law.





## UNITED STATES

In the wake of its loss of air delivery vehicles in an incident last year Amazon is advocating for all low-altitude aircraft to be electronically visible. The company asks that drone systems have advanced detect-and-avoid capabilities to meet higher safety standards.

Amazon Prime Air is striving to be more than just another last-mile delivery option for customers and it is promoting its service to be an aerospace program embracing rigorous aerospace standards.

This approach has established Prime Air as an industry leader, combining cutting edge drone design and manufacturing capabilities with sophisticated operational systems that enable safe, efficient, and scalable drone delivery operations.

Since launching in 2022, Amazon have been delivering packages weighing up to five pounds to customers in under one hour. It now embraces a wide range of products including medications and smartphones.

Amazon Prime Air has shared public comments on the proposed regulation with the FAA, which focus on ensuring a safe and scalable framework for drone delivery. A few of our bar-raising safety priorities are as follows, you can also read our [full public comments](#).

They have asked the FAA to close a critical safety gap by requiring all crewed aircraft that operate at low altitude (below 500 feet above ground level) to be electronically conspicuous—in other words, be electronically visible—to all other operators, including drone operators.

Safety in the skies requires multiple layers of protection, similar to how cars have both airbags and seatbelts. That's they are asking the FAA to require drone systems to have advanced detect-and-avoid (DAA) capabilities that go beyond basic location broadcasting systems.

They are advocating higher safety standards for package delivery drone operators than are currently proposed. Prime Air strongly supports the FAA's proposed two-track framework for many BVLOS operations, including agricultural, aerial survey, and civic-interest use cases. However, package delivery operations should not be permitted under the lighter "permitted" framework.

Meanwhile there is controversy among users and lawmakers over the status of China built drones. The intention of the administration to ban all China made drones has not gone down well with many including a regular correspondent in PAN, Mark Colborn, late of the Dallas PD but more recently an East Coast USA man. He recently posted a rant on Linked In of which this is an edit. .

Civil Servants have set the ban in motion and meanwhile they refuse to order any federal agency to perform a cyber security audit (on Chinese manufactured drones, specifically DJI and Autel) they themselves ordered a year ago is totally unacceptable. Some see it as obvious that no security issues had been found to support the edits from on high. It would destroy their narrative.



A so-called expert and proponent of the ban recently stated on LinkedIn that building domestic supply chains (for drones and drone parts) may take two to three years. This is an ambitious estimate. The real estimate is closer to five to ten years, if at all. American drone companies have burned through millions of dollars in VC money either to fold like a cheap suit or abandon the recreational and commercial drone market completely, instead vying for lucrative government and military contracts (awarded not by merit, but with the assistance of corrupt politicians).

And until recently, most of these so-called "Made in Merica" companies sourced mostly Chinese made parts and assembly was accomplished Stateside. Since American drone tech has always been at least 5-years behind the Chinese, this will lead to the USA being a decade behind the rest of the world in drone tech. And since the next war we fight will be with drones (as the Russia/Ukraine war has showed us), that's bad. Americans have become experts at shooting ourselves in the foot. As the architects of this anti-China and "Made In 'Merica" campaign like Stephanik and her imbecillic colleague in Florida Rick Scott eventually leave public office (after being betrayed and lied to by their Dear Leader in the White House), the damage they leave behind will be felt for decades to come.

While everyone has been in a panic approaching the December 23 deadline, Mark has been flying his new DJI Mavic 4 Pro. It's an amazingly incredible piece of kit, and every time he launches it he is flabbergasted at how far DJI has innovated and improved their products in the past 12-years.

In December 2013, he built his first DJI drone. It was a DJI Flamewheel F450 with Naza Lite Controller. He has flown DJI ever since and trusts their products, know their capabilities and limitations, and count on their steadfast reliability. The thought of no longer being allowed, by an ill-informed government, to access or purchase any of DJI's future innovative tech, is frankly hugely depressing and totally pisses me off.

*Editor: OK Mark is talking about the US scene but he knows his subject and so much of what he does and the US does resonates with what happens across the world.*

## ADVERTISING WITH POLICE AVIATION NEWS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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





# HISTORY

Now dawns 2026, 70 years since in 1956 in Australia vigorous attempts were being made by the local airlines ANA and TAA to interest a number of police forces in operating aviation units. It was too soon and the technology was not yet sophisticated enough and their approaches were spurned.

Nearly a decade on from the first helicopter operation being set up by New York, the situation was little better in the United Kingdom.

In January 1956 Pye Television of Cambridge and Bristol Aircraft demonstrate a miniature monochrome heli-tele equipment to the military and police in Bristol but it failed to find backing, again it was simply before its time.

Some UK police forces were undertaking limited flights in fixed wing aircraft but such instances were the exception. Later in the year Civil Defence helicopters visited a number of police services to undertake police duty trials. The units were Cheshire, Glamorgan, Liverpool, Metropolitan, Nottingham, Southampton, Stafford, West Riding of Yorkshire and Worcestershire but it was to be just a passing phase.



PAR Collection

## HISTORY 2

### THE POLICE AEROPLANE - 'EYES IN THE SKY' FOR 90 YEARS

Police aviation in the UK, with aeroplanes, may be traced back to the 1930's, when Reigate Borough Police enrolled the pilots belonging to a local flying club as special constables. These police pilots, together with a police observer, then flew their aeroplanes on police duties. However, the debate, helicopter or aeroplane, rotary or fixed-wing, is much more recent. As helicopters became bigger and better, they have also become much more expensive, both to purchase and to operate. Helicopters in police service are now also challenged by relatively 'cheap and cheerful' drones, although the latter have some serious limitations when compared to a manned aircraft. Is the aeroplane still a viable alternative to the helicopter for police air support duties? In the UK the aeroplane has been providing the police with an 'eye in the sky' since 1935?



**Reigate Borough  
Police Air Support Unit  
-1935**



PAR Collection

## NATIONAL POLICE AIR SERVICE

According to the National Police Air Service (NPAS) who operate a mixed fleet of aeroplanes and helicopters, the aeroplane, in this case the Vulcanair P68R, provides a lower cost alternative to helicopters with, according to NPAS, operating costs around one third that of a police helicopter, typically the Airbus H135. Moreover, the aeroplane offers significant advantages for operations requiring endurance, for intelligence-led policing and for large area searches. Also, according to NPAS, sorties of up to 8 hours are possible compared to a maximum of two hours for the helicopter. Although, with a relatively small aeroplane, one without a toilet, comfort breaks must be a challenge for the crew!

**The UK National Police Air Service has four Vulcanair P68R's based at East Midlands Airport**



The four aeroplanes belonging to NPAS, all based at East Midlands Airport, are regarded as a national asset, designed to support strategic policing requirements rather than being limited to rapid response. This is a significant change in modus operandi as, in the day, some 20 years ago, the aeroplane belonging to the former North East Police Air Support Unit, a BN2B-20 Islander based at Teesside Airport, was operated in much the same way as the police helicopter based at Newcastle (Police Aviation News - October 2025). Moreover, the results achieved by the aeroplane were on par with those of the helicopter, sometimes better! When the chief pilot, Captain Jim Martin, who was qualified to fly both aeroplanes and helicopters, was asked, *"Why do you operate the aeroplane like a helicopter?"* His immediate reply was, *"No one told us that we couldn't."*

## THE IDEAL POLICE AEROPLANE

In the search for the ideal police aeroplane a variety of types, most with two engines and many with a military pedigree, have been tried and tested in the UK. At the forefront of police aviation in the UK in the 1980's and 1990's was Chief Inspector Bob Ruprecht, the chief pilot and unit executive officer of the former Hampshire Police Air Support Unit. Starting with single-engine Cessna's, popular with many police units in the USA and the workhorse of the US Civil Air Patrol, his unit then tested the futuristic Edgley EA-7 Optica which was marketed as an aeroplane with the viewing characteristics of a light helicopter. According to Ruprecht, this aircraft could certainly fly very slowly, but couldn't get anywhere very quickly! Moreover, the cabin of this aircraft was uncomfortably hot in the summer. The former test pilot, John Farley described the Optica as the

**The futuristic EA-7 Edgley Optica could fly very slowly, but it couldn't get anywhere very quickly.**





'draggiest' aircraft he'd ever flown. Sadly, Hampshire Police suffered a fatal accident with the Optica in 1985 when both the pilot and the observer were killed following an unexplained loss of control at low level.

Another aircraft that was trialled, in the 1990's, this time by Cumbria Police, was the the Cessna 337 Super Skymaster, an aircraft that also flown by the US Air Force as an armed, forward air control aircraft with the designation, Cessna O-2. In police service an electro-optical camera turret was carried under the port wing.

**The Cessna Super Skymaster was flown by the US Air Force as an armed, forward air control aircraft and also by Cumbria Police from Carlisle Airport** [PAR Collection]



The Cessna worked well enough in armed military guise but under UK civil rules that LEO 400 under the left wing ran into all sorts of weight and mass issues that meant it could not fly effectively at night. [Wikipedia image]

## THE AEROPLANE OF CHOICE

As police aviation in the UK matured in the 1990's the aeroplane of choice for a number of police forces, Durham, Cheshire, Cleveland, Greater Manchester, Hampshire and the Police Service of Northern Ireland too, became the BN Islander, followed by the longer, 'stretched' BN Defender 4000.

**Greater Manchester Police BN-2T Defender 4000, a 'stretched' BN Islander.**





For many, the police aeroplane of choice may still prove to be the BN Islander with a choice of either piston or turbine engines. This rugged, agile aeroplane, may be flown from paved runways, from grass landing strips and from beaches too. The author, when flying for the Scottish Air Ambulance Service, flying a BN Islander, would fly patients from several of the Western Isles that were without airfields, those with just landing strips. Two of these airfields, without paved runways, at Barra and Bute, were, nevertheless, equipped with 'runway' lights for night operations!



**Hampshire Police BN2B-20 Islander - G-HPAA, with a nose mounted Leo 400 EO /IR camera turret.**

## CONCLUSION

After flying Cessna's, followed by the Edgley EA-7 Optica the Hampshire Police Air Support unit enjoyed enormous success with the BN Islander. An aircraft that has proved itself in many roles, in both military and civil use; police, air observation, surveillance, survey, air ambulance, sport parachuting and for general transport, both freight and passengers. An aircraft which is big enough for many roles, but also small enough to retain operating agility, as well as the ability to operate from very basic landing strips. The Islander is also cleared for flight in known icing conditions. In retrospect, the Hampshire Police were less impressed with the bigger, BN 2T Defender 4000. Today, the Police Service of Northern Ireland operate two aeroplanes, a BN2T Islander, callsign Scout 1 and a BN2T Defender 4000, callsign Scout 2.

James A Cowan MBE

Note: After completing military service, in the Royal Air Force, the author flew the BN Islander for the North East Police Air Support Unit, for the Cheshire Police and for the Scottish Air Ambulance Service

## MOVE ALONG THERE

*Oh, Happy New Year!* Things are certainly looking up and positive for the editor. Linked In just sent one of its auto messages offering me a new job options as an Epic Games Director or Chief of Staff to the Chief of Defence Nuclear. I know we are in a period where equality prevails but I do wonder what the jobs entail and whether they are really suited to a doddery old ex-cop pushing 80. Still 'The Donald' is also my age so perhaps I am not done and dusted after all.



New friends are always welcome, some long standing contacts of my age seem to be less likely to answer the telephone these days, it seems they have a growing bond with the medical profession (it will get them nowhere!). I can always ask my new friend with a strong Indian accent who says my computer is broken..... he is called Christopher Wren. I suspect he is not the same Mr Wren who designed a famous church after the Great Fire of London - but he may claim be a relative. Should I trust him?



St. Pauls Cathedral, London was designed by Wren

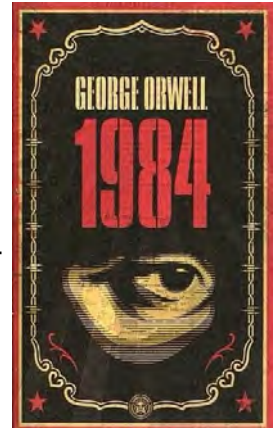


A word or two of caution though from a former police detective I know is this comment about how '1984' is creeping up on us.

A charity worker has become the first person charged under Britain's buffer-zone laws for silently praying outside an abortion facility. No words. No signs. No interaction. Just thoughts.

The woman is Isabel Vaughan-Spruce, previously cleared by the courts for doing precisely nothing unlawful. This time, prosecutors have decided that what might be happening in her head is now a criminal matter. On December 17, 2025, Isabel was criminally charged again for standing, silently praying, holding pro-life beliefs in her head – in a "buffer zone" around an abortion facility in Birmingham (UK).

When the state starts policing silence and belief, we're no longer talking about public order. We're talking about thought control. You don't have to agree with her views to see the problem. If silent prayer can be criminalised today, silent dissent is next. [David McElvie]



In the United Kingdom, the weather deteriorated as the year drew to a close and most people stayed at home – and that includes the forlorn would be illegal migrants waiting on the French coast to invade Britain at the first opportunity.... See *Channel Update* .....

Meanwhile in the "promised land" that is the United Kingdom common sense deserted some. In the West Country the Meteorological Office issued a warning of heavy seas and most of the numerous Christmas Day open sea swimmers dutifully cancelled their events – except one where two of the male swimmers who swam out into a sea clearly boiling due to the winds and undercurrents failed to come back. Many more were close to joining them. If destitute foreigners have more sense than the supposedly "informed" where are we?

It seems that a new breath of very old and stale fresh air is blowing through the ranks of senior police officers in the United Kingdom. It may be that the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) have taken on a new religion but it is doubtful.

In December someone among their ranks announced they have discovered street policing (again). They who have never walked the streets for more than a month or so have somehow discovered that placing police officers on the street deters and possibly detects crime at source. In London the Metropolitan Police have discovered that injecting 100 police officers on to the street in target areas can halt street crime in its tracks. All of a sudden in some areas it is possible to talk on your cell-phone without having it snatched from your hand by some dark and sinister figure on an illegal souped up electric bike.



Truly a revelation to every occupant of the Office of Constable, but can it be built on and will it last?

How long before they return to the malpractice of acquiring medals – especially those earned by others – and hiding behind their oversized leather swivel chairs whilst bullying their office staff to the point of tears?

They have a solid track record in that quarter. Over recent years it has been difficult for PAN to keep track of the identity of the various NPCC Aviation Portfolio Lead officers as each incumbent in turn was suspended for unseemly behaviour, some were reinstated others blended with the background for a while and then reappeared in a different, newly promoted, guise. As an apparent diversion the NPCC sought to blame all the ills of policing on members of secret societies and the Catholic Guild. In an apparent dereliction of their purpose in life, looking after each others backs, one of their members somehow remains on bail charged with fraud and misconduct in public office. What view the courts take of that may be interesting.

To those that paced the streets for many years the truth never changed. They know from personal experience that a single uniformed officer visible on the street comprehensibly prevents crime in the immediate vicinity. Three police officers standing in the same place and time have no significant effect on crime and therefore public wellbeing, than one does, they need to be dispersed – one man one street. Been there, seen it done it. It is dangerous, potentially frightening, but who said policing was anything else?

This is not something I dreamed up this is how policing used to be done when it was judged as more efficient and well led by individuals who knew and believed in their duty to The Crown and people. Except perhaps to crew an aircraft or to quell a major disturbance efficient policing is not supposed to be viewed as a group outing for the faint hearted.

# CHANNEL UPDATE

## A NEW YEAR, A NEW FOCUS

With no end in sight, to the number of illegal migrants entering the UK, after crossing the English Channel in small boats, starting from the beaches of northern France, it's time for some new ideas, a new focus, together with some decisive action, many will agree. In 8 years, since 2018, when the first 299 migrants crossed the Channel in small boats, the numbers have increased year on year. This year, in 2025, the numbers of illegal migrants landed at Dover, the English Channel port closest to France, was, at the time of writing, 41,474. The total in 8 years is 192,635.

Nevertheless, in the first two weeks of December, when 789 illegal migrants were landed at Dover from 12 boats, the French 'prevented' 821 migrants from crossing the Channel in the same period. In fact, these crossings were deferred, rather than prevented as the same migrants will board another boat on another day. Unfortunately, a true measure of success, by the French, the number of boats destroyed on, or close to the beaches of northern France has never been published by the Home Office.

In the 8 year period since 2018, in the UK, there have been 5 Prime Ministers, 6 Home Secretaries (Minister for the Interior) and a change in Government in July 2024, from the Conservative Party to the current, ruling Labour Party. Also, in May 2017, Emmanuel Macron became President of France with an election for new president due in 2027. In the intervening years there have been a number of Anglo-French initiatives to 'stop the boats'. These include, over £700 million (\$945.5 million) paid to France by the UK since 2018, now extended to 2027, to improve security on the beaches of northern France, to 'stop the boats'. Based on the results, with numbers going up, rather than numbers going down, it's very difficult to describe this as money that has been well spent!

### NEW ANGLO-FRENCH INITIATIVES

Following a statement from the British Prime Minister, Sir Kier Starmer that, "*there is no effective deterrent*" President Macron agreed to a new French initiative with a change in tactics, one which would permit the French police to follow boats into the sea, those carrying illegal migrants, to disable the boats in shallow water. However, this instruction was quickly modified with a new instruction which specifies that only 'taxi boats', those with a crew, but without passengers, may be disabled. Moreover, the French police unions regard these instructions to be dangerous and are demanding guarantees that there will be no prosecutions in the event of a death, or injury.

Another initiative is the, 'One in, one out agreement', agreed by Prime Minister Starmer and President Macron, which permits an exchange of migrants between the UK and France. Failed asylum seekers are returned to France in exchange for those whose asylum applications have been approved in France. As a result, beginning in August 2025, in 5 months, the total number of migrants returned to France was 193, with an equal number travelling to the UK by an approved route.

A glaring anomaly is that the illegal migrants travelling across the English Channel in large, underpowered, grossly overloaded, unseaworthy boats, those provided by the organised criminal groups (at an exorbitant price) are currently escorted to mid-Channel by the French security forces! A French citizen attempting the same journey, in a boat that is clearly unsafe, would be prosecuted for breaking basic safety rules, those rules which promote safety at sea!

**A vessel belonging to the Gendarmerie Maritime escorts a large inflatable boat carrying illegal migrants to rendezvous, mid-Channel, with a vessel belonging to the UK Border Force.**

AFP



Then, after arriving at mid-Channel, the illegal migrants board one of five crew transfer vessels, those vessels which are on contract to the UK Border Force, before being landed at Dover. These 25 metre crew transfer vessels (CTVs) each have a platform at the stern to facilitate boarding. At the same time the English Channel is patrolled from the air, mid-Channel, by one of the two maritime patrol aircraft, the deHavill-



land Dash 8's that are on contract from PAL Aerospace of Canada and based at Lydd airfield in Kent.

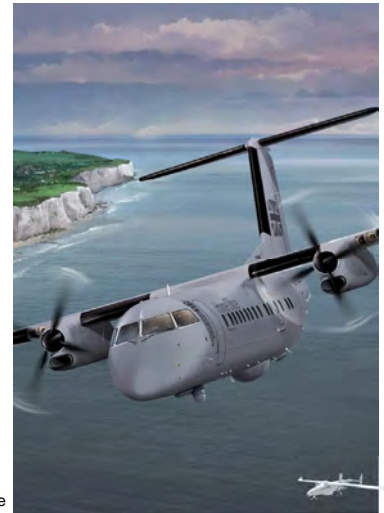
**The UK Border Force vessel, Hurricane with illegal migrants boarding mid-Channel. This adapted crew transfer vessel, one of five, designed to carry engineers to offshore wind farms, has a boarding platform at the stern.**



Home Office

Those who have been following this criminal operation since the very beginning, since 2018, will be aware that both the patrol aircraft and the rescue vessels are on rolling contracts with the UK Home Office and the UK Border Force. The two deHavilland Dash 8 maritime patrol aircraft are based in Kent, at Lydd and the five CTVs are based at Ramsgate, also in Kent. Moreover, an important point is that these aircraft and ships are generally restricted to operations in and above UK territorial waters, flying and sailing no further south than the middle of the English Channel.

**The two deHavilland Dash 8 maritime patrol aircraft, on contract to the UK Home Office and Border Force are restricted to flying above UK territorial waters, from the UK coast to the middle of the English Channel.**



Home Office

## SEARCH AND RESCUE

By comparison, those aircraft that are on contract to His Majesty's Coastguard, together with the lifeboats, with their volunteer crews, those belonging to the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, when engaged in life-saving duties are permitted to operate anywhere in the English Channel, in and above both UK and French territorial waters.

*"Search and rescue vessels **must** be allowed to enter territorial waters for rescue operations, as international law (IMO SAR Convention, UNCLOS) obligates states to coordinate and permit immediate entry for rescue units, even if they are from other countries, to save lives, though coastal states coordinate procedures and can manage disembarkation to safe ports."*

**Beechcraft King Air B200. These aircraft, flown on behalf of HM Coastguard routinely conduct search and rescue missions over French territorial waters and up to the French coast in the English Channel.**



HMCG

These perilous journeys, with migrants travelling in inflatable boats, begin in France, from the beaches near Calais and Dunkirk. Fatalities often occur at the beginning of the journey, in French waters; the re-

sult of the boat capsizing, or deflating, or with passengers crushed to death in a grossly overloaded boat. These unseaworthy, underpowered, and grossly overloaded boats, described as 'death traps', are in distress as soon as they reach deep water. This is a risk shared by the British and the French governments, together with a shared responsibility for rescue operations spanning the English Channel.



**The Diamond DA62 MPP, in HM Coastguard livery, is also used to patrol the English Channel and the northern coast of France to locate and track those inflatable boats carrying illegal migrants.**

These hapless people must be rescued at the earliest opportunity, in French waters, by the multi-agency French rescue services, by the Gendarmerie Maritime, by La Douane, the Coastguard of French Customs Service, and by the French voluntary lifeboat service, the SNMS, supported by HM Coastguard and the volunteers of the RNLI. Rescued before they encounter the added danger of being run down by a super tanker, or a large container ship whilst attempting to cross the busiest shipping lane in the world. The Border Force CTVs, those based at Ramsgate and used to transport migrants from mid-Channel to Dover, should, at the earliest opportunity, have their contracts transferred to the Maritime and Coastguard Agency and HM Coastguard.

**The French Police Nationale fly a regular air patrol above the beaches of northern France, between Dunkirk and the Baie de Somme, with a Vulcanair P68 Observer based at Lille.**



Police Nationale

Then, with the CTVs re-branded as HM Coastguard rescue vessels, migrants would be rescued in French waters in accordance with international maritime law. Currently, the vessels and the aircraft, those which are on contract to the UK Border Force, for border security duties, work to different rules to those aircraft on contract to HM Coastguard, those engaged in lifesaving duties. The activities of the lifeboats of the UK voluntary lifeboat service, the RNLI, are, when engaged in lifesaving duties, coordinated by HM Coastguard.

**The Dover Strait, part of the English Channel, just 20 miles from shore to shore, is the busiest shipping lane in the world with, each day, up to 600 ships of all sizes in transit between the North Atlantic and the North Sea.**



Steve Finn



For those readers who may be unfamiliar with the geography of the UK, the English Channel at its narrowest point, just 20 miles between England and France, is called the Dover Strait, also called the Pas-de-Calais. This natural choke point, between the North Atlantic, the North Sea and the Baltic Sea, is a gateway between the UK, Europe and the rest of the world. It is also the busiest shipping lane in the world with up to 600 ships of all sizes, large cargo ships, oil tankers, passenger ferries and fishing vessels, in transit every day. This is a primary route for European trade, moving vast quantities of oil, gas, consumer goods and industrial products with vessels subject to a traffic separation scheme to prevent collisions. The large, underpowered, overloaded inflatable boats carrying up to 80 illegal migrants, travelling at right angles to the those vessels in transit through the Dover Strait, are in extreme danger, day and night.

**The vessel Hurricane in the livery of His Majesty's Coastguard. An illustration of a Border Force vessel, one of five crew transfer vessels, re-branded for search and rescue duties, for saving lives at sea in the English Channel, between England and France.**



Home Office/Steven Smith

## CONCLUSION

Successive politicians, successive governments, on both sides of the English Channel, together with senior police and military officers have failed to counter a criminal operation which has, in 8 years, seen over 190,000 illegal migrants cross the English Channel from France to England at great personal risk. Nevertheless, in previous years, culminating in 2016, the French, supported with British finance, effectively stopped migrants from crossing the Channel. Those migrants, who attempted to cross the Channel by hiding in lorries, before travelling on ferries and through the Channel Tunnel, were stopped by the very tight security deployed at the French Channel ports at Calais and Dunkirk.

With Anglo-French cooperation those illegal migrants now crossing the English Channel in large, unseaworthy inflatable boats can be stopped too. However, French security personnel escorting boats, those carrying illegal migrants, to mid-Channel where the migrants then rendezvous with and board UK Border Force vessels is seen by many as the authorities, on both sides of the English Channel, failing in their duty to secure the national border between France and Great Britain; openly colluding with the organised criminal groups. These two democratic, rules based societies are failing their respective citizens. How is it even possible that two of the most powerful nations in the world, the United Kingdom and France, cannot stop illegal migrants, those in inflatable boats, from crossing the English Channel to enter the UK without permission?

Can the boats be stopped? Yes, they can:

- \* Form a unified search and rescue zone in the English Channel with Belgium, France and the United Kingdom as the constituent members.
- \* Establish a joint rescue coordination centre at either Cap Gris-Nez, or at Dover.
- \* Agree that all large, unseaworthy, inflatable boats, those without qualified crew in command, are, de facto, in distress and their passengers must, regardless of risk, be rescued at the first opportunity, in French waters, before they face the added danger of being run down by a large, commercial vessel whilst crossing the busiest shipping lane in the world.
- \* Transfer the contracts for the UK Border Force crew transfer vessels to the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, to HM Coastguard to facilitate search and rescue operations throughout the proposed, unified English Channel search and rescue zone.

Those other Border Force vessels, the five ocean-going Cutters and the six smaller Coastal Patrol Vessels, together with Royal Navy offshore patrol vessels, would intercept and take into custody those illegal migrants who have not been rescued and returned to France. Those who, without permission, have crossed the median line that separates the British and French territorial waters.



**With the five Border Force crew transfer vessels transferred to HM Coastguard the UK territorial waters would be patrolled by the fleet of five ocean-going Cutters and the six smaller Coastal Patrol Vessels, including BF Eagle, together with Royal Navy offshore patrol vessels.** [Home Office]

In addition, the governments of the three countries bordering the English Channel must develop their plans to detain, disperse and, where necessary, deport those migrants who have no right to claim asylum in either Belgium, France, or the UK. Deportation to a third, safe country would be an option. Also, the UK government must remove the 'pull factor' which attracts migrants to the UK; hotel accommodation, easy access to financial support and an unregulated 'grey' economy. However, the first action by the British and French governments, together with the government of Belgium, must be to prevent migrants from endangering their lives by crossing the English Channel in unseaworthy boats. With the cross-Channel route closed to unregistered boats there will be no reason for migrants to cross Europe to set up the squalid migrant camps that may be found in northern France, outside Calais and Dunkirk.

James A Cowan MBE

After an article that seems to be all about *Boating World* perhaps its time to look up again and take on a story about drones and their perceived threat to prisons.

It is no secret that drones have become a persistent challenge for correctional facilities, with incidents of contraband deliveries increasing year after year. But some correctional leaders believe it's only a matter of time before drones are used in even more ambitious ways — including assisting with escapes.

Back in July His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons Charlie Taylor warned that drone technology is advancing so quickly that the idea of an inmate being lifted out of jail by drone is now "a theoretical possibility."

That worry is reinforced by a video which shows a person being lifted to safety by an agricultural drone during severe flooding in southwestern China.

So it seems that use of the humble, recently hi-jacked, jail escape helicopter is now under threat from drones.... Where will it end?

It is a very old cartoon and has appeared in PAN many times before but it looks like it is in keeping with the latest threat voiced by the United Kingdom prison authorities.





## EVENTS

**28 January, 2026 The 2026 Law Enforcement-Homeland Security Forum & Technology Exposition in Chantilly, Virginia, USA.** This event has built partnerships, shared and integrated intelligence, strengthened collaborations, and bridged technology all in an effort to secure our homeland. The classified forum will feature keynote speakers, presentations, panel discussions and case studies on topics germane to Federal Law Enforcement, Homeland Security, Intelligence Community, and the broader US national security community. Counterterrorism, Transnational Organised Crime, Counterdrug, Border Security, Maritime Security, Emerging & Innovative Technologies

The forum will also include government and industry innovative technologies, products and programs which will be showcased during the unclassified Technology Exposition. <https://www.ncsi.com/event>

**17-19 February 2026 APSA On-The-Road TFO Course/Airborne Thermographer Certification Course in Alameda County, California, USA.** The Host Agency is Alameda County Sheriff's Office and the venue for registered attendees is 4985 Broder Blvd, Dublin CA 94568-3314

The Tactical Flight Officer and Airborne Thermographer Certification Course is designed to provide aircrew members the tactical skills and information necessary to safely and successfully support ground units engaged in a variety of law enforcement missions. While this course is designed with tactical flight officers in mind, it's equally valuable for pilots (manned and unmanned), aircrew members, and unit supervisors. Attendees will learn the elements of crew coordination; how to set up a perimeter and direct the activities of ground units from the air; how to manage vehicle pursuits from the air; and how to conduct thermal imagery searches using the latest in airborne tactics and technology. This course is essential to the professional development of aviation law enforcement personnel and meets one of the requirements for TFO training related to accreditation.

This course also offers certification as an Airborne Thermographer to participants who attend the full 24 hours and pass the written exam. This portion of the course is presented by Mr. Brian Spillane, Teledyne FLIR, who is a Certified Thermographer Instructor. Members \$415, Non-members \$515. Details from AIRBORNE PUBLIC SAFETY ASSOCIATION, INC., 50 Carroll Creek Way, Suite 260, Frederick, MD 21701 +1 301-631-2406 [apsa@publicsafetyaviation.org](mailto:apsa@publicsafetyaviation.org) [www.publicsafetyaviation.org](http://www.publicsafetyaviation.org)



10 March 2026 APSA  
Rescue Summit 2026.  
Atlanta, Georgia,  
USA. Part of the Vertical  
event.



10-12 March 2026 Vertical, Atlanta, Georgia, USA




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