

Police Aviation News

©Police Aviation Research

Issue 366 October 2026

PAR

FRENCH DILEMMA

Supply and demand do not match

SAR SETS A WEIGHT LIMIT
CABLE STREET 90
1936 - 2026

STRONGER. TOGETHER.

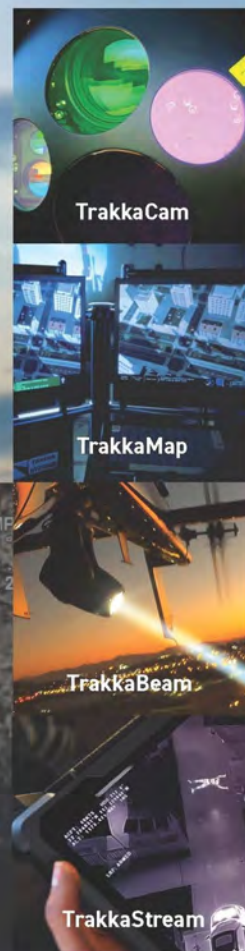
TOTAL MISSION SOLUTIONS

Trakka Systems is a global leader in Critical Vision Technology, empowering law enforcement and public safety for over two decades. As your single supplier, we streamline the supply chain, simplifying procurement for integrators, OEMs, and end users. Experience the strength of Trakka's unified ecosystem—where advanced imaging, mapping, and lighting technologies work in concert to simplify the mission and improve operational outcomes.

Trakka Total Mission Solutions. Stronger together, for every mission.



trakkasystems.com/total-mission-solutions | +46 16 708 60



ACFT: 56KTS HDG: 157.2°
32.748398°N 117.075257°W
ALT: 1324.3ft NAV: INS

TRGT: 9MP
32.750058°
ELV: 358°
RNG: 1222

LRF: AR

DDE MED
AGC ON

Tc301
CAM: HD-EO
MODE: G-TRK

Police Aviation News published monthly by **POLICE AVIATION RESEARCH.**

7 Windmill Close, Honey Lane, Waltham Abbey, Essex EN9 3BQ UK

Contacts Cell: +44 7778 296650. Main web site: www.policeaviationnews.com

E-mail: policeaviation@hotmail.com or editor@policeaviationnews.com

Police Aviation Research an Airborne Public Safety Association Member since 1994

Police Aviation News has been published since April 1996 and is wholly supported by advertising.

RECENT SPONSORS

Bell Textron

www.bellflight.com

Enterprise Control Systems

www.enterprisecontrol.co.uk

FlySight

www.flysight.it

Teledyne FLIR

www.flir.com

Macro-Blue

www.macro-blue.com

Smith-Myers

www.artemis.smithmyers.com

Trakka Systems

www.trakkasystems.com

Airborne Public Safety Association

www.publicsafetyaviation.org

PAvCon Europe

www.pavconeurope.eu

EDITORIAL

It has been a mildly interesting month. We in Britain have witnessed the departure of a Prime Minister, Sir Keir Starmer, a man in high office who clearly did not have a clue about what he was doing and what his purpose in life as a leader was. His was a year of pretty much nothing that ended in a spectacular.... nothing. His demonstrable skill lay in the U-turn; no sooner was he off in one direction than he performed a volte face to head off back again. He barely started anything for long and always succeeded in attracting a groan from the ranks about pretty much everything and everywhere. The migrant boats kept coming. Once out of the door he decided that politics was not for him and performed another U turn and resigned parliament despite stating he intended to stay to represent the people who had voted for him. Many had reluctantly come to the conclusion that he was not staying long before he did.

All hail the new Prime Minister, all hail Andy Burnham, where will we go next? Surely the British people finally have a leader of a nation? Well perhaps not. Meanwhile there is growing confusion over whether to hang onto the Chagos Islands, defence funding, North Sea oil and many other issues some see as important as the migrant boats keep coming loaded with unknown young men who have no love for Britain other than its many handouts. Heaven help the politicians if even one of them proves to be a terrorist. Such a development will spill many cups of coffee in Parliament.

Sadly, nothing appears to have changed. It seems like many of the leaders of the Western World have lost the will to lead. Unfortunately, in most cases, the leaders of the police in many places have fallen into the same mould. It is the normality of our times.

After ten years of being stung by the barbs of irresolute leadership and underfunding it turns out that the England and Wales NPAS are far from being unique in being the Cinderella service of law enforcement aviation. A recent report by French politicians has highlighted that things have not been going well for the airborne law enforcers of France for some time. They may have several times as many helicopters as the UK but a combination of poor funding and investment by people with little understanding of police aviation has reduced the day-to-day capability of the Gendarmerie air fleet by half. Read on for the story.

Bryn Elliott



LAW ENFORCEMENT

BRAZIL

FEDERAL TENDER: The Federal Police (PF) has launched an international tender to establish a price registration agreement for three medium-sized twin-engine helicopters.

Two aircraft are allocated to the Operational Aviation Coordination (CAOP) the agency managing the procurement agreement—and one to the Federal District Civil Police (PCDF), which joined the tender as a participating agency. The Terms of Reference set a reference price of US\$ 22,713,457.71 per unit and a total of US\$ 68,140,373.13 (or R\$ 346,296,190.28, based on the exchange rate from April 9, 2026).

The tender specifications require factory-new, twin-engine aircraft certified in Brazil for day and night VFR and IFR operations, with a minimum of 14 seats. The Preliminary Technical Study calls for a capacity of two pilots and 12 passengers (with a combined weight of 1,300 kg), a minimum range of 330 nautical miles in this configuration, and a range of 500 nautical miles without refuelling when carrying two pilots and two tactical flight officers. [Piloto Policial]

FRANCE

GENDARMERIE: Regular readers will have noted a Stop Press at the end of the September 2026 issue. Unfortunately, the story arrived on the eve of publication, so readers were directed to an original article in French on the website opex360. Some will therefore be familiar with the content already.

For others it is clear that the item was a broadside attack on the state of the Gendarmerie aviation in France. The article was something of an eye opener. From an initial translation it seemed that the words published by zone militaire opex360.com are like reading the story of NPAS all over again. The article was based on an official report to the French Senate.

It would appear that, not unlike NPAS in the UK, there are some who have allowed the operation of 40 years old Aerospatiale AS350 helicopters as something to be proud of, a badge of honour, even if they are rotting and rarely available! Then there is buying the H160 for the Gendarmerie that it seems reeks of some highly placed person signing off the purchase of a machine as a personal aggrandizement project – smart and capable but way too big for the current police mission.

For the British audience it may be pertinent that the Channel boats have meant that the people in the UK have also been paying a significant amount of money to enhance the capabilities of Police Nationale and the Gendarmerie in stopping the boats, adding drones and aerial patrols to the EU side of the English



Channel. It appears that none of this money, millions, has been available to enhance the air surveillance by the Gendarmerie.

Shortly before their summer recess The Senate, the upper house of the French Parliament, received a report from Bruno Belin, a senator representing the department of Vienne and having Senate interests in finance and aviation, which highlighted many deficiencies in the Gendarmerie air arm.

The report, written on behalf of the French Republican Party and submitted on June 30 sounded the alarm on the state of capability of the air arm and revealed that it had entered a phase of vulnerability. They appear to have a well-supplied inventory of aircraft, but the real situation is much more fragile.

On January 1, 2025, the Gendarmerie was nominally operating fifty-six helicopters comprising twenty-six Aerospatiale AS350 Ecureuil, fifteen Eurocopter EC135s, and fifteen Eurocopter EC145s. In addition, new H145 and H160 aircraft were on order from Airbus Helicopters and deliveries had started. The main fleet is allocated to mainland France but has detachments in overseas territories.

In 2025 the fleet carried out 15,478 missions accruing 17,004 flight hours. Overall, the fleet was suffering with availability issues. The AS350 fleet, with the first delivered from 1979, are now on average 40 years old, and yet numerically nearly half the fleet. Many of them are suffering from corrosion and spares shortages. In 2018 they were available 69.7% of the time but by 2025 this had plummeted to 43.7%. The more modern aircraft in the fleet also showed reductions in availability as they too grew older. The fifteen years old EC135T2+ fleet availability is quoted as falling to 72.3% from 83.1% and the early model EC145s down to 66% from 73.8%. The latter were the first off the production line and delivered between 2002 and 2008. The soon to be retired as worn out NPAS fleet of EC145s are youngsters in comparison, although they may have more hours per airframe. As a comparison the UK EC135 fleet is of a comparable age to the Gendarmerie fleet but has had greater use in terms of individual airframe hours. According to the report the mission profiles are protection and assistance [28%], operational readiness [28%], security and law enforcement [17%], investigations [13%], area defence [7%], and logistics [7%].

The level of availability is such that the nominal fleet of fifty-six helicopter allows for just thirty-four being available on an average day. The consequences are that Aerial sections have been obliged to close temporarily – specifically Limoges, Egletons and Amiens along with several mountain bases. It is warned that if the AS350 Ecureuil's are not replaced, ten sections could be put on standby as early as 2028.

Replacement aircraft, ten H160s and six H145D3s remain too few in number (only two H160s and one H145 had been delivered but unavailable due to crew and maintenance training and role equipping). The first three H160s were delivered without their mission fit, and rumours suggest that their very role in the service is being called into question. The H160s are too big for an organisation that has grown up patrolling on Alouette's, Ecureuil's and EC135s. Furthermore, the new deliveries place an enormous strain on the maintenance organisation in that they increase the number of different standards to five at a time when they are clearly struggling with maintaining the three older airframes.

In October 2025, before the National Assembly Defence Committee, the Director General of the National Gendarmerie, Army General Hubert Bonneau, warned that it was imperative to order twenty-two H145D3s in 2026 to avoid a severe reduction in the fleet. The report states that it foresees the fleet being "reformed" in the period 2028-30. If those 22 H145s do not already have allocated production slots any new H145s must surely sit in the queue until 2035 along with all the other customers. Transferring the order to the



H135 may allow a better delivery option. Even so the Senat report highlights that the financial requirement to meet the re-equipment order is in the region of 350M Euros to which might be added an annual 50M to maintain them.

Overall funding for the Gendarmerie amounts to 11 billion euros, but the budget is consumed by over 82% on salaries and bonuses, leaving only crumbs for material investment. The whole appears to be very similar to the problems faced by NPAS in having to set the organisation with numerous senior ranks to produce an organisation that could only cut costs on the flight line.



The report reveals that in May 2026 the Gendarmerie had in service some 1,350 drones and 1,200 pilots seconded from their normal duties. The PN has 830 drones, 596 local remote pilots and 182 personnel assigned to specialist drone and counter drone units. In 2025 the PN recorded 4,909 missions and increase of 87.5% over their 2,618 hours in 2024, totalling 17,913 flight hours.

Overall, this has been a massive increase in drone use compared with activity just 2-3 years ago when the same question usually elicited the reply that “no drones are in use.”

Editor: Until this Senate report appeared few outsiders considered the Gendarmerie to be in a period of fiscal and material stress. All appeared to be going well, and the senior officers seemed keen to engage with the media and such as PAVCon Europe to host the annual gathering to promote their impressive new fleet. Since then, there have been noticeable delays in the “PAVCon with the Gendarmerie” date – that meet up has slipped twice now – and the rumours about delays in re-equipment and the unsuitability of the H160 for their police role now appear confirmed.

The Senate paper seems to resonate in many ways with the UK HMI's report by Matt Tarr that has largely been ignored nearly ten years on from its publication. There are other similarities with the state of the UK police air operations. It is noticeable that France has considerably more resources assigned to their emergency services than the UK – that is a common comment when considering both Germany and Italy also.

With France and the United Kingdom being of similar in population if not area it is noticeable that the civil fleets of the Gendarmerie, Police Nationale, Customs and Securite Civile dwarf the likes of the police in NPAS/Scotland and Northern Ireland. There are other aircraft, including the Coast Guard but they are not numerous.

Until late last century, most of Europe had civil police and military police and in many countries the latter were absorbed by the Ministry of the Interior this century. For the French Gendarmerie it was 2009. The air arm remained linked to the Armée de l'air et de l'espace and that order for the H160 was a joint one with them and set up by them, potentially with little reference to the real needs of the police operation...

In terms of the costs faced by the law enforcement operations, it seems probable that when the Gendarmerie was carved out of the Armée de l'air to undertake a more civilian role they took with them some (expensive) senior officer ranks. This may have been the case with others such as the Bundespolizei in Germany and the Gendarmerie in Belgium, but so far at least, no problems have emerged with funding any ‘top heavy’ tendencies they have had.

In contrast NPAS was taken from what was largely a lean machine with very low ranks in charge of the day-to-day operation to an organisation where the Home Office and other fools felt obliged by legal protocols to add expensive layers of management to the limited budget that in effect held back funding the front line. It seems that there is a similarity in funding problems but derived from a different model. Finding 350M Euros in capital for re-equipment appears an impossible ask.

Elsewhere in the article it is stated that the natural successor to the AS350, the EC135/H135 is to be withdrawn from service in 2035, and those early models EC145s are set to go even earlier. Assigned to mountain rescue they are said to have suffered undue stress which has affected their serviceability. With no orders in the pipeline (let alone twenty-two new H145D3s) there is no way that any of the current fleet can be replaced in that timescale, unless Airbus has already set the airframes aside. That is going to compound the problems identified in the report to the Senate.

The 8-page French language report to the Senate is not as detailed as the 97-page report on NPAS by the now retired Matt Parr HMICFRS in 2017 but it can be found at <https://www.senat.fr/rap/r25-812/r25-812-syn.pdf>

The British police report *Planes, drones and helicopters: an independent study of police air support* is still available on the web. <https://assets-hmicfrs.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/uploads/planes-drones-and-helicopters-an-independent-study-of-police-air-support.pdf> It is of course approaching ten years old, and a lot has changed but like the Senate report it may well stick around to haunt some.

POLICE NATIONALE: As they were mentioned in the Belin report it is worth noting his comments on the PN aircraft use.

The PN model varies significantly from that of the gendarmerie. It does not have a helicopter fleet (although they have leased helicopters in the past) and relies on leased or provided fixed wing aircraft as well as support from other administrations including the Customs, Gendarmerie, military and Securite Civile.

The manned assets normally mobilised comprise ten aircraft taken up from civil flying clubs etc, but not all are available as a priority.

In recent months a variety of aircraft have been noted as being involved in the 'stop the boats' effort around the English Channel including Cessna singles, a Diamond DA62 and a Vulcanair P68. The report states there are five role equipped aircraft and four that are not. There is also a Beechcraft 1900D 19 seat transport aircraft based at Le Bourget.



This Vulcanair P68 has regularly been noted surveying the coast of La Manche



Gendarmerie in Guadeloupe operate both the venerable AS350 helicopters and the new Delair DT46 drones. (SM)

DRONES: In Guadeloupe and the north, the Gendarmerie Nationale is strengthening its drone support capabilities.

Based in Pointe-a-Pitre, Guadeloupe, the French administered island group on the Atlantic borders of the southern Caribbean the drone support unit primarily works alongside the based helicopters operating in

detering illicit maritime trafficking. They operate small quadcopters and the larger high-performance, long-range tactical Delair DT46 also used by the French military for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance.

The Delair DT46 weighs 25kg with a 5kg payload and endurance around 3.5 to 5 hours depending on its specification. Normal vertical lift it can extend its endurance to nearly 7 hours if set-up as a fixed wing.

In the north of France, the Drone Support Section based in Amiens provides air support in the fight against illegal immigration in and around the English Channel/La Manche and the North Sea.

Days later it was reported that the Tribunal administrative de Grenoble had suspended the authorisation allowing the Haute-Savoie Gendarmerie to use drones for rescue missions and SAR. It is not said to be a general ban on the Gendarmerie using drones.



Gendarmerie quadcopter in Guadeloupe

In August the local Gendarmerie had been authorised to capture, record and transmit images for the purpose of searching for missing persons and rescue operations until November 13, 2026. A local anti-surveillance pressure group, the Vigie Liberté, has appealed against that decision in the courts and as a result the authorisation was suspended while the court considers the situation. [Social Media]

NORWAY

POLICE: A tender was issued in 2025 to locate a suitable pilot training helicopter for the police with a predicted contract value of 2,400,000 krone (£191,200). The result was announced on September 1.

The tender called for helicopter pilot education to two employees, to be trained up for their fleet of AW169 helicopters. The requirement included elements that required the service to be supplied in Scandinavia rather than abroad. The training place was required to be within day-commuting distance from the Oslo area. Any relocation of the candidates abroad was seen to result in considerable additional costs and practical challenges and is not considered a real alternative. In the event only one supplier could meet the requirement - European Helicopter Centre AS (EHC) in Sandefjord, Norway.

macro-blue
TACTICAL MISSION DISPLAYS

Now Partnering with Technisonic
for radio integration.

TECHNISONIC
COMMUNICATIONS

www.macro-blue.com

The customer announced the tender could not be met as an open tender and announced it was going down the single supplier route in June this year. The resulting contract turned out to be more expensive than initially predicted at 3 200 000,00 NOK (£255,000) [TED 568951]

Editor: EHC undertake pilot training on the Robinson R44 and Airbus EC135T2+ with a simulator based on the AS355N.

The Norwegian Police Shared Services, on behalf of the police, is conducting a market survey (RFI) to gain an overview of what the market can offer in terms of helicopter services in Northern Norway for use in emergency preparedness. In this context, helicopter preparedness refers to access to a fully staffed helicopter capacity that is available for transport at short notice, 24 hours a day, all year round. The service may include both emergency missions and planned missions. The information received through the market survey will be used as a basis for the further work related to planning and the potential implementation of a subsequent procurement. Please refer to the RFI documents for further description as well as information regarding participation and response requirements. [TED]

SWITZERLAND

ZURICH: In November 2024 a tender was issued to acquire a role equipped light twin helicopter for the Canton of Zurich under a lease for up to 15 years. The tender called for the airframe to be role equipped and include Continuing Airworthiness Management, maintenance and ensuring the operational capability of the contract object as well as the provision of a back-up helicopter - if required. The operation was to be 24 hour and include Night Vision Goggles. The Kanton are currently using a AS350B3 HB-ZKZ that has been on contract from Heli-Linth AG in Dübendorf for over ten years. The tender was seeking to afford a larger and more capable type like the Bell 429.



Kantonspolizei Zurich

A maximum of three bidders were invited to bid (believed to be Airbus, Bell and Leonardo). In the event no winner was chosen to meet this tender as the buyer found there were insufficient funds to meet it, and it was closed. [TED 72430-2026]



UNITED KINGDOM

HMICFRS REPORT

In her annual assessment of policing in England and Wales, HM Chief Inspector Michelle Skeer OBE QPM said the government's programme of police reform, including the creation of a National Police Service (NPS), could help address long-standing problems that prevent policing from operating as efficiently and effectively as it could.

Although some improvements in prospects are evident by the recent orders and deliveries of new helicopters, NPAS are still holding on to the prospect of the NPS being set up to reduce the management burden they have in being a small independent section of policing under West Yorkshire Police.

At the moment that prospect seems no nearer. There was no mention of NPAS in the report but we have a NPS timeline from new editions of the NPAS Strategic Board minutes (which see).

ESS

Assistant Chief Constable Lee Berry and Head of Flight Operations Paul Watts (right) held a presentation on NPAS in the future at The Emergency Services Show 2026, taking part in a session titled '*National Police Air Service and Innovations in the Sky*'. The session formed part of the Fleet of the Future programme and has been recorded as a podcast to be posted by the Emergency Services Times podcast. *This was the subject of a report in the separate events document also on the PAN website and previously circulated.* At the ESS show in Birmingham there was talk of around 18 months until the creation of the NPS. Again the newly released minutes clarify that timeline.



As a result of the amount of material scheduled for this month's edition, I have already published reports relating to activities at the UAV show in Las Vegas and the Emergency Services Show in Birmingham, UK as a separate document. You will find the report on the websites. Although largely about drones, the document includes reports on NPAS manned aircraft activities presented at the show. This has been largely superseded by access to those new NPAS Strategic Board minutes for January and March 2026. They are available on the NPAS website and are worth a read for the detail.

STRATEGIC BOARD

The new minutes reveal there have been some budget issues, some positive and others negative. They have faced high accommodation and travel costs due to the number of vacancies within NPAS and having to move staff around the country to deliver the service. While this has eased for pilots there remain difficulties with TFOs as each of the individual forces either call back officers early or refuse to release them for NPAS service in the first place. They all have their own staff retention problems as overall numbers dwindle.

London are predicted to be significantly under their hours at year end which is a significant issue in terms of costs – they are paying for a service that is not being delivered by manned helicopters although there may be some payback in the north London DFR programme.

PCC Philip Wilkinson made a statement in terms of the South West position which had been agreed by all the PCCs and Chief Constables within the region and had been sent to the Chair in a formal letter: "We remain committed to supporting the NPAS collaboration and are supportive of the proposed move to a national centre for policing. We also welcome the development of the NPCC Aviation Strategy, in particular the planned transition towards greater and more innovative use of drones as an integral policing capability. While we recognise the benefits of collaboration, we continue to have concerns regarding value for money. We understand and share the concerns expressed by PCCs about their ability to justify certain elements of the collaboration's costs to local taxpayers, including—but not limited to—the costs associated with Fixed Wing provision.

We do not wish to exacerbate these pressures through attritional or potentially damaging litigation. However, we do expect to see progress on cost reduction in areas that are not intrinsically linked to the core collaboration agreement. In particular, our operational assessment is that the South West can be effectively served from a single base rather than the current 2.5."

Chief Constable of West Yorkshire Police, Sir John Robins QPM DL. The Police Air Operations Certificate Holder commented that the replacement for helicopters through pilotless/crewless aircraft beyond BVLOS is further away than (originally) imagined. Probably this is the first time this has been recorded in the minutes. He was talking about the future craft to meet the requirement being investigated by last years Avon drone trials of a single engine Scheibel S101 rather than the craft involved in the DFR programme.

It is hoped that the NPS will bring together governance, oversight and operational command, user requirement and drone development all into one place to make it a more autonomous service.

Avonmouth 2024 the NPAS BVLOS trials involving a single engine drone that does not meet current certification requirements



At this point a discussion took place regarding the projected timeline for the NPS. Transition Stage 1 is planned to take on digital policing, forensics and NPAS and the plan is aviation reform will be agreed mid 2026, Royal Assent for the paper would be 2027 and NPAS would transfer into the NPS in Q3/27. So according to that timeline it should already be in place.

At the time of the earlier meetings they had identified a potential budget underspend of £1.3M within the capital programme due to delays with the Emergency Services Network (ESN) programme and issues with capital parts. In the case of ESN it will be a deferment of payment as the work will still have to be undertaken.

GS advised the Home Office have granted NPAS an additional £6.5M in capital funds for 25/26 and £5.1M of this funding will be used to meet milestone payments due for fleet replacement. NPAS are working with the Home Office to place the remainder into reserves.

Funding for three additional new helicopters exists, subject to some financial targets being met. Back in March there remained some indecision around whether to split the funding with drone acquisition. As a result, the funding may be for 1, 2 or 3 aircraft and additional DFR funding. Later meetings may well have clarified this indecision. No timeline was given for the availability of this funding.

NPAS SAFETY UPDATE

James Cunningham presented the report and highlighted that mid-air collision risk between drones and helicopters is recognised internationally as a major aviation safety threat.



Within UK policing, recent safety reporting shows an increase in drone-related incidents, including mid-air collisions, structural strikes, and several Airprox reports. Some incidents involved police drone operators deviating from national guidance on safety and deconfliction, creating genuine collision risks. Two specific cases were highlighted where police drone operators acted without proper clearance or observer support, leading NPAS crews to decline tasks on safety grounds.

Despite these concerns, the majority of forces (around 90%) are successfully deconflicting with NPAS, with excellent examples of daily safe interoperability, only a small minority of forces show non-compliance or refusal to coordinate.

Risk modelling indicates that while the baseline NPAS collision risk for conventional aircraft is low, the risk is significantly higher when drones are involved, largely because drones lack the electronic conspicuity and avoidance systems used by crewed aircraft. Nonetheless the risk from police operated drones is far less than that from civilian drones.

UNITED STATES

DRUG RUNNING: Aerial assets continue to be sent out to intercept drug running boats, and more recently their refuelling bases.

The US Marine Corps air assets include HMLA-269 a Bell UH-1Y Venom operating squadron nicknamed the "Gunrunners" usually based in North Carolina. They are assigned to interdicting the drug running criminals in the Pacific. No holds barred it seems.

On September 7 a vessel of interest was boarded and cleared before being destroyed. Subsequent to that President Trump highlighted the work of the US military in anti-narcotic missions in his speech to the gathered international audience in the United Nations Building in New York on September 22.



ARIZONA: As reported in the August edition of *Police Aviation News* (page 7) the police in Phoenix are acquiring an Airbus H145. Since then, Davenport Aviation has confirmed that they are undertaking the supply of the helicopter and that delivery to the unit is not expected until the end of 2028.

The new H145 will join the Phoenix Police Department's existing fleet of Airbus H125 helicopters, adding a twin-engine capability to complement the department's already extensive airborne operations. Phoenix currently flies a 2005 A109E N109FB c/n 11629 on twin engine rescue missions.

Davenport Aviation will support the Phoenix Police Department throughout the acquisition process, with aircraft delivery anticipated in the fourth quarter of 2028. Aircraft completion and mission equipment integration will be performed by Hangar One Avionics in Carlsbad, California.

CALIFORNIA: Two Oakland police helicopter pilots are accused of conspiring with a Federal Aviation Administration inspector to falsify required flight tests and obtain pilot certifications they were not entitled to, according to a federal indictment revealed last month. Officers David Mac and Brandon Mart, members of the Oakland PD's Air Support Unit, (ARGUS) pleaded not guilty.

Prosecutors allege the officers falsely claimed they completed required helicopter check rides and submitted paperwork containing false information to obtain FAA certifications in 2023 and 2024. The indictment also alleges one of the officers falsified police flight records to obstruct the federal investigation. Court documents allege the scheme involved William Miller, an FAA Aviation Safety Inspector based in Florida. Prosecutors say text messages, flight-tracking data and department records support the case.

In one example outlined in the indictment, investigators allege a helicopter used in a supposed February 2024 check ride for Mac never left the ground despite records showing the test occurred. Prosecutors also allege Miller approved some Oakland-area check rides while he was in Florida.

Bail was set for each at \$25,000 and none of the defendants are currently in custody, they have surrendered their passports. They are scheduled to return to court in November. [ABC/Bay Local]
Editor: Oakland PD operate the MD500E in Alameda County, it is a city on the east side of San Francisco Bay. Meanwhile the air unit has had its operations suspended by the Oakland Police chiefs.

WWW.POLICEAVIATIONNEWS.INFO

The back up site for PAN

***Keep track of your favourite Emergency Services News
Full archives and other downloads***

WASHINGTON: Images from the APSA Safety Stand-To held in Spokane, Washington last month with the Regional Air Support Unit. Around 30 attended the instruction classroom supported by a handful of industry sponsors.



 **AIR AMBULANCES UK**
SUPPORTING AIR AMBULANCE CHARITIES

Save the date

**ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND
AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE**

Thursday 3rd December 2026

03 | 12 | 26

Telford International Centre
St Quentin Gate
TF3 4DE

AIR AMBULANCE

AUSTRALIA



QUEENSLAND: After what was described as an epic journey from Italy to Brisbane LifeFlight has taken delivery at its Archerfield maintenance facility of its newest Leonardo AW139 helicopter VH-LF7. It is the sixth AW139 to wear the blue LifeFlight livery.

Once assembled the helicopter was sent off to the care of Sunshine Coast based Helimods Pty Ltd., at Caloundra Airport, Queensland to be outfitted with its aeromedical role fit.

The Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) in Queensland will acquire six new Beechcraft King Air 260C aircraft to modernise its fleet. They are set to be delivered over four years from 2028 to replace the existing fleet of King Air 200s.

The fixed wing fleet will also receive a bespoke aeromedical mission system from Helimods Pty Ltd.

GERMANY

HESSE: Johanniter Air Rescue (JAR) is the current provider of air-based intensive care transport, emergency medical services, and international medical repatriation in the landlocked German state of Hesse (officially termed Land Hessen). They operate air rescue centres in Gießen, Reichelsheim, Rostock, and at the Nürburgring throughout the year. They have been the provider for inter-facility transports in Hesse for more than two decades.

Through its Hessisches Ministerium für Gesundheit und Familie and the state office for Health and Care the Land Hessen has granted an extension of the ITH service until at least 2032, extendable until 2036. The operation undertakes a dual-use system. In addition to intensive transports (secondary missions), it is



also commissioned by the state of Hesse for emergency medical services (primary missions), particularly for night-time operation.

On the transfer missions JAR operate two Airbus helicopters that differ in size, capacity and main areas of operation. The fleet includes examples of the Eurocopter/Airbus AS365N3, H155 and two H145 D3.

The operational areas of Christoph Gießen and Christoph Mittelhessen extend to the federal states of Hesse, Rhineland-Palatinate, Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg. The operational area of Christoph Rostock extends from Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania across the Baltic Sea islands to neighbouring federal states. Secondary transports are carried out throughout Germany and, if required, also to Denmark, the Netherlands, Poland, and the Czech Republic.

Air Rescue Nürburgring is deployed in Rhineland-Palatinate and the neighbouring federal states. [p. Meermann/SM]

LUXEMBOURG

Regular correspondent Alan Norris (Norrpress) Just travelling back from Germany and stopped at LAR in Ettelbruck and their MD902 replacement LX-HHO is an Airbus H145D2 c/n 20030 is now operational.

Meanwhile over at the Base Samu {Air Ambulance base} at the Centre Hospitalier du Nord in Ettelbruck another of the recent arrival H145s for Luxembourg Air Rescue/Air Services is LX-HLP a 145D3. Another LX-HSL also paid a short visit to the same base to pick up some medics before continuing to its mission.



Norrpress

NORWAY

AIR AMBULANCE: Norwegian Air Ambulance (NLA) and Dragonfly AS based in Oslo have entered into a long-term agreement for the ownership and management of air ambulance helicopters. The agreement includes 17 Airbus helicopters of the types H135 and H145. Through the financing, Dragonfly will take over ownership of the fleet, while Norwegian Air Ambulance will continue to operate the helicopters through an operational lease agreement starting in 2028 and lasting up to ten years. [Parapex]

UNITED KINGDOM

CHANNEL ISLANDS: Last month PAN reported on a change in operator for the air ambulance service in the Channel Islands. The losing bidders Gama Aviation were reported to be suing on a technicality.

Gama took this 5-year contract over when they acquired Capital Air Ambulance in June 2025, it expires in December this year.

The reason for the move to 247 Aviation, part of the SERE Group, is now clear in that the customer decided to move over to a single engine aircraft to cut costs and Gama Aviation do not operate single engine aircraft, they were offering twin engine Beech King Air 200 air ambulances where 247 Aviation have access to a fleet that includes three PC-12.

Guernsey's decision to change air ambulance providers was challenged in court on September 10, with claims Health and Social Care (HSC) didn't properly follow the States' own procurement rules. Represented in court by Advocate Michael Adkins, Gama Aviation said HSC breached the core principles of the States of Guernsey's procurement policies in awarding the air ambulance contract to 247 Aviation Ltd. [Bailwick Express]

FIRE

BRAZIL

AMAZONIA: The Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (Ibama) has started the process detailing the requirements for the future acquisition of two medium/large helicopters intended for inspection, transport, monitoring, and firefighting missions in the Amazon.

The project is funded by the Amazon Fund, set up last year, which will invest R\$ 825.7M (£120M/US\$162M) to strengthen environmental enforcement and the fight against illegal deforestation. The planned actions include expanding aerial capacity, acquiring drones, and setting up four air bases and eight helipads in strategic areas.

On June 18, 2026, Ibama held a public hearing to discuss the technical requirements for the aircraft. The meeting was held both in person and remotely. On June 29, the institute made the minutes and attendance list available for public consultation.

Among the documents is a call for a Medium Twin-Engine Multi-Mission/Operational Support Helicopter that will be twin-engine, multi-mission and accommodate two pilots and at least 10 passengers, as well as equipment for operations in remote areas and firefighting, with a water drop system with a minimum capacity of 1,000 US gallons, about 3,785 litres. [Piloto Policial]

WWW.POLICEAVIATIONNEWS.COM

Keeping up with Emergency Services News



GERMANY

SACHSEN: With memories of this years horrific wildfires in Europe quite fresh, in early September the Saxon State Police (Polizei Sachsen) were undertaking Bambi Bucket training on their latest Airbus H145 D-HSNH c/n 20030 at Jacobsthal around 100 miles south of Berlin.

They now have a fleet of three H145. The first of them (D-HSNF) was delivered early 2025, to get the crews mission ready on the new type. The other two (D-HSNG & D-HSNH) came to Dresden just a few weeks ago. They replaced three EC135. Two of them left already, the last one will be sold soon.



JAPAN

KUMAMOTO: Japan's Fire and Disaster Management Agency (FDMA), under the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, has signed an order for an Airbus H160, marking the agency's very first acquisition of the type.

To be stationed in Kumamoto prefecture in the Kyushu region, the H160 will join FDMA's existing helicopter fleet to enhance nationwide emergency response, speed and coverage. The aircraft's primary role will be rapid aerial reconnaissance and real-time visual intelligence gathering during major natural disasters, including large-scale scenarios such as a potential Nankai trough megaquake.

The H160 will feature Helisat advanced satellite technology. By streaming high-definition data directly to orbiting satellites, the system completely bypasses damaged ground infrastructure, providing emergency commanders with uninterrupted, real-time visibility straight from affected areas. Furthermore, Airbus is developing custom snow landing gear designed specifically for the H160, ensuring uncompromising safety and stability during deep-snow operations in Japan's severe winter climates.

The deployment to Kumamoto builds on a strong, multi-decade foundation of proven operational success. The prefecture introduced the AS365N3 in 2001 for disaster management missions and subsequently upgraded to an AS365N3+ in 2018. Operating the FDMA's new H160 alongside the prefecture's existing AS365N3+ will deliver superior range, safety and operational capabilities.

The H160 has entered into service in Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, U.K., U.S. and many other European countries.

UNITED KINGDOM

PARLIAMENT: Several members of Parliament tabled questions relating to the military capability in fighting fires on September 8.

Each asked the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of maintaining helicopters with wildfire suppression capabilities at readiness for deployment in support of domestic wildfire incidents; and if he will consider the feasibility of maintaining a deployable aerial firefighting capability, based onboard the Airbus A400M Atlas, for use in the UK and overseas territories.

Louise Jones the Parliamentary Under-Secretary (Ministry of Defence) (Minister for the Armed Forces) replied Responsibility for responding to wildfires in the UK rests with the relevant civil authorities and emergency services, with military support potentially available where requested through established Military Aid to the Civil Authorities (MACA) arrangements on a case-by-case basis. This includes consideration of a clear need for military assistance, whether the requirement is beyond the capability or

capacity of the civil authority, and whether support can be provided without unacceptably prejudicing Defence's primary tasks, operational commitments, and readiness.

The Ministry of Defence does not currently hold a requirement to provide a dedicated domestic aerial firefighting capability (including a fixed-wing aerial firefighting capability). However, Defence retains limited aerial firefighting capabilities to support standing tasks overseas. As part of this, Defence maintains a helicopter-based aerial firefighting capability in Cyprus for the specific purpose of meeting our obligations to the Sovereign Base Areas and wider communities during periods of heightened wildfire risk.

The Ministry of Defence has not conducted a specific impact assessment on the absence of a dedicated military aerial firefighting capability, nor a specific assessment of the economic impact arising from that absence.

The Department is aware of the Airbus A400M aerial firefighting system currently under development and testing by the manufacturer. Consequently, the Department has no plans to adapt the RAF A400M Atlas fleet for aerial firefighting purposes, or to procure dedicated water-bombing helicopters or water-bombing equipment for the military helicopter fleet. [Hansard]

Wales have a separate parliament and talk in there has been of helicopters and aerial support. Rhun ap Iorwerth Jones the Plaid Cymru First Minister of Wales fielded a number of statements on the difficulties on resourcing air support in fighting this summer's fires and in the face of criticisms over how they were dealt with.

On October 22, he is to convene the Wales climate change and resilience summit, focusing on wildfires. It will be focused on practical action and consider the steps needed to reduce the likelihood and consequences of future incidents. The expectation is that the Principality will seek to reduce future risks by setting up a plan for the future. Since the fires the fire and rescue services are already developing a proposal to have some sort of framework in place for rapid access to civilian firefighting helicopters, contracting for aerial support. They don't need Welsh Government's permission to do this, but funding would be an issue.



REAL WORLD TRAINING FOR REAL WORLD MISSIONS

Special Operations Training in Real-World Environments



SPECIALIZED RESPONSE & TRAINING SOLUTIONS

Delivering the expertise of the world's most experienced professionals to your team, anytime, anywhere.

 TRAINING ANYWHERE Desert, Mountains, Ocean – we come to you.	 MISSION FOCUSED SAR, hoist, NVG, tactical, mountain, long-line & more.	 EXPERT INSTRUCTORS Veteran operators with real world experience you can trust.	 TOTAL CREW CONCEPT Building complete, coordinated teams ready for anything.	 PROVEN WORLDWIDE We have trained Special Mission Operators around the world.
--	--	--	--	--



LET'S TALK.

From initial pilot training to advanced search and rescue and everything in between, SRT has you covered.

REAL WORLD TRAINING. REAL WORLD RESULTS.


SRTHELO.COM

INFORMATION@SRTHELO.COM


TRAINING ANYTIME. ANYWHERE.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

ADRIATIC

JOINT EXERCISE: Search and Rescue in the Adriatic Sea region depends on neighbouring authorities working closely together.

Last month in Trieste, the maritime authorities of Italy, Croatia and Slovenia put that cooperation into practice in the Adriatic Sea SARex 2026. The exercise was held within the Multipurpose Maritime Operation ADRIA 2026, with the participation of the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA), European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) and Frontex.



The Italian Coast Guard hosted the exercise and coordinated it from the Maritime Rescue Sub-Centre (MRSC) in Trieste. The scenario was a simulated collision involving a fishing vessel. It required the Maritime Rescue Coordination Centres (MRCC) in Rome, Koper and Rijeka and MRSC Trieste to exchange information across their Search and Rescue regions, plan the search and coordinate the participating units. They followed the IAMSAR Manual and the existing bilateral agreements between Italy and Croatia and between Italy and Slovenia.

The Italian Coast Guard offshore patrol vessel Gregoretti acted as On-Scene Coordinator.

The other participating units included: EFCA's offshore patrol vessel Ocean Sentinel SAR units designated by the Slovenian and Croatian authorities, Italian Coast Guard patrol boats and a helicopter



The Italian Coast Guard OPV Gregoretti, On-Scene Coordinator, with a coast guard helicopter and rescue boat.

UNITED KINGDOM

NORTH SEA TRAVEL: Hundreds of North Sea workers are still too heavy for offshore helicopter travel less than two months before new rules come into force. From November they should weigh no more than 19st 7lb (124.7kg) in their clothing and footwear, so they can be winched to safety in an emergency.

When the plans were announced by industry body Offshore Energies UK (OEUK) last year, they said more than 2,200 workers were above that limit. New figures suggest up to 800 still exceed it. Jobs could be lost as a result although alternative onshore roles could also be explored by companies.

The new weight limit came after the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) warned that rescue winches - which are critical during offshore emergencies - cannot safely lift heavier people.

The 39st (249kg) maximum Coastguard rescue helicopter winch load is made up of the maximum clothed weight plus the average 14st (90.3kg) weight of a rescue worker, a 4st 7lb (29kg) stretcher, and the 7lb (5kg) kit.

Other rules were also introduced in the recent past including a limit on the physical dimensions of the passengers. Anyone with a shoulder width of 22in (56cm) or more were classed as extra broad and had to sit next to a similarly large helicopter window, so they could escape.

The restriction applies only to outbound (offshore) flights. There are no weight restrictions for return flights to shore and there are no restrictions on persons on ship and in the sea – although non-carriage may be decided on the day with over size persons. [UK Offshore Energies Association/Media]

Ed: So, are they now forcing the overweight to take drugs they would normally steer clear of? Is this more government control?

Can you think of an instance where a commercial jet aircraft ditched, or a cruise ship sinks and all the passengers were rescued by helicopter? The chances of offshore workers being winched from a ditched helicopter or a stricken vessel are infinitely higher, and the likelihood of winching an obese survivor ought to be minimised. Whether these restrictions will also apply to other offshore operations is unclear.

CHANNEL REPORT INTRODUCTION

In September the UK Labour Government, together with the Prime Minister, Andy Burnham were pleased to announce that, year on year, in the first 9 months of 2026, January to September, the number of illegal migrants, those crossing the English Channel in large, unseaworthy inflatable boats, described as 'death traps', had decreased by some 40% compared to the same period in 2025. Nevertheless, 19,105 illegal migrants landed in the UK in 2026, up to and including the 28 September, landed by the Home Office Border Security Command, together with the volunteers of the national lifeboat service, the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, is still a big number; 60% of the total number of illegal migrants landed in the same period in 2025. Moreover, the total, since the Labour Government came to power in July 2024, 83,819 illegal migrants landed from 1,376 boats, is hardly a success story!

This month there has been a lot of speculation with regard to a perceived reduction in the number of crossings, using inflatable boats, from northern France and Belgium. The truth is that the organised criminal groups have been using fewer, but much bigger inflatable boats, boats which can only set sail in perfect weather, with a light breeze and a calm sea.

ACTION COUNTERS TERRORISM

Regular readers of *Police Aviation News* will recall that the August 2026 edition (Page 20, Channel Report) highlights the threat to RAF air bases in the UK, those hosting aircraft belonging to the US Air Force. In particular, RAF Fairford in Gloucestershire. This threat came from the Islamic Republic of Iran which in July 2026, following the attacks on Iran by American forces, declared that military bases in the UK, those hosting US Air Force personnel, were "legitimate targets". At the same time the threat level from acts of terrorism in the UK, on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being LOW and 5 being CRITICAL, is currently at level 4, SEVERE.

Then, in the early hours of Sunday, 27 September 2026, 3 white vans, with group of masked men, acting suspiciously, were reported to the police in the village of Whelford, a short distance from RAF Fairford. This

report came from a farmer returning home after midnight. Five men, subsequently reported to be UK nationals from London, were arrested on suspicion of committing offences under the Explosives Act and suspicion of the preparation of a terrorist act. They were then released on bail the following day.

At time of writing, on the 29 September, Counter Terrorism Policing are leading the enquiry with the support of Gloucestershire Police and an Army bomb disposal team. A terrorist attack on RAF Fairford and its personnel would be an attack on the USA. Eighty-five households in the village of Whelford were subsequently evacuated and accommodated in a nearby leisure centre.

The 3 white vans found by the police in the village of Whelford, close to RAF Fairford, in the early hours of Sunday, 27 September 2026, are inspected by a remotely controlled robot belonging to an Army bomb disposal team.

BBC



On Monday, 28 September, the day after the incident, the farmer who made the report to the police, with an emergency 999 call, insisted that there were up to 10 hooded and masked men, not just 5. Also, the residents of Whelford were informed that they would be able to return to their homes after some 40 hours. Despite the reassurances by the police, and by the government, that all of the 5 men that were arrested are UK nationals in their early 20's, from London, the threat to the UK from Iran is still in place. Moreover, of those 33,374 illegal migrants crossing the English Channel in inflatable boats in the 12-month period up to the end of June 2026, up to 3,600 were from Iran. The fact that none of these illegal migrants, many of them without documents, including those arriving from a hostile state, are not detained whilst their applications for asylum are processed, simply beggars belief.

Following the release of the 5 suspects on bail, the head of Counter Terrorism Policing, Laurence Taylor delivered a statement in which he confirmed that although those who had been arrested had been released, they remain under investigation whilst the police explore multiple lines of enquiry. This whole incident now remains shrouded in mystery. Why were 3 vans and up to 10 masked men seen in the village of Whelford, close to RAF Fairford in Gloucestershire, at night, in the early hours of Sunday, 27 September? In the meantime, all military bases in the UK have been placed under heightened security.

RECORD NUMBERS

The record, for the number of illegal migrants in one boat, a so called, 'taxi boat', was set on the 10 August 2026, when 230 migrants crossed the Channel in one very large inflatable boat, more passengers than carried by a Boeing 737 airliner. Then, on Sunday, 6 September, there were reports of a large inflatable boat full of migrants leaving a beach in Normandy, on the Cherbourg Peninsula, some 230 miles west of Calais, before heading towards Portsmouth, a journey of some 70 miles in an open boat, at night. This boat was followed by French rescue vessels, and helicopters too, before it was intercepted, mid-Channel by two all-weather lifeboats of the RNLI.

WWW.POLICEAVIATIONNEWS.COM

Keeping up with Emergency Services News



UK PORTS REFUSE ENTRY

This story doesn't end there! Both RNLI lifeboats were refused entry into the ports of Portsmouth and neighbouring Southampton and eventually landed 140 illegal migrants at the small harbour at Langstone, immediately to the east of Portsmouth. This crossing, lasting many hours, had taken so long that there was sufficient time to set up a reception area at Langstone, with marquees, hot food and buses to take the migrants to the migrant reception centre at Dover. The police, HM Coastguard, Border Security Command, the RNLI, ambulance and fire services were all mobilised. Moreover, there was also a large number of protesters who, temporarily, blocked the exit road leading from the harbour. This followed the much bigger protest in Dover the day before, on Saturday, 5 September. Other protests have taken place in the villages Piddington in Oxfordshire and Barnham in Suffolk, to stop thousands of male migrants from being housed, but not detained, in re-purposed military bases which are far too close to the small villages, each with a just a few hundred residents.

A large number of protesters attempted to block the road leading from Langstone Harbour after the RNLI landed 140 illegal migrants at the beginning of September.



BBC

Then, later in September, a second large inflatable boats with up to 60 illegal migrants on board set sail from a beach near Vierville-sur-Mer in Normandy. This boat was, again tracked by French rescue vessels throughout Monday, 21 September and into the following day, before the migrants were 'rescued' by the RNLI volunteer lifeboat crews from Eastbourne and Hastings. Then, rather than land the migrants at the nearest port in the UK, at Gosport near Portsmouth, they were transferred at sea, at night, to the large cutter, HMC Vigilant belonging to Border Security Command, and then landed at Dover after more than 30 hours at sea.

In a separate incident, also on Monday, 21 September, up to 7 illegal migrants landed on the UK, near Folkstone without being detected by the Border Security Command, or HM Coastguard. Then, the following day, on Tuesday, 22 September a second boat arrived, undetected, on a beach near Dover with over 30 illegal migrants on board, of which just 21 have been detained. The Home Secretary (Minister for the Interior), The Rt Hon Shabana Mahmood MP has, not surprisingly, ordered an urgent review by the Border Security Command into these undetected landings. How did these migrants in low speed, inflatable boats, evade BSC vessels, patrol aircraft, drones and shore based hi-tech detection systems?

Author



Following intimidation and threats of violence to the volunteers of the RNLI lifeboat service, the lifeboat station at Portsmouth has been closed. Hopefully, this will be a short-term closure. Also, for their own safety, members of the RNLI lifeboat crews, together with their supporters, have been advised not to wear clothing which identifies them as members; this is absolutely outrageous. For the RNLI, the charity which, with its volunteer lifeboat crews, 'saves lives at sea' there is the very real danger of being drawn into an ongoing criminal operation with a consequential loss of reputation, together with a loss of charitable donations. Both the chief executive of the RNLI and the commander of the Border Security Command have been asked for a comment, but neither had replied at the time of writing.

The big question is, why is the RNLI involved in this operation when the UK Border Security Command now has a fleet of 7 re-purposed crew transfer vessels, designated as search and rescue vessels; 5 large ocean-going cutters; 6 smaller coastal patrol vessels and several rigid inflatable boats?

HMC Vigilant transfers illegal migrants from the Eastbourne and Hastings RNLI all-weather lifeboats, before landing them at Dover. The UK Border Security Command has a fleet of 18 vessels; 5 large ocean-going cutters; 6 smaller coastal patrol vessels; 7 search and rescue vessels (re-purposed crew transfer vessels) and several rigid inflatable boats.

PA



In the same incident, in which up to 60 illegal migrants had travelled from Normandy towards Portsmouth, followed by French rescue vessels before being 'rescued' in UK waters by the RNLI, the inflatable boat, now empty of migrants, was intercepted and disabled. The hull was punctured, by a public spirited, British volunteer, Daniel Thomas, 37 years. Thomas was subsequently arrested and charged in England, by Hampshire Police, for causing criminal damage. On Friday, 25 September he appeared at Basingstoke Magistrates Court where he pleaded not guilty and elected trial by jury. His next appearance at court, to secure bail pending trial, will be at Portsmouth Crown Court. The owner of the boat has not been identified and, presumably, has not made a complaint against Thomas.

On Tuesday, 29 September, Daniel Thomas was refused bail and unless this decision is reversed, Thomas will remain in prison for 5 months before his trial begins on the 1 March 2027. How does this decision, to refuse bail, sit with the earlier decision, made yesterday, 28 September, by the Counter Terror Police to release on bail the 5 hooded men behaving suspiciously outside RAF Fairford in the early hours of Sunday, 27 September. These men are being investigated with offences under the Explosives Act and suspicion of preparation for a terrorist act.

The irony, the fact that the UK government has paid £662M to France, for the French police to 'stop the boats', to disable them on French beaches by slashing them with a 'box cutter'. Then, subsequently, the British police charge a UK citizen with criminal damage, for slashing a boat in UK waters, one that was empty, after being used to transport illegal migrants, has not been lost on the public, on both sides of the English Channel. The result of this bizarre criminal trial, referred to as "two tier policing", will be reported in future editions of *Police Aviation News*.

In the meantime, there are reports that the French Minister for the Interior, Laurent Nunez has informed the police that puncturing dinghies close to shore, in shallow water, is unacceptable. The British public may be forgiven for asking what this year's payment £662M to the French, to 'stop the boats', is actually paying for. Moreover, why are the French police standing by whilst unqualified people are breaking the law by taking charge of large, grossly overloaded inflatable boat and then endangering the lives of others at sea?

Since the first migrants crossed the English Channel in small boats in 2018 over 180 have perished at sea. In the latest incident, on Monday, 28 September, a 10-year-old child and two 30 year old women died in a boat carrying 105 migrants, shortly after it departed from a beach near Calais. The three casualties died on board the boat and it's presumed that they were crushed to death. The French authorities have reported that three other migrants also died in incidents involving boats in the previous week

AIR SUPPORT

In addition to 18 vessels at sea, the UK Border Security Command has air support provided by 2 deHavilland Dash 8 maritime patrol aircraft and 2 drones, a twin-engine Tekever AR5 Evolution and a smaller, single-engine Tekever AR3. Also, although His Majesty's Coastguard has no rescue vessels, it requests support from the RNLI and independent lifeboat stations, it does have a fleet of aircraft which also patrol the English Channel. These aircraft include the Diamond DA62 and the Beechcraft King Air, both configured for maritime patrol, and a Schiebel S-100 drone, together with S-92, AW-189 and AW-139 search and rescue helicopters. On the opposite side of the English Channel, the French and the Belgians' fly occasional coastal patrols with a Diamond DA62, a Vulcanair P68 Observer and a second Schiebel S-100 drone.

The UK Border Security Command has a fleet of aircraft which includes the DeHavilland Dash 8 maritime patrol aircraft, the twin-engine Tekever AR5 Evolution drone and the single-engine Tekever AR3 drone. Additional air support is available from those crewed aircraft and drones that are on contract to HM Coastguard.



Tekever.

Unfortunately, there is no evidence to suggest that the Belgians', the British and the French are coordinating these flights, to fly persistent air patrols along the coast of Belgium and France to counter the very large inflatable 'taxi boats' which now cruise, unhindered, along the coast, calling in at designated beaches along the way to collect more illegal migrants. The size of these inflatable boats now means that this is now a bus service, rather than a taxi service, with many of these boats now larger than a bus and carrying many more passengers too.

If additional, persistent air patrols were required along the shores of northern France then, if this were the USA, the volunteers of the US Civil Air Patrol would be quickly airborne in their Cessna 'spotter planes'. Closer to home, in Sweden, the Swedish Volunteer Air Corps (FFK) with 2,400 members is a voluntary defence organisation which assists the civil emergency services and the Armed Forces with aviation capabilities.

PLAYING THE SYSTEM

On the same day that 140 illegal migrants were crossing the English Channel from a beach in Normandy, on the 6 September, a further 485 migrants in 7 boats, an average of 69 migrants in each boat, were using the shorter route from a beaches near Calais, heading towards the Port of Dover. As well as using bigger boats the criminal gangs are also 'playing' the system with their so called 'taxi boats', picking up migrants from the water, knowing that the French police will not, under the current rules, stop boats that are already at sea, albeit in close proximity of the shore, often within wading distance of a beach.

The criminal gangs use 'taxi boats' that pick up migrants from the sea, within wading distance of the shore, knowing that the French police won't enter the water to intervene. [PA image]



POSITIVE NEWS

One piece of positive news, in September, was that Chan Mathok Atak, 19 years from South Sudan, was convicted at Canterbury Crown Court in Kent for endangering the lives of others when in charge of an inflatable boat with 165 migrants on board; a boat which crossed the English Channel on the 23 July. Thirty one of the passengers were children with the youngest aged 14 years. Atak, who was sentenced to 2 years 3 months in prison, is the 16th person to be convicted since the new offence was created in January 2026. This conviction was based on 90 minutes of aerial imagery taken from a drone, showing Atak steering the boat across the English Channel.

CONCLUSION

In September, despite periods of adverse weather, with strong winds and a rough sea, there were also periods of good weather when records were broken. Setting sail from Normandy, some 230 miles to the west of Calais, is a new tactic which has challenged both the organised criminal groups, the illegal migrants and security services on both sides of the English Channel. In the latter part of September more than a thousand illegal migrants were landed in the UK in just 3 days. In the same 3 days, two boats carrying illegal migrants landed in the UK without being detected, much to the consternation of the Home Secretary, The Rt Hon Shabana Mahmood MP who has ordered an urgent review.

As we move from summer into autumn and then into winter, the new, long sea passage between Normandy and Portsmouth, twice the distance from Calais to Dover, will expose the migrants to many hours of danger, day and night, in an open inflatable boat, an unseaworthy boat that could, in a moment, deflate and sink. No one with experience at sea would step on board one of these boats, let alone contemplate a 70-mile cross-Channel passage. Yet, French politicians, including the Minister for the Interior, Laurent Nunez, have ordered the French police not to take preventative action to save lives at sea. They must not get their feet wet by stopping boats in shallow water, those boats carrying illegal migrants, from leaving France. Moreover, they must not disable boats in shallow water, forcing the migrants to return to dry land.

All the more reason to accept earlier advice, to create an English Channel Search and Rescue Region. Then, the combined forces of Belgium, France and the United Kingdom, would rescue those migrants travelling in unseaworthy inflatable boats at the earliest opportunity, before returning them to the nearest

place of safety, Belgium, or France. The current practice of escorting grossly overloaded, unseaworthy inflatable boats into deep water, into the middle of the English Channel, into the middle of the world's busiest shipping lane, the Dover Strait is fraught with danger and it cannot be condoned. According to Tony Smith, the former director general of the UK Border Force, *"Every successful landing is a message to the next migrant waiting on a French beach that it's worth a try."*

James A Cowan MBE

Note: The author, a former military pilot, a former member of the Royal Air Force, was also a police officer, police and air ambulance pilot as well as the UEO of a police helicopter unit.



Tony Cowan, the author, discussing the migrant crossings with HM Coastguard staff at the recent ESS in Birmingham. [PAR]

INDUSTRY

ASTRID, the communication provider for Belgium's emergency and security services, has selected **Frequentis** to deliver its LifeX communication platform as part of the nationwide ComHub modernisation programme.

The project will strengthen how emergency calls are handled and responders are dispatched, helping police, fire, and medical services deliver faster, more coordinated support across Belgium.

The platform is designed to meet upcoming European NG112 standards, including supporting real-time text, changing public communication habits, and broader accessibility needs. It will also support a seamless path towards ASTRID's future Mission Critical Services (MCX) network, supporting the evolution of public safety communications in the years ahead.

To support both the people who call for help and the teams working on the front line to protect communities across Belgium, ASTRID is investing in proven technology from Frequentis to create a resilient foundation for emergency response.

In Parliament Lord Berkeley asked His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of establishing an emergency hospital helipad infrastructure contingency fund alongside the existing support provided by the Helicopter Emergency Landing Pads Appeal to secure future hospital helipad provision.

In reply the Government stated that whilst it recognises the important role that hospital helipads can play in supporting emergency care, it has not established, and is not currently considering, a dedicated contingency fund for hospital helipad infrastructure.

Decisions on capital investment are primarily taken by National Health Service organisations and systems, and these are currently met by the charitable work of the **HELP Appeal**.

In the latest update statement on the **Emergency Services Network (ESN)** Sarah Jones of the Home Office says that ESN the system will now include access to the 5G network (it was originally marketed as based only on 4G), giving first responders immediate access to life-saving data, images and information in live situations and emergencies on the frontline.

ESN uses the BT/EE mobile network supplemented by government-built masts in remote areas through the Extended Area Service programme. The construction of ESN masts is largely finished, improving connectivity in areas that previously had limited or no coverage and supporting more than 1,300 additional 999 calls each month.

Work continues to provide coverage in locations with specific requirements, such as densely populated communities, sports venues and shopping centres. ESN will also provide coverage up to 10,000 feet in the air and 12 nautical miles from Britain's coastline.

As of April 2026, ESN coverage extends to approximately 86% of Great Britain's landmass, compared with around 82% coverage provided by the current Airwave network.

Speaking at the **Police Superintendents' annual conference** in Stratford-upon-Avon, ACC Mark Nottage, the national police ESN coordinator, admitted the programme is known in some circles as "ESWhen" given how many times it's slipped. Around £9 billion has been spent so far, with a further £4 billion in contracts signed with BT, EE and IBM back in 2024. Airwave's price cap expires in 2029, after which running two systems together would become unaffordable.

ESN itself is due to switch on in the second quarter of 2028, (still two years away) with Airwave switching off at the behest of the local chief constable, with a target switch over of mid-2030.

Editor: As we have found over the last decade or so, "other targets are available."

Not likely to be coming to a charity HEMS near you in the immediate future but news in last month of an experimental patient recovery system for the military from the European Union.

The iMEDCAP consortium has undertaken a successful demonstration of its autonomous tactical medical evacuation system at a NATO exercise in Estonia.

The demonstration showcased a fully integrated chain of autonomous search, rescue, ground transport, in-transit treatment, and aerial evacuation for combat casualties, considering also contaminated soldiers.

The conflict in Ukraine has underscored a critical challenge in modern warfare: as battlefield lethality increases, medical personnel are themselves becoming priority targets. The "Golden Hour" principle, which holds that survival rates improve dramatically when a wounded soldier receives advanced care within 60 minutes, is increasingly difficult to uphold.

Twenty-four partners from nine nations have brought together expertise in drones, robotics, sensor systems, data processing, software development, transport engineering, and military medicine to create a 'solution' that is full of sensors and technology.

A thermal-imaging reconnaissance drone autonomously locates the casualty. A second drone equipped with radar then detects whether the casualty is alive before a **ThEMIS Unmanned Ground Vehicle (UGV)**, equipped with a patient box navigates to the casualty and recovers them. The Themis is a small, tracked military vehicle that has an array of offensive, defensive and passive roles in the modern battlefield.

Editor: In its current warlike configuration, it weighs 1.650kg so will not be of use in civil SAR but if a lighter version were to be developed using the same technology there may be room for civil operations in places where casualty extrications are life threatening



Onboard Systems has announced the dates and venue of the **2027 Operator Conference** which is held most years in concert with the Vertiflite Conference and Exhibition dates.

The ever-popular event will be held on Saturday, March 13 and Sunday, March 14 at the Hilton Anaheim, Convention Center. This is the weekend immediately prior to the Vertiflite event. They expect more than 250 hoist operators and pilots from around the world gather to discuss hoist training, look at case studies, receive technical briefings and learn best practices in airborne rescue operations.

You can register your interest at US Conference - Onboard Systems Hoist & Winch

At last month's DVD event at UTAC Millbrook, Bedford, UK, **Tekever** officially signed the paperwork for the £400M CORVUS contract to deliver the British Army's next generation surveillance capability.

DVD is a bi-annual two-day meet up of the UK's defence industry, sponsored by the National Armaments Director Group and Army Headquarters, at the motor industry testing ground where the restricted access attendees get a chance to experience the latest and greatest in military vehicles. It involves a small number of aviation manufacturers and dealers. PAN has not reported from there regularly for some years.

An advertisement for the Smith Myers Artemis mobile phone detection system. The background is dark blue. On the left is the Smith Myers logo, consisting of a stylized 'SM' above the text 'smith myers'. In the center, there is an orange rectangular box with the text 'THE MOBILE PHONE DETECTION & LOCATION SYSTEM' in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. Below this box is the website 'artemis.smithmyers.com' in white. To the right of the text is a photograph of the Artemis hardware, which includes a black control unit with various ports and a smaller black component. On the far right is the Artemis logo, which features a white compass rose with a stylized 'A' in the center and the word 'ARTEMIS' below it.

A completely new cockpit based on the Garmin G3000 PRIME Integrated Flight Deck, featuring capabilities such as Safety Autoland, make the brand-new PC-12 PRO the most technologically advanced, best performing, most reliable aircraft in its class. The **Safety Autoland system** has been certified by both the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

The PC-12 already ranks among the safest aircraft in class, with an exceptional, statistically proven safety record. With the PC-12 PRO, Pilatus takes this excellent safety standard to an even higher level: the latest generation of this bestseller is equipped with a host of additional safety features – including the innovative Safety Autoland system.

Safety Autoland is designed to handle situations involving sudden pilot incapacitation – due to a medical emergency, for example. When the activation button is pressed or when a pilot inactivity is detected, the system takes full control of the aircraft, informing all occupants that the automated landing mode has been activated. Simultaneously, it begins analysing all available information, including weather, aircraft status and navigation data.

Based on this information, the system determines the best choice of airport, taking into account factors such as runway length, wind, weather conditions and remaining fuel. It then calculates a safe route, avoiding obstacles and terrain. During autonomous flight, Safety Autoland takes care of all the systems required for landing – including flaps, landing gear, lighting and de-icing – and fully prepares the aircraft for the final approach. It also handles all radio communications, automatically making calls on the appropriate frequencies to keep ATC and persons on the ground informed about the situation.

In a single-engine aircraft, a proven powerplant is the most important component. The PC-12 PRO is equipped with the latest version of the most reliable aircraft engine ever built – the Pratt & Whitney Canada PT6. With over 60,000 units in service and more than 400 million hours in the air, the PT6 engine family boasts an unmatched track record.



Late last month **Game Aerospace** based in Bentonville, Arkansas, USA announced the successful first flight of the GB2, the first purpose-built firefighting aircraft developed in the United States.

Conducted from Louise Thaden Field in Bentonville, the flight marks a major milestone in the aircraft's development. The GB2 performed as expected and completed all planned initial evaluations.

The prototype weighs 6,050 pounds empty and has a maximum gross weight of 19,000 pounds, providing an exceptional payload fraction.

It carries 1,200 gallons of mission payload and 400 gallons of fuel, while its two-seat cockpit supports training and operational flexibility.

Flight testing will progress toward FAA Part 23 standard-category certification and production.

Game Aerospace game.aero



ACCIDENTS & INCIDENTS

8 September 2026 MBB BO105CBS-5 9M-LLF Air ambulance operating Flying Doctor Service under contract to the Malaysian Ministry of Health by Layang Aerospace (Rotorwing (M) Sdn.Bhd). Departed Long Siut airport to undertake routine visit medical operations along the Miri–Ba Lai–Long Siut–Long Lellang route. Experienced an engine fire when approaching Long Lellang (Sarawak), trailing smoke, over dense woodland. Helicopter apparently trying to reach the clearing at the heliport but crashed short of runway 04 at Long Lellang STOLport. The five occupants, pilot: Captain Zainol, Doctor: Dr. Ainul, Senior Paramedic: Alexson Adit, Staff Nurse: Debra Moset, Staff Nurse: Jessie Paya perished and the helicopter was destroyed by fire. [ASN]

12 September helicopter Japan Coast Guard. Off the coast of Ishigaki island in Okinawa prefecture, an accident occurred in which a JCG rescue team member—suspended from a helicopter hovering at 150 feet during a rescue operation—struck a rocky area and suffered a broken rib. [ASN]
The Ishigaki Airbase (ISG/ROIG), JCG has two AgustaWestland AW139s, i.e. JA971A (c/n 31426) and ja972A (c/n 31438). 11th Regional Coast Guard also has three Sikorsky S-76s and a Eurocopter EC225LP Super Puma as Patrol helicopters.

13 September 2026 Cessna T206H Stationair TC HK-4985 medical/healthcare aircraft of Patrulla Aérea, Colombia. Aircraft departed Condoto-Mandinga Airport for Guaymaral Airport with five persons aboard and was subsequently reported missing. Guaymaral Airport is a high elevation airport on the outskirts of Bogota. [ASN]

20 September 2026 Eurocopter AS332L1 N332N Firefighting helicopter operated by Valair operated by Precision Helicopters. Two pilots were killed the helicopter crashed in Yosemite National Park while supporting fire suppression efforts on the Dome Fire. The Alaska Division of Forestry and Fire Protection identified one of the pilots as Greg King, who had worked extensively on wildland fires in Alaska. The agency said the identity of the second pilot was Ryan Cutter.
The Dome Fire began September 15 near Wawona and had grown to 3,222 acres. The fire remained 15% contained as 581 personnel worked the incident.

20 September 2026 Mil Mi-8MTV-1 RA-22154 Air ambulance/medical flight operated by KradAvia.departed from Baykit Airport and made a hard landing 1,8 km from Sulomay, Krasnoyarsk Krai, Russia. The airframe landed upright in trees but suffered major deformation damage fuselage and tail boom. No sign of fire. There were three members of the flight crew, as well as a medic on board, the latter of whom was reportedly injured. [ASN]

21 September 2026 Basler BT-67 (Douglas DC-3 conversion) PNC-0256 of the Colombian Police. When landing at Guillermo León Valencia Airport, Popayán, Cauca, Colombia. There were no reported injuries, and the aircraft was not damaged.

FLIGHT SAFETY

A northern Minnesota man is facing additional charges for allegedly shooting a firefighting plane earlier this year.

Prosecutors initially charged Daniel Christian Pettit with two weapons offences, including assault for allegedly shooting at the airplane. A grand jury later returned an indictment that charges Pettit, 49, with damaging an aircraft and discharging a firearm.

Pilot Jorden Grief told investigators that on May 15, he heard popping sounds on his 35th pass to scoop water from Kjostad Lake while fighting a wildfire. He had initially thought the noise while he was flying at 500 to 700 feet was a bird strike, so continued his water drops. It was only after landing in Hibbing that he found damage to his rudder and its trim tab and saw that a bullet had entered the bottom of the rudder and exited on the left side.

According to the state complaint, Pettit told investigators that he probably fired at the firefighting aircraft “more than five times” while crow hunting. He denied deliberately targeting the aircraft.

If convicted in state court, Pettit faces up to seven years in prison, the federal charges carry up to 20 years, with a 10-year mandatory minimum.

UNMANNED

Remember when Jeff Bezos promised drone deliveries within five years during a 60-Minutes interview in December 2013? That might just become a reality in Richmond, Virginia. It only took 13 years, but hey, who's counting! Our house just happens to be in the Amazon (pronounced in three syllables in America as "Am-ah-zon" and in one syllable in the Queen's English by Jeremy Clarkson in Britain as "Amuhzun"!), Prime Air 7.5-mile delivery radius of warehouse. A recent presentation at the Richmond Motor Speedway (Fairfield, Virginia, USA) was interesting.

Good questions were asked, including one fielded by an individual that is not excited by the prospect. They asked if their property could be excluded from overflight. The presenter didn't mince words and stated that the only entity that can regulate the airspace is the FAA. Prime Air is an "opt in" program, not an opt out one, pointing out that they are a FAA Part 135 Air Taxi operator and therefore fall under the Interstate Commerce Clause which doesn't allow states or municipalities to regulate aircraft commerce activity. Same reason states couldn't shut down the airlines during Covid.

Their aircraft arrives over the target property above 100' and descends straight down to 13' and drops the package. It goes straight back up and departs to the warehouse. Can't wait to make an order!

Mark Colborn

(Mark Colborn a former Dallas PD police officer helicopter and drone pilot, in fact something of a whizz with drones, is the author of the extensive article on the 2026 Las Vegas Drone Show now available on the PAN web site).



Editor: And now in Britain there is talk of extending the Amazon deliveries to more places in that marketplace. Perhaps the people of Britain should follow the example of the Ukrainians and start buying up chicken wire to protect our homes from falling delivery drones? The further plus point is that if Putin declares war on us, we will have half our home defences in place!

A new community drone scheme is taking flight to tackle rural crime in the southern county of Hampshire. The Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary is piloting the project, believed to be the first of its kind in the country, with fully trained volunteers operating drones to support live police incidents in rural Hampshire. Each volunteer has passed a drone operators' course at a cost to the local taxpayer.

The drones will be used for evidence gathering and rapid response in incidents such as hare coursing, poaching, and non-dwelling burglaries.

The project is being led by a local inspector intent on reducing the crimes undertaken against the rural community, farmers, landowners, gamekeepers and estate owners across the county. He saw it as a crucial effort as a police service to tackle the problems.

Five volunteers are currently involved in the pilot, with plans to expand the scheme. The project has been funded by Test Valley Borough Council, North Wessex Downs National Landscapes (NWDNL) Farming in Protected Landscapes, and the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Police and the office of the local Police and Crime Commissioner. The scheme aims to strengthen information sharing between police and rural communities, using advanced technology to improve evidence gathering.

Editor: More kudos for the drone community, perhaps. But at what cost in police time set aside to interact and train the volunteers? Currently it's pretty difficult to find or even get in contact with local police as they whizz by in their fast cars and as for calling in to see them at the local police station house that's an evaporating dream too as building after building is sold off and those that remain are.... Where exactly? It appears that the plan places on these five initial volunteers the evidence gathering for increasingly absent police. They then turn up and go through the motions of, perhaps, creating a case based purely on a set of moving images.

And who is going to protect the farmer pilot when the 'not so nice' people associated with Hare Coursing and rustling find out it's just a farmer not a cop controlling that drone?

After a conversation at the recent ESS in Birmingham, it appears this whole story wrong footed a number of people in police drone development! They did not have prior knowledge and is a little awkward because it works outside the current plan for ensuring that there is a professional drone operator cadre in place. All this highlights the very old story of the police hierarchy (NPCC) rejecting the long-standing offer of private pilots to help out in air surveillance by search and reporting crimes from their own light aircraft (under the title of Skywatch and other names). All offered for free, no training or supply of drones required – available at the end of a telephone from police HQ. So, if they the police authorities are seen to do this drone thing at significant cost for training and equipping farmers it only enhances the negativity towards private pilots. Overall, it just highlights the difficulties of trying to get 43 police forces doing the same thing together.

BRITISH TRANSPORT POLICE

Announced in conjunction with the recent Emergency Services Show, where they had a stand (see below), the railway police teamed up with BT Business to announce the UK's first national routine BVLOS drone operations.

Following the start of routine operations earlier this year, BT's Drone SIM capability provides reliable connectivity that supports real-time intelligence, faster decision-making and safer responses, helping minimise passenger disruption.

In 2023/2024 more than 19,300 trespass incidents, approximately one every 30 minutes, occurred across the rail network. This new operational approach enables officers to assess incidents remotely, reducing delays in decision making and response time.

Delivered using BT's Drone SIM solution, and underpinned by EE's resilient mobile connectivity at altitude, the service is enabling safer, faster responses to incidents across Britain's rail network, and establishes a new operating model for policing.

Operating across more than 20,000 miles of railway, BTP responds to incidents of trespass, welfare and operational disruption, many of which occur in remote locations. In 2023/2024, more than 19,300 trespass incidents, approximately one every 30 minutes, occurred across the rail network. Traditionally, officers have often needed to travel significant distances before assessing the situation further delaying critical operational decisions.



Working together, BT and BTP have developed and launched a scalable Drone as First Responder capability that allows drones to be launched remotely from strategically located drone-in-a-box stations and piloted from BTP's operations centre in London Bridge. BTP currently operates 7 drone-in-a-box locations across the rail network, with plans to expand with up to 14 sites over the next 2 years. [Network Rail]

Editor: This is a scale thing. Take 20,000 miles and overlay a dozen or so DFR sites with a 3km coverage and you have just a tiny area of capability that is clearly going to be strictly targeted.

Nothing new here. Twenty years ago the transport police used to borrow the helicopters usually assigned to rail engineering during holiday weekends and fill them with camera crews to make a big show of having anti-trespass patrols over the rail property – it inevitably included extensive public interest footage on local tv news channels across the country all backed up with signs and posters on the stations and rolling stock. The deterrence publicity coverage extended to the London underground railway but there were no reports of police helicopters in tunnels in my time (except in Hollywood movies). It was all publicity and little real substance. Until the transport police signed up to NPAS there were simply no significant crime busting missions.

Droneshield has been awarded an Indefinite Delivery, Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contract supporting Joint Interagency Task Force 401 (JIATF-401)'s Domestic Shield initiative, with a maximum contract value of up to USD\$500 million over three years.

The award establishes a streamlined procurement pathway for DroneShield's counter-UAS capabilities to support Domestic Shield requirements and the rapid fielding of technology to protect defense critical infrastructure and other high-priority locations across the United States.

Domestic Shield is a JIATF-401 initiative focused on accelerating the deployment of counter-UAS capabilities in response to the rapidly evolving threat posed by unmanned aircraft systems (sUAS).

The award builds on DroneShield's expanding support of JIATF-401 and broader U.S. counter-UAS initiatives. DroneShield has previously delivered DroneSentry-X Mk2 on-the-move counter-UAS capabilities in support of JIATF-401 requirements, including successful installation and acceptance of deployed technology. DroneShield capabilities are also represented on the JIATF-401 Counter-UAS Marketplace, established to accelerate access to vetted counter-UAS technologies.

PEOPLE

Bill Long, the Aviation Director at Essex and Herts Air Ambulance (EHAAT) has now left the charity air ambulance. From last month the role has been taken over by Andy Moorhouse the Accountable Manager.

In another about turn in his relatively short political career the former UK prime Minister Keir Starmer has quit his job as Member of Parliament for Holborn and St. Pancras to complete one of the most spectacular political collapses in recent memory. Already he is a forlorn and forgotten figure, recently described as a glove puppet – spineless – just like his replacement in post.

I only mention Sir Kier's ignominious passing because I think that he will reappear a bad penny to start to fight on behalf of the boat people before long and will make the job ever more difficult for those actually tasked with the job. He may have been saying 'stop the boats' but much of the trouble with the legal side of stopping thousands of people getting from France to the UK was put in place by him before he became PM.

Companies House updates on UK Charity Air Ambulance people:

- Scotland Charity - Termination of appointment of Janice Catherine Cutting as a director on 12 August.
- London - Appointment of Professor Karim Brohi as a director on 30 July.
- Kent Surrey Sussex - Termination of appointment of Timothy Simon Neville Oakes as a director on 28 July.
- Association of Air Ambulances - Termination of appointment of Claire Suzanne Ashby Walters as a director on 21 September.

MOVE ALONG THERE

ALL THE FUN OF THE CARNIVAL

One task that faces the London Metropolitan Police each August is the Notting Hill Carnival. It has been going for some 60 years now, and the pile of dead bodies is getting quite high. Unfortunately the politicians make sure they 'bury' the dead in the dark recesses of their minds, so the stink does not get so bad as to make them sit up and notice it. Every year (and almost everyone has led to extensive crime) is judged to be a success regardless of the need for 7,000 police being on site at massive cost, just to try and stop them killing each other and the fact that at least 636 arrests were made this year alone.

A police statement claimed that the event passed without incident this year, clearly ignoring the two deaths they were dealing with. Last year must have been monotonous for them as only eight stabbings, two fatalities, more than 50 police officers injured, and 334 arrests disturbed them.

1984

I always understood that giving evidence in British courts was based on the unique and personal words of the witness. Heaven helps anyone writing their evidence in cooperation with another witness and both witnesses expounding virtually the same words. The defence might rightly pose the question of a conspiracy of evidence.

Now however Metropolitan Police in London UK have issued a 14-page book that directs its officers on the wording to use when writing their reports. Acceptable police speak. Not directly relating to just evidence in

court but setting out the correct words of how to report anything -which could so easily end up in court. Dangerous territory, especially for officers who only rarely get into court to learn their skills at giving evidence. It was long ago that the police thought it was a jolly good idea to represent their prosecutions with a person who was never ever at the scene of any crime.

MISSING THE ACTION

In a related storyline, figures exposed last month reveal that 40% of British police did not make a single arrest last year – a statistic that implies an ongoing decline of the traditional street police. It is assumed that, like their mentors in the NPCC, they prefer comfortable desk jobs rather than working on the always confrontational streets.

Although it seems that there may be plenty of police sitting at desks in headquarters only 16 out of 43 forces even bothered to respond to a Freedom of Information request to reveal that 35% of officers in the 16 responding made no arrests in 2023-25, rising to 40% last year.

Government figures show that across England and Wales police made 754,000 arrests last year and that contrasts with 1.47 million in 2008. [Sun]

Editor: This decline in numbers may be due in part to the ongoing decline in the number of police in the service, however there are some odd contrasts in even that.

Thirty years ago, policing managed with far fewer officers than the current establishment and yet it is seen as a crisis now.

The numbers may be falling (opinions may vary on the exact number) but last month a government minister was enthusing that neighbourhood policing has been a big focus for them. "Through the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee, we delivered more than 3,800 officers and PCSOs into neighbourhood policing roles, which exceeded our target for the first year."

As usual many statements do not add up, and even our late Queen Elizabeth II thought that individual recollections may vary.

A TALE OF TWO ISLANDS

The Falkland Islands are British but unfortunately no one wanted it when it dealt in whale oil. All of a sudden it now has mineral oil deposits that a nearby mainland nation would like to own. The population remain in place and welcome most tourists from around the world.

Much further east, Diego Garcia is the largest island of the Chagos Archipelago, it too is British (subject to recently Trumped negotiation). It has been used as a joint UK-U.S. military base since the 1970s, following the expulsion of the native Chagossians by the UK government. Tourists, including expelled Chagossians, are not welcome.

AI aka SI

From time-to-time Artificial Intelligence, said to be the destruction of future writers nudges its way into the editorial process. Yes, it can be helpful, but it is clearly just as often hopeless. Some of the AI written and illustrated material appearing in browsers is poor and sufficiently bad to discard immediately, but I fear for the future where prior knowledge does not ring alarm bells for the ill-informed reader.

I have tested it on illustrations, and it is fun, if off the mark at times. It does depend on the questions you ask and my first flying policeman turned out to be more Superman as I forgot to mention putting him in an aircraft.

More recently my i-Phone offered to create a caricature of me based on what it knew of me. All it needed was a 'selfie' and the rest was on my telephone it assured me. So, decades of police, writing, researching, history and aviation living in my handy phone should show through readily enough.



Wrong it seems. I happened to be wearing a yellow coat for the selfie because some days I manage a street market locally. The resultant image came out as 'Bob the builder' – not an aviation or police element to be seen in the image! I have never been a builder all my life. Well as long as Super Intelligence keeps at that level, we will still need writers and humanity may survive!

FOLLOW ME

Lots of plans around but not much action! Plans to reduce the number of UK police forces proceed at snail's pace apparently because the leaders in the NPCC are split on the issue, some want to go for it, plenty do not. And that was further content of the State of Policing report by His Majesty's Chief Inspector, Michelle Skeer. The police reform in England and Wales was a "once-in-a-generation opportunity to substantially improve the service provided to the public" but not everyone is buying it.

HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF



Rotary air support in its infancy.

90 years ago, in the East End of London rotors briefly featured in the Battle of Cable Street, a violent clash on October 4, 1936, when over 100,000 anti-fascist protesters blocked a march by Sir Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists (BUF) through East London.

Thousands of east Londoners united and took to the streets to block the fascist march. A mural commemorates the event on St George's Town Hall in Tower Hamlets and that includes a depiction of a police autogyro that hovered over the crowds at 2,000 feet.

Throughout the 1930s the Metropolitan Police were undertaking trials with the Cierva Autogyro (they called it a helicopter in those days, but it was not a 'pure' one we know today as the main rotor was not powered) which was regularly used at sports events and major gatherings. Despite the intense media interest, not a single image of the circling Cierva has emerged. All we have is written reports and that striking mural.

The bad boys at the time were Oswald Moseleys Blackshirts, Fascists who seemed to find time to argue with pretty much anyone who was around but there was a migrant leaning to the trouble they caused so the October 1936 targets were the Jews in the East End.

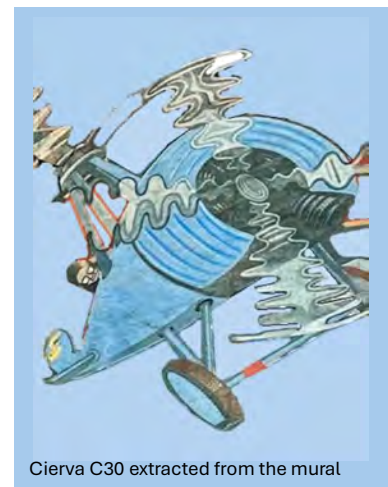


As the escort to the march by the fascists the police were harried all along the way by the East End people. The police made several baton charges, both foot and mounted, to try to clear a way for them to escort the right-wing march. They did not succeed, but it lost them any sympathy of the crowds. Barricades were set up in their path, a lorry overturned, all sorts of makeshift barriers erected. The police managed to clear the first but found a second behind it and then a third. Marbles were thrown under the hooves of the police horses; volleys of bricks and other missiles added to the melee.

Eventually the police told Mosley would be impossible for him to have his march through the East End to his proposed rally in Victoria Park. The Blackshirts marched, but they marched west, not east, through the deserted City of London to the Embankment by the River Thames and dispersed. They had been outmanoeuvred by an aggressive and hyped-up left wing.

So, going by last month, we now have an almost accidental reprise of the problem, people in black clothing wearing face coverings and complaining about a very different group of migrants as they march through streets and block them. In this instance the roles were all but reversed – the men and women in black were trying to stop the migrants arriving. The authorities held firm and eventually dispersed the men in black. Their likely more rowdy adversaries, the left wing, were otherwise engaged eating takeaways and watching streamed box sets! As a result, fortunately, 2026 was not as violent as the 1936 version but the result was pretty much similar.

This was not the only instance of the police Autogyro being in action over the Moseley meetings, in 1934 they held a rally in Hyde Park, London which was again overshadowed by a police force leased Cierva with 6,000 police in close contact.



Cierva C30 extracted from the mural

More detail on this quite busy day in aviation history on page 39 of the Police Aviation History on the resources page of www.policeaviationnews.com

LATE MEDICAL NEWS

Some late news items from the Air Ambulance sector:

In Israel the **Hatzolah Air organisation** established the pad at the Herzog Medical Centre, and it will serve Beit Shemesh, the Jordan Valley, the Dead Sea, and the West Bank.

A new helipad was established at the Herzog Medical Centre in Jerusalem with an investment of approximately NIS 5 million sheqels (£1.23M). The helipad, built by the Hatzolah Air organization is mainly intended for operating a Sikorsky S-76 medevac helicopter.

The organisation's Jerusalem operations centre is being built alongside the helipad; it will include infrastructure for operations, command, and control and crew facilities. Although primarily for the Jerusalem area the facility also hopes to serve the River Jordan valley, Beit Shemesh, Lachish, the Dead Sea, Judea and Samaria.



On the right: Eli Rowe, president of Hatzolah Air, Dr. Aaron Adler, director and medical director of Hatzolah Air, Dr. Yehezkel Caine, President of Herzog Medical Centre, and Dr. Kobi Haviv, the CEO and Director General of Herzog Medical Centre with the Sikorsky S-76 4X-BHT (Morag Bitan)

Hatzolah Air is a non-profit organization established in the United States in 2018 by American-Jewish philanthropist Eli Rowe. The organization engages in medical flights, patient transfers to care centres, and rescue missions. [Jerusalem Times]



In Bali, Indonesia has started trialling a national air ambulance service using Eurocopter EC120 helicopters to enable faster emergency medical evacuations across isolated and remote regions. Trials have been undertaken in the Pesisir Barat Regency of Lampung province on the island of Sumatra. As a type the Colibri is restricted in space and performance in the air ambulance role but it can carry a single stretcher patient. Standard access for the patient is via the rear under boom door.

Further research by Parapex finds there are at least three former military EC120B Colibri with **Republik Indonesia Ambulance** titles, these are H-1201 featured in the press report on a demonstration of the capability on September 23, H-1213 featured alongside an Indonesian Air Force example on social media (above) and a third one believed to be H-1214. From 2001, the Indonesian AF took delivery of twelve EC120, HL-1201 being the first one. They replaced the Bell 47 in the basic training role. The entire military EC120 fleet is based at Kalijati / Suryadarma AF Bas. [Antara News/Kabar 5/Helis.com/Parapex]

ON-LINE NEWS

www.POLICE AVIATION NEWS.info

www.POLICE AVIATION NEWS.com



Wings of Mercy, a charitable organisation that has spent the past 35 years arranging free flights for patients in rural communities in the USA has been presented with major problems thanks to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

Its network of volunteer pilots flies patients to appointments at medical facilities across the USA. The organisation is funded entirely by private donations—patients and their insurers pay nothing.

The FAA has claimed authority to regulate such organisations and their pilots like a commercial airline. The FAA Modernization and Reform Act (2012) requires the FAA to allow pilots to accept reimbursement for fuel costs on charitable medical flights, subject to a few enhanced safety requirements related to the pilot's training and experience.

The FAA has chosen to ignore that mandate, choosing instead to treat any reimbursement of a pilot's expenses as flying "for compensation or hire." The cost is real. In July, a volunteer pilot paid \$460 to fly part of a Wings of Mercy mission to the Mayo Clinic. Wings of Mercy had the funds and would have reimbursed him, but the FAA's interpretations stood in the way. So long as those interpretations remain in force, fewer pilots will be available to help transport patients in need.

Wings of Mercy have now filed two federal lawsuits asking the courts to enforce the law Congress actually enacted, rather than giving agencies unchecked power to interpret the rules.



The advertisement features a blue background with a photograph of an exhibition hall filled with people and aircraft. The text is arranged in a structured layout with various fonts and colors (white, yellow, and blue) to highlight key information.

EUROPEAN ROTORS | THE VTOL SHOW AND SAFETY CONFERENCE

30 November – 3 December 2026
(Exhibits Open 1–3 December)
EUREXPO Lyon, France
www.europeanrotors.eu

**Connect with Europe's
vertical aviation community**

Exhibit at
EUROPEAN ROTORS 2026

BEEN THERE SEEN THAT...

The PAN report on Emergency Services Show (ESS) and The Emergency Tech Show (ETS) is published separately on the website. It is well worth a read simply to understand the current state of the US market as seen by Mark Colborn. The item on UK DFR will probably fill in a few gaps in knowledge.

Details of the event only arrived after publication, so it bears repeating here with notification of the dates of next year's event.

The Emergency Services Show welcomed 10,792 visitors and 351 exhibitors, while The Emergency Tech Show attracted 5,785 visitors and 132 exhibitors. Both events recorded year-on-year growth. The two collocated shows will return to the NEC Birmingham on 6-7 October 2027, with the events moving into Halls 17, 18 and 19 for their next edition.

The expanded footprint will provide additional space for exhibitors, visitors and live experiences, including a large outdoor exhibition area dedicated to showcasing the latest emergency service vehicles, specialist equipment, technology and operational solutions. The new outdoor space will provide visitors with the opportunity to see the latest innovations in action and experience the capabilities of next-generation emergency response vehicles and technologies first-hand.

This year the outdoor exhibits were kept within the main hall and were therefore fewer in number.

AND THAT...

On the eve of publication PAN put in a visit to the DroneX show at ExCel in London Docklands. This is the event that co-hosted with the remnants of Helitech as it died away. It is noteworthy the marketing is similar and we were led to expect 300 exhibitors in the one small hall. As with Helitech there was no such number, indeed it will have been difficult to count 300 persons assigned to running the exhibitor stands over the two days! But, and this is worthy of stressing, they have made the hall so much smaller now that the whole place is frenetic. Jammed with people eager to get and see the latest in Drones UK.

I am not sure they (the customers) will be over-pleased, but the event had a certain zing to it even if it was mainly caused by congestion!

There may have been a general lack of manufacturers in among the 300 exhibitors but if you wanted new batteries or 3D printing this was indeed the place to be! In fairness bigger, better and more efficient batteries are the key to future progress in the industry but they are all a bit similar when exhibited.

Fortunately, there were the presentation theatres to fall back on and they were bustling and offered an interesting range of presentations. The theatres were all well equipped for the silent presentation so that some at least could hear the presenter clearly. Unfortunately it was one headset per seat so an over popular subject required those standing around to be lip readers.

One of the major speakers was Superintendent Taryn Evans of the NPCC drone programme. As had been the case with her audible appearance at the ESS Show in Birmingham it was a popular presentation. The limited number headsets severely restricted the numbers able to avail themselves of the full presentation which is a major pity.

Supt Taryn Evans drew a big audience for her presentation on UK DFR activities.

An interesting subject line that the future shape of effective police air support may rely upon. A suitable subject for PAvCon UK.



COMING SOON

24-27 October 2026 (EDT) The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) Annual Conference and Exposition at the Orange County Convention Center, International Drive, Orlando, Florida, USA The IACP event is the largest and most impactful law enforcement event of the year in the USA and it attracts International interest. More than 16,000 public safety professionals come to learn new techniques, advance their knowledge and careers, and equip their department for success. The three tenets of the conference are training, networking, and exhibit hall education. The expo hall will be open Sunday – Tuesday of the conference to meet with more than 600 vendors showcasing products and services. Welcome to IACP 2026! - IACP Conference 2026



30 November – 3 December 2026 European Rotors 2026, EuroExpo Lyon Boulevard de l'Europe, 69680 Chassieu, Lyon. Europe's leading vertical aviation trade show and safety conference returns as France hosts the event for the first time and the show builds on five years of consecutive growth. The European Helicopter Association (EHA) organises the event, endorsed by European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and powered by Vertical Aviation International (VAI) and the European Rotors (ER) team.

Organisers expect more than 200 exhibitors to display products and services across the vertical aviation industry, including helicopters, drones, maintenance solutions, avionics, training systems, and operational support technologies. ER2026 will offer a broad conference programme focused on safety, regulation, technology, sustainability, workforce development, and operational performance. Sessions will feature industry experts, policymakers, operators, and thought leaders addressing the issues shaping the future of vertical flight.
www.europeanrotors.eu

Although the dates and other details of the event will be announced before then, it is planned that the next edition of PAVCon Europe in May/June 2027 will be promoted at the European Rotors event.





Parapex Media

Marketing, Social Media Management, Website Design, Press and PR
dedicated to the Aviation Industry

www.ParapexMedia.com



A&R
able&rush

People Solutions

- Transformation Management
- Crew Resource Management
- Organisational Development
- Psychometrics
- Talent Management
- Coaching
- Facilitation

'Helping you to realise and release the talent potential that sits within your organisation, developing your people and ensuring that you safely thrive and fly'

David Howell, Director

www.ableandrush.com