

Police Aviation News

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Issue 358

February 2026



**NEW YORK STATE
TAKE DELIVERY**

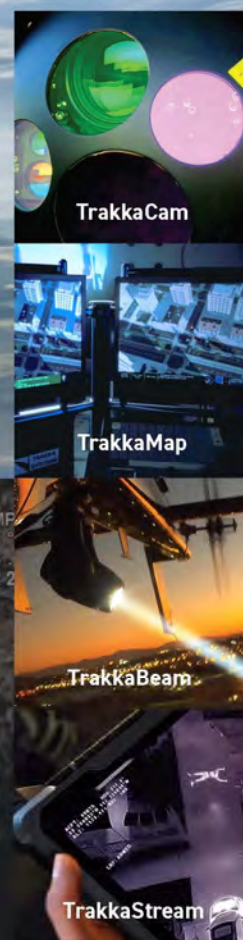


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EDITORIAL

At the end of January, the Government of the United Kingdom published a White Paper that announced major changes to the police forces in England and Wales. It is intended to cut the current number of police forces from 43 to (perhaps) 12-15 and to set up a National Police Service (NPS) to undertake investigation of the major crime areas including murders and gangs. The newly transformed police forces would be expected to look after more local problems including community policing and lesser crimes.

The actual scope of areas of responsibility to be undertaken by each police service and the NPS, widely associated with the description of being “a British FBI,” has yet to be clarified. It is estimated it will take around four years to settle down which might place the final stages of the process in the middle of campaigning for a General Election that might see the process embroiled in the negative politics of a new government.

According to initial information the creation of far fewer police forces will affect the management of the existing NPAS, currently under West Yorkshire Police, and provide an escape route for the current management from a set up that they no longer wish to operate but cannot divest themselves of. It looks likely that the new NPS formation may well provide an opportune dumping ground for the air services in England and Wales.

The plan to mess about with the way policing is organised looks set fair for creating massive confusion. Just changing the badges and paperwork will cost a significant amount, then there is the headache of whether all politicians of all parties agree to the project going ahead. Turning all eight of the police services in Scotland into one entity in 2013 was a bit of a disaster and yet at the time Scotland was something of a ‘one party state.’ This England and Wales plan looks like being not too different but is likely to be complicated by a clash of numerous different political parties each with different ideologies vying for government in a General Election due in a year or so.

With UK policing already in turmoil over staff employment, standards and retention, the aspect to bear in mind is that the idiots that are reputedly failing to manage the current set up adequately will be the same idiots that will plan and carry out the projected reorganization.

Overall, that does not look to be too positive a prospect.

Bryn Elliott

LAW ENFORCEMENT

AUSTRALIA

BORDER FORCE: Recently delivered to the Babcock completion centre in Staverton Gloucestershire UK were two Airbus Helicopter H145 destined after role fit to enter service on the other side of the world in Australia.

Babcock will continue a 30-year partnership with Australian Border Force as part of a new \$250M contract to protect Australia’s northern border in the strategically important Torres Strait. The deal was signed and announced in September last year.



©Babcock

In New York State the police officially became an Airbus Helicopters operator in the middle of January when they took delivery of their first two H145 helicopters, N9SP and N430SP. In a joint Airbus and Metro Aviation project Davenport Aviation officially delivered the two new helicopters in what promises to be a major upgrade in their capabilities. [Davenport/Metro/NYSP]

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30

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The eight-year contract with the Commonwealth Government will deliver the two new mission modified helicopters to Australia's Border Force, plus air crews and ongoing aircraft maintenance to ensure an all-weather airborne service enabling deterrence, prevention and response operations from Horn Island, in the Torres Strait. The service provides multi-agency capability for a range of maritime security threats including illegal fishing, illegal immigration and marine pollution.

The two H145 (MBB-BK 117 D-3) helicopters, currently UK registered as G-CNAI s/n 21459 and G-CNAH s/n 21435, will be delivered fitted with latest technology sensors, mission management systems and long-range tanks to provide a significant upgrade to the current surveillance capability and protection in the region.

Sixteen new staff will be recruited, including pilots, surveillance crew and engineers to support the new contract. The state-of-the-art aircraft are expected to be in service from September 2026.

Babcock and its predecessor companies have provided the service to the Australian Border Force since 1995 when the helicopters operating the service were examples of the Bell 206 and 412. The current fleet includes a leased Bell 412 and Airbus AS350 flying up to 2,200 hours per year as well as ten Dash 8 fixed wing patrol aircraft flying up to 15,000 hours annually. [Babcock]

CAYMAN ISLANDS

POLICE: Although the applications for the post closed on January 9 it is worth recording that the Royal Cayman Islands Police Service (RCIPS) were advertising for a new helicopter pilot over the New Year period.

The full-time post is for a pilot to fly airborne response in the performance of law enforcement, HEMS, rapid transportation and other police operations for the RCIPS utilizing two Airbus H145 Helicopters. The post holder will be required to perform a comprehensive range of assignments and attracts a salary in the range of CI\$87,444 – CI\$114,768 (US\$72,800 - \$95,500) per annum.

The post holder will on an average clock 200 flight hours per year, with 50% of flights being Proactive/Regular and the remaining 50% being Reactive/Emergency flights. Some flights are as aid to other nearby countries in times of emergency.

The applicant is expected to have a Current Commercial Pilot License to operate Airbus H145 helicopter, with medical certificate (class 1 or equivalent), at least 3,000 hours helicopter flight time, of which 1,500 hours should have been PIC, with a minimum of 200 hours night flying experience and a minimum of 1,000 hours of multi-engine turbine flying.

The RCIPS is the primary law enforcement agency in the British overseas territory of the Cayman Islands

and serves all three of the Cayman Islands: Grand Cayman, Cayman Brac and Little Cayman. Demographically, the Cayman Islands estimated population is about circa 65,000 representing a mix of more than 100 nationalities. The vast majority of people reside on Grand Cayman with Cayman Brac being the second most populated with appx. 2,000 residents, followed by Little Cayman with approximately. 200 permanent residents.

CHILE

CARABINEROS: Early in January the Carabineros from Labocar Concepcion in south central Chile were conducting investigations into the crash of a Thrush firefighting aircraft in Lebu. The single engine aircraft came down in a clearing close to the tree line while fighting a nearby wildfire on January 11. The aircraft is a write off but the pilot survived and was taken off to hospital in Lebu.

The \$3.5M firefighting contract with the Spanish company Plysa has been running since 2021 and provides three modern Thrush 710P aircraft that have served since 2023. Plysa deployed a total of 21 people at the South American bases, including nine pilots, six mechanics, and six water loaders. [X, Informa Al Minuto]



KUWAIT

POLICE: Last month the Kuwait Ministry of Interior announced that First Lieutenant Dana Al-Shaleen (far left) has been chosen to pursue aviation studies in Greece with the expectation that she will become the first woman in Kuwait's history to qualify as a police pilot.

She will undertake intensive academic coursework alongside hands-on flight training in Greece as part of her preparation to serve as a police officer. [Madhyamam]



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UNITED KINGDOM

NATIONAL: Following the Government's publication of the Police Reform White Paper From Local to National: A New Model for Policing, NPAS has released a statement on what the proposals mean for specialist police aviation.

"As a national capability already operating across England and Wales, NPAS is well placed to support the future direction of policing set out in the White Paper. The proposals include the creation of a new National Police Service (NPS), which aims to bring together national functions, strengthen coordination, drive consistency, and modernise specialist capabilities across policing.

"NPAS remains committed to delivering safe, effective and responsive air support to all forces, and we will continue to work closely with our policing partners as these reforms are developed in the years ahead."

Editor; The White Paper is a document of 106 pages of which only a tiny part mentions aviation. The proposals include an intention to get rid of the costly Police and Crime Commissioners in 2028, an idea that will surely enrage the current governments political rivals, and remove all hope of consensus of opinion in the plans. The proposals should result in West Yorkshire Police divesting themselves of NPAS and may even provide a means whereby the expensive NPAS specific organisational structure can be slimmed down and thereby reduce management costs.

Meanwhile, it seems clear that most UK police forces are now forsaking manned police aviation for drones where possible. The perceived lack of service from NPAS creates a void which forces have been obliged to fill with the cheaper, if operationally limited, small craft solution.

NORFOLK DRONES: As announced back in August 2025, Norfolk Constabulary was chosen by the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) to lead a trial of Drone as First Responder (DFR) that will see drones remotely deployed to be first on the scene of police incidents.

As previously reported The University of East Anglia (UEA) has been the home to the latest in community safety technology, with the university housing a drone on its 360-acre campus to assist with police incidents, as part of a new collaboration with Norfolk Constabulary.

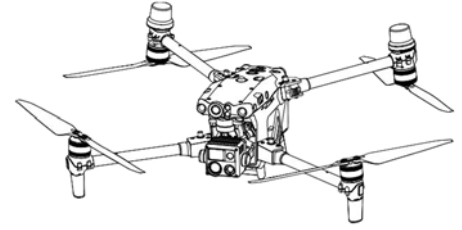
The drone location is the roof of the Thomas Paine Study Centre (TPSC), from where it can be deployed for emergency police incidents. The UEA campus was the scene for one of the first demonstrations of Drone as First Responder (DFR) technology, where Norfolk Constabulary's Drones Team set up a typical task using a drone stationed in a weatherproof box on a roof nearby.

L-R: Prof Gerard Parr from UEA's School of Computer Sciences; Supt Tarryn Evans from Norfolk Police Chiefs' Council; Norfolk Constabulary Superintendent Phill Gray



KENT: The event was already known about but was clearly being hushed up as embarrassing to the people involved but the story was outed by the BBC last month. A child was injured by a DJI M30T drone in Kent during the afternoon of August 2, 2025.

In Strode Crescent, Sheerness, Kent, a Kent Police officer launched a drone, for a suspect search. Unfortunately, the drone hit previously unseen overhead wires and then crashed to the ground injuring a child. A subsequent investigation has released some of the details but does not include the age or gender of the child involved or the extent of the injury caused. The BBC report states it is a 'serious' injury.



The Air Accident Investigation Branch (AAIB) said: "The cable hazard had not been identified during the rapid deployment." True to form Kent Police said it could not comment due to an ongoing inquiry by the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC).

Editor: Potentially a relatively minor incident it does however raise issues of public safety relating to things that go up having a liability to fall one day. In this instance the fall took place sooner rather than later.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE POLICE: Last month the land of Robin Hood and his Merry Men, Nottinghamshire, were actively promoting their drone team and their achievements to anyone who would listen.

The promotional text states that car thieves, dangerous drivers, and violent criminals all had cause to rue the presence of Nottinghamshire remote-controlled eyes in the sky as the drones' team enjoyed its most productive year yet.

The team, now consisting of 20 trained officers from departments across the force, supported colleagues on the ground on more occasions than ever before. As a result, they delivered more positive outcomes than ever before, including locating fleeing and hiding suspects on 79 occasions, locating vehicles of interest on 19 occasions and helping to locate vulnerable missing people on 34 occasions.

The enhanced performance has been made possible by the training of additional pilots, who volunteer to fly drones on top of their day-to-day roles as police officers and further enhanced by the availability of a new dedicated drone response vehicle, adapted to allow for the storage and quick deployment of fully assembled drones.

Apparently in response to the promotion in Nottinghamshire the PR team in NPAS were quick to follow up that positive message with their own storyline where they assisted in bringing a stolen Jaguar car pursuit to a safe end in Nottinghamshire

The NPAS EC135 crew based on the edge of the GA airfield at Husbands Bosworth, Leicestershire supported Nottinghamshire Police after a stolen Jaguar was sighted travelling north on the A60 road in Ravenshead north of Nottingham.

The aircraft, operating single-crewed, quickly located the vehicle and provided continuous downlink footage as it failed to stop for officers. This real time aerial intelligence enabled ground units to monitor the car safely and co-ordinate an effective plan to contain it.

The pursuit came to a safe conclusion on Field Lane, Blidworth, where the driver and front-seat passenger were arrested. The vehicle - stolen from a Nottingham main dealer before Christmas and believed to have been linked to burglary offences - has now been recovered.

Detective Sergeant Nathan Bingham said:

"Thanks to the presence in the area of a police helicopter we had the ability to follow this vehicle over a long distance, but in the end were able to bring this vehicle to a swift and compliant stop."

This incident highlights the vital role NPAS plays in supporting forces - providing strategic overwatch, downlink capability and safe management of pursuit-type incidents."

Editor: Although timely, and that is thanks to the new PR team who actually think of getting such things out there to the public, the pursuit was not that remarkable in itself but, sadly, it underlines the ongoing lack of TFOs to crew the much-denuded aircraft fleet. In this instance it would appear that luck may have played a part. The home base of the helicopter (assumed to be EC135P2 G-SUFK), is over 50 miles away from the point of the action and from a standing launch would not really offer a viable service. The original unit for the area, based at the police HQ in Ripley, Derbyshire was just 15 miles away from the action.

Another photo call put out by the NPAS PR team was to highlight the visit by Leo Hammond, Deputy Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Humberside, East Yorkshire, to NPAS Carr Gate, Wakefield, Yorkshire, on January 26 for a tour of the base and an insight into how national air support enhances frontline policing.

Ch Supt Fiona Gaffney MSc, NPAS Accountable Manager, and Kate Hann, Carr Gate Base Manager, showed him around. The visit was also an opportunity to share how NPAS continues to “evolve, innovate, and strengthen future service delivery across England and Wales.”

Coincidentally the visit came on the same day as the Home Secretary and Home Office were setting out plans for yet another major revamp of British Policing that looks set to place NPAS under new masters and sideline the powers of the current Police and Crime Commissioners.



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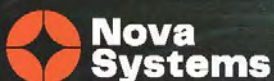
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AVONMOUTH: At the end of the year the BVLOS trial at Avonmouth ran its course of trials. In the final weeks it was unfortunately without its leader, David Walters, due to family matters but others in the team stepped up until he returned. He is now back to undertake the BVLOS Trials Summary update documents.

PAN was asked the identity of the drones by an AB Historian, and I had not thought to undertake that little detail at the time. Fortunately, there are clues out there and from the images I have seen the S100s have a number at the base of the tail, and it can be seen in some images.

I am unsure how many they have used but certainly two flyers and one assumed dummy airframe at the Emergency Services Show 2025. The identified flying craft are s/n 0489 and s/n 0238.

UNITED STATES

CALIFORNIA: CNC Technologies has a contract with the California Highway Patrol to delivery three (3) mission equipped Cessna 208 Caravan's. CNC is the prime contractor and have already purchased the basic Caravans from Textron and delivered them to Hangar One Avionics in Carlsbad, CA, for them to perform the integration services. CNC designed the ISR mission suite and will also be purchasing the mission equipment for installation by Hangar One. The completed aircraft will be due for delivery from this month and through into the summer, with a delivery every few months.

On February 17-19 and APSA sponsored On-The-Road TFO Course/Airborne Thermographer Certification Course is to be held at the County Sheriff's facility at 4985 Broder Blvd, Dublin, California 94568-3314. The cost for the course is Members \$415 and Non-Members \$515.



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

This course also offers certification as an Airborne Thermographer to participants who attend the full 24 hours and pass the written exam. This portion of the course is presented by Mr. Brian Spillane, Teledyne FLIR, who is a Certified Thermographer Instructor.



Artistic rendition of the paint-scheme to be applied to the Flagler Bell 505. In a few months the helicopter will be serving a 571 Square mile county with a tiny population of under 137,000

FLORIDA: Flagler County Sheriff's Office based in Bunnell, is one of two counties on the Atlantic coast of Florida not to have a sheriff's helicopter. That's about to change since a prominent attorney has 'donated' his seven years old Bell 505 to the dept. They have already accepted it and changed the N number. The next step will see it repainted from its current white and black scheme and outfitted with mission equipment. Above is an artist's rendering of what it will look like as N611FC.

Until recently the Bell 505 helicopter c/n 65122 was operating as N407DN for Dan Newlin, the personal injury attorney and friend of Sheriff Rick Staly. The helicopter had made frequent appearances at sheriff's events. The selection of the helicopter's new N-Number 611FC, is apparently based on 61-1 the dispatch call number for Sheriff Staly. Flagler County does have one other emergency services helicopter. A 2024 H125 operates for the County Emergency and fire department, as FireFlight, it had seen some use in police and sheriff's support. The Sheriff's helicopter will complement the FireFlight helicopter, the pair potentially operating a 24-hour service between them pending the arrival of sufficient pilots. The FireFlight hangar is unsuited for co-locating the two together so accommodation has been arranged with the East Flagler Mosquito Control H125 helicopter N594MC.

The helicopter is currently at the Lakeland Airport, where it is being role equipped over the next five or six months. The role fit will include a FLIR camera system, searchlight and medevac equipment, it will be used for SAR, tracking suspects, and observational duties directing deputies, and in maritime searches and routine patrols. Currently they have a consultant, Patrick Deans, who is developing the policies and creating all protocols for review by the Sheriff. The consultant is a former Orange County Sheriff's Office pilot and instructor operating as Blackheart Aviation, LLC.

Although some reports state that the transfer of the million-dollar helicopter was a donation by the lawyer the detail suggests otherwise. The Sheriff's Office is describing the acquisition as a private-public partnership with Newlin. The helicopter is valued at \$1.42M, the agency contributed \$700,000 (\$125,000 from the asset-seizure fund resulting from drug arrests, the rest from what the agency describes as one-time savings). Newlin is contributing the balance "in market value," plus \$30,000 for equipment. Whether a purchase or a gift, the acquisition carries reporting and oversight requirements regardless. Even as a gift, the helicopter will incur costs that are substantial for the small population to cover operations and maintenance. So far, the helicopter acquisition has not been a subject of public discussion, nor did the sheriff suggest that he was looking to acquire a helicopter when he last discussed his agency's budget.

The back story on the donor of at least part of the value of the helicopter is that he has several links to law enforcement and politics. Newlin is an old friend and formerly worked under Staly's. He was a police officer in his native Chicago before joining the Orange County Sheriff's Office (FL) for 10 years, where Staly was his supervisor as undersheriff. Newlin served 18 more years as a reserve deputy. In June 2025 Staly asked him to serve as an honorary deputy in Flagler County. Newlin owns the Central Florida Dan Newlin Injury Attorneys law firm and has been a lavish donor to political candidates and political action committees for years. He donated \$1M million to the Make America Great Again PAC in 2024.

Flagler County is around 571 sq. mls in area, a little bigger than the UK's Greater Manchester. But the population is just under 137,000



©NYSP/Airbus/MA



NEW YORK: The State Police officially became an Airbus Helicopters operator in the middle of January when they took delivery of their first two H145 helicopters, N9SP and N430SP.

Last week, Davenport Aviation officially delivered two new H145 (BK117 D-3) helicopters to the New York State Police, marking an important step forward in the agency's aviation operations.

The twin-engine H145s significantly enhance NYSP's operational capability, offering increased performance, redundancy, and safety to support missions ranging from law enforcement and search and rescue to disaster response across New York State.

Davenport Aviation worked alongside Airbus Helicopters and Metro Aviation Inc., to deliver these aircraft and look forward to seeing them in service as they support critical public safety operations statewide.

One of the pair is registered N9SP c/n 21301, legacy marks for the NYSP that previously graced a long forgotten BO105 in 1990. The other airframe is N430SP c/n 21314. In 2026 the FAA shows 23 sets of marks allocated to the NY State Police but only identified 16 airframes assigned to them immediately prior to the delivery of the new Airbus fleet.

TEXAS: Last month The Editor of PAN incorrectly identified the searchlight fit on the latest Bell 505 for Fort Worth Police Department as the Luminator Orion. Within a few hours of publication the error was highlighted! The searchlight equipment was actually a Trakka product – the TL-360 which has a significantly different profile from the 'standard' Trakka searchlight.

CNC Technologies was the prime contractor for the mission equipment integration, and FWPd chose the Trakka TL-360. They will be having their first B505 retrofitted with the TL-360 as well (a switch from the Trakka TLX searchlight).

The TrakkaBeam® TL-360 LED/LEP hybrid searchlight offers operators a 360° illumination while using just 1/3 of the power compared to similar systems. Featuring a lightweight and compact single LRU configuration, the TL-360 provides simplified installation and integration, eliminating the need for power conditioning or external interface units. Its inertial stabilisation enhances performance during aircraft manoeuvres, reducing external vibrations. The TL-360 is suitable for fixed-wing, rotary-wing, light aircraft, and manned or unmanned platforms. With solid-state components, it offers robustness and is highly expandable and upgradeable.



VIRGINIA: Virginia State Police took delivery of a new Bell 412EPX N40VA on December 22, 2025, delivered from Bell's completion centre in Tennessee. Other recent deliveries include three Kodiak fixed wings scheduled to replace a fleet of Cessna 206.

The operation has a handful of Bell 407, a single Bell 412EPi N28VA delivered three years ago and an EC145. The Bell 412Epi replaced one of the EC145s they purchased in 2010 and the new delivery is expected to replace the second.

The Department operates two helicopter medical evacuation programs that serve Central and Southwest Virginia. These provide rapid response, advanced medical procedures, and transport for critically injured patients to level one trauma centres. They serve 43 hospitals and the people in 59 counties and 34 cities.

Since 2022, on average, the Med-Flight programs have responded to over 1,800 calls a year and transported over 800 patients annually.

The Aviation Division has a Headquarters and Maintenance Facility based in North Chesterfield and other bases in Abingdon and Lynchburg.



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AIR AMBULANCE

GERMANY

BAVARIA: DRF Maintenance GmbH has inaugurated its new helicopter hangar in Straubing, Bavaria, Germany. DRF Maintenance, part of DRF Luftrettung, is thus expanding its capacity for future maintenance and repair projects and offering tailor-made services for operators of private and public fleets – both in southern Germany and in neighbouring countries. With the start of operations, DRF Maintenance is now ready to take on new orders.

As a certified EASA Part 145 maintenance organisation, the facility specialises in base maintenance services for the Airbus EC155 and H145 types. In future, it will also be able to service the H135. The infrastructure currently comprises besides of maintenance docks, modern workstations for complex maintenance work and workshops for sheet metal repairs and avionics. Operators benefit from short downtimes and the option of having modifications carried out.

The new location complements the DRF Maintenance service network, which already includes the maintenance facilities in Wilhelmshaven (Lower Saxony) and Rheinmünster at Karlsruhe/Baden-Baden Airport (Baden-Württemberg) – the latter is one of the largest and most modern helicopter maintenance facilities in Europe. In addition to services for external customers, helicopters belonging to DRF Luftrettung from surrounding HEMS bases and ARA Flugrettung from Austria can also be serviced in Straubing.

UNITED KINGDOM

DEVON: 2025 was another busy year for Devon Air Ambulance (DAA), with the charity attending 2,125 land and air missions across Devon and neighbouring counties. The charity is grateful to the local community for its support in enabling it to continue its vital, lifesaving service. Medical emergencies can impact lives anywhere and at any time. DAA pilots, paramedics and doctors are ready to respond by air and by road, with lifesaving kit and the skills to provide crucial, time-critical care

Of the 2,125 times, the service was called to assist in 2025; 395 of the missions were night missions. With a network of more than 200 pre-surveyed Community Landing Sites (CLS) across Devon, DAA crews are able to get to patients during the hours of darkness. The most recent of these sites, the 207th, became operational at Inghams Sports pitches in Cranbrook in mid-December, thanks to a partnership between DAA & Cranbrook Town Council. [DAA]



Pictured above from left to right: Toby Russell, Devon Air Ambulance Projects manager; Alexandra Robinson, Deputy Clerk, Cranbrook Town Council; Graham Coates, Devon Air Ambulance landing Site Manager; Alastair Lees, Devon Air Ambulance Line Pilot; Sophie Anderson, Property Administrator, Cranbrook Town Council.



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DORSET & SOMERSET: The charity air ambulance has announced a series of updates and developments that will secure the operations into the future. Demand for the life-saving service continues to grow year on year; by air and by road, missions have more than tripled in the last ten years.

The future operational base is to be created at the Leonardo UK Site in Yeovil, Somerset. They have confirmed the long-term intention to develop a new operational base with a 35-year lease agreement signed with generous support from Leonardo who will not be charging the charity rent.

The proposal for the new operational base in Yeovil follows careful consideration, operational analysis, and a vision to secure a sustainable and future proof home for the life saving service. DSAA requires modern facilities that support clinical excellence, rapid deployment and staff wellbeing. A new base will offer purpose-built spaces for patient interaction, training, operational coordination and community engagement, ensuring the charity can continue to provide outstanding care to people across Dorset and Somerset for decades to come.

Operational analysis shows that Yeovil's location provides excellent aircraft coverage across the entire Dorset and Somerset region, whilst immediate access to major roads, enhance deployment for the rapid response vehicles used when the helicopters cannot respond. The development and construction of a new base will be subject to a public consultation in mid-2026, followed by securing planning permission and raising the necessary funds.



In the meantime, they will continue operating their Leonardo AW169 from Henstridge Airfield, some thirty miles away, thanks to the ongoing support of Geoff Jarvis and the local Henstridge community, whose contribution over many years has been fundamental to the charity and its life saving work.

Last September, DSAA launched its second helicopter appeal to help fund the purchase and equipping of another helicopter for the area. The aircraft has undergone test flights and is now getting ready for its flight to Staverton, where Gama Aviation will customise it for Helicopter Emergency Medical Service (HEMS) missions. The second helicopter is expected to be operational in Summer 2026.

Editor: This new base deal is worthy of a wry smile. When set up 25 years ago the Dorset & Somerset AA were based at Henstridge where they are now. Many years ago Dorset & Somerset left Henstridge and were based at Yeovil as the guest of the helicopter manufacturer Westland. The latter was progressively taken over by Agusta to become AgustaWestland, Finmeccanica and then Leonardo twenty years ago.

When the Agusta's CEO Giuseppe Orsi (right), visited Yeovil early in 2007 he spied the air ambulance on the field and there was hell to pay. At the time, like most UK air ambulances the charity was flying a Eurocopter product. Although it was all denied at the time Orsi saw that they were caste out – although it is known that the




charity received a fair bit of money from the staff at Westland to ease the pain. It was after all their charity of choice and they did not have any expectation of it operating one of their traditional military helicopters in a HEMS role where Agusta did have suitable airframes.

They ended up back at Henstridge and in September 2008 moved into a newly-finished operational base. Located on the north side of the field, the new facility including a hangar and operational offices for this EMS operation, which still flew EC135T2+ G-DORS. Since then the charity has changed its preferences and in 2017 started operating a Leonardo AW169 – a type more acceptable to the management in Yeovil.

KINGS LYNN: Last month a new purpose-built helipad was opened in Kings Lynn as a first move towards the building of a new hospital service for the town. The new facility has been funded through a donation by the HELP Appeal, the only charity in the country dedicated to funding NHS helipads which has donated £516,000 to cover the entire cost of the new QEH helipad.

This is a permanent relocation of the helipad to allow for progress to be made in the building of the new hospital with the construction of a multi-storey car park. Plans for the new helipad have been worked on with the East Anglian Air Ambulance (EAAA) who use this important resource regularly for operational reasons due to its central location in the eastern region. Patients arriving at the site who need care at The QEH will be transferred to the Emergency Department via ambulance for further care – as happened from the previous onsite helipad.

The new helipad lighting system is a wholly solar powered, designed to ensure sustainable battery power even in low light and through the winter to give resilience in all weathers. The helipads system uses the latest technology and can be controlled on the ground or with in-flight activation from approaching helicopters. It is all fully compliant to current the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) standards.

The background of the advertisement is a dark, atmospheric image of a Star SAFIRE 380X-HDc sensor mounted on the underside of an aircraft. The sensor is a compact, low-profile unit with a hexagonal lens array. The aircraft's structure and wings are visible in the upper left, silhouetted against a cloudy sky. The overall tone is professional and high-tech.

TELEDYNE | FLIR Defense

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The Star SAFIRE® 380X-HDc provides premier EO/IR imaging in a compact, low-profile package. This premier system is essentially a cheat code for airborne ISR missions, thanks to advanced imaging capabilities such as de-scintillation filter, integrated Moving Target Indicator (MTI), AR mapping overlays, and more.

FLIR.COM/380X

MAGPAS: The Cambridgeshire-based charity, Magpas Air Ambulance, saw its busiest year on record in 2025, as the publicly funded emergency service was activated 1,948 times. Magpas Air Ambulance's team of advanced doctors and paramedics are specially trained in pre-hospital emergency medicine and are therefore only called to the most seriously ill and injured patients across the East of England.

The service responded to incidents in 12 counties in and around the East of England last year, with the charity situated in Cambridgeshire, it's no surprise the county was once again Magpas Air Ambulance's most attended, followed by Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire.

Magpas Air Ambulance has always been committed to enhancing knowledge in the community too; training thousands of people in the lifesaving skills of CPR and how to use a defibrillator, and promoting equality in bystander CPR, too. The charity is pleased to report that of all the cardiac arrests Magpas Air Ambulance was called to, 73% had received bystander CPR prior to the team's arrival—a figure that continues to increase year on year. Working around the clock, operating with fast response cars when the helicopter was not available, 37% of Magpas Air Ambulance's missions took place overnight.



©SOTAA

STOKE-ON-TRENT: The Stoke Air Ambulance project continues to move forward. They recently announced that they plan to use an Agusta 109 variant as the primary aircraft and have released a list of areas they intend to serve once operations commence.

These areas represent the communities they aim to reach quickly and efficiently in the future, "providing critical emergency support when it's needed most". There are other, long established, charity air ambulances in the region who might disagree. The target area, all within an eight-minute flight time from the Royal Stoke Hospital, Stoke-on-Trent include Congleton, Crewe, and Nantwich in the north, to Stafford County Hospital in the south, and from Market Drayton in the west to Leek in the east.

During market research the fundraisers sought to make their aircraft stand out from the usual HEMS airframes (generally red or yellow or a combination) and that led them to numerous creative ideas. Taking inspiration from the heritage of Stoke-on-Trent, they selected a colour deeply connected with Stoke and its industrial past, the world-famous Wedgwood Blue from the Potteries. The prime aircraft will also carry the name Jasper, another element with link to Jasperware and local industry. www.stokeairambulance.org

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UNITED STATES



PENNSYLVANIA: Last month the Geisinger Life Flight operation took delivery of a new Airbus Helicopters H135 N479LF after completion work by Metro Aviation Inc., at their Shreveport LA facility. The 1,200-mile air delivery from Shreveport to Geisinger's base at Danville PA was via Lexington, Kentucky.

Geisinger Life Flight is a leading provider of value-based hospital care. They serve 1.2 million people in urban and rural communities across Pennsylvania and operate a mixed fleet including nine Airbus EC145s and H135s.



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SEARCH AND RESCUE

CANADA

CORMORANT UPGRADE: In September last year the first aircraft shell of the Leonardo CH-149 Cormorant left Yeovil in the United Kingdom and was transported to IMP Aerospace in Halifax, N.S. for completion into the upgrade of the helicopter rescue fleet.

The work was underway in Canada in December. Leonardo is working with IMP, GE Canada, Collins Aerospace, and CAE, under a contract awarded in late 2022. They are to build three new aircraft in the UK and upgrade the RCAF's remaining, 24 years old, Cormorants, using the Norwegian AW101-612 SAR helicopter as the baseline.

The programme will use a mix of new components and rebuilt/refurbished equipment from both the thirteen existing Cormorants and nine of the discarded VH-71 US Presidential helicopter acquired for spare parts in 2011. The latter were not airworthy, but they do provide control surfaces, transmissions and GE CT7-8E engines to the project.



Some elements from the Norwegian version launched ten years ago (*launch event at Yeovil in May 2006, left*) and will be set aside but other new elements will be acquired where they enhance the original Cormorant including an advanced autopilot and full authority digital engine control, large-screen glass cockpit with moving map display, a terrain avoidance and warning system, synthetic vision, and a significantly improved weather radar. Also new will be the *L3 Harris Wescam EO/IR sensor* and the *Smith Myers Artemis* mobile phone detection system.

The first three aircraft will be produced in Yeovil with an expectation that there will be a first delivery in 2027 and operational capability from 2029. [Leonardo/Smith Myers/SkiesMag]

MALTA

AFM: In December the Armed Forces of Malta (AFM) signed two major procurement contracts aimed at further enhancing the operational capabilities and standardisation of the Air Wing across both rotary and fixed-wing platforms.

In an agreement with Leonardo Helicopters, the AFM will acquire an additional AW139 helicopter, increasing the Air Wing's AW139 fleet to four aircraft. This acquisition forms part of the ongoing standardisation of the helicopter fleet and will significantly strengthen the Force's ability to carry out critical missions, including border control, surveillance, maritime law enforcement, and search and rescue operations. The signing for the additional Leonardo AW139 took place on December 22 and brings the fleet up to four.



A separate contract signing covered the acquisition of an additional Beechcraft King Air surveillance aircraft. Announced on December 17, an order for one King Air 360 was placed via Aerodata AG, which already supports the Mediterranean nation's three-strong fleet of surveillance-role King Air 200 twin-turboprops.

The announcement suggests that these two aircraft will standardise the fleet and see the retirement of the legacy fleet – currently a single Britten-Norman BN2T and one Sud Alouette III.

From mid-January teams operating the AW139 helicopters on behalf of HM Coastguard will be supported by Manston Airport for crew changes, refuelling, and other Search and Rescue (SAR) operational requirements. [Photo River Oak/Manston Airport]



UNITED KINGDOM

COASTGUARD: After disagreements over the cost of operating its aircraft from London Ashford Airport at Lydd in Kent the UK Coastguard withdrew its aircraft and helicopters to other airfields in January.

The airport has hosted government related air services for some years now. The UK Coastguard operation is an element of the multi-faceted Maritime & Coastguard Agency (MCA) contracted to Bristow Helicopters and Border Force has contracted aircraft provided by PAL and drones by Tekever. The current disagreement over airport fees and airport availability appears to affect only the Bristow operations.

Response search and rescue services were operating as usual, according to the MCA but the two Leonardo AW139 helicopters, which had been based at Lydd Airport since 2015, were temporarily operating from the Bristow SAR base at Lee-on-the-Solent, near Portsmouth, nearly 100 miles (161km) away.

HM Coastguard's operator Bristow said it relocated the aircraft after the "suspension of out-of-hours access and the introduction of significant cost increases" at Lydd Airport.

It would appear that the airport was seeking to increase the charges for providing 24/7 airfield services and as part of the negotiations they withdrew the 24/7 access. The airfield said its "core costs" were not covered, "clearly, that's unsustainable". It added that it was "continuing to engage constructively" with Bristow but at some point, the SAR operator decided that its withdrawal of the out of hours access was too much for them.

Bristow said that the suspension of out-of-hours access and the introduction of significant cost increases made SAR services no longer possible from Lydd. On its part Lydd Airport stopped responding to media requests for comment.

After the initial dispersal to accessible airfields Bristow set to rebuilding its core helicopter operation at Manston Airport where they had operated prior to 2015.

Other operations were also withdrawn. The unmanned drone relocated to Dover, and two 2Excel DA62 fixed-wing aircraft contracted to Bristow were stationed in Southend-on-Sea in Essex where 2Excel have a base for an oil spill Boeing 727, all pending a decision on the future basing.

The Lydd Airport operations rely greatly on MCA and Border Force aircraft bases for their 24/7 availability. Driven by the ongoing migrant boat sorties search and rescue teams from Lydd were called out more than 250 times in 2025.

Bristow have been operating its Coastguard search and rescue helicopter service from the airport at Lydd since 2015. They were awarded the 10-year service contract for HM Coastguard in 2013. That has since been extended.

Manston Airport was the site originally chosen as one of ten UK bases for the helicopters, but that plan was scrapped after its closure in 2014. A one-year contract at Lydd was set up and operations have continued there until now. With Manston now set to reopen there is again an alternative to Lydd and it might be expected that River Oak Strategic Partners a UK-registered joint venture company which owns all rights, interests and both financial and operational responsibility for the Development Consent Order in respect of Manston Airport, will have a great interest in building up its customer base after the years of closure. The airport is planning to reopen faced by a project that is currently to cost £750M but endlessly faced with rising costs.

Lydd Airport was set up as Ferryfield in 1954 and originally operated the Silver City car transport to Europe. When that method of taking cars to Europe declines the airport diversified into general aviation, business jets, flight training, filming, and specialist charter operations. In more recent years, it has become a base for government activity, search and rescue, and the development of emerging aviation technologies. www.lyddairport.co.uk

CHANNEL ISLANDS: Channel Islands Air Search (CIAS) was temporarily grounded due to an issue affecting air traffic worldwide. The voluntary service operates a 2019 Britten-Norman BN-2B-20 Islander c/n 2314 using a FAA registration N70AS registered with the US Authorities to Southern Aircraft Consultancy Inc., [SACI] based and operating in the United Kingdom.

As the news broke CIAS told the media that the problem relating to the aircraft's registration provider, had resulted in a decision by the United States Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to ground hundreds of aircraft across the world. They had already initiated the process to transfer its aircraft registration to an alternative provider. Meanwhile CIAS has informed the Guernsey and Jersey coastguards and emergency services they were temporarily unavailable.

On January 13, the FAA informed the CAA that USA (N) registered aircraft that are registered through Southern Aircraft Consultancy Inc (Ltd) using a non-Citizen Trust Agreement (NCT) have been grounded with immediate effect as their Certificate of Registration is considered to be invalid. The lack of a valid Certificate of Registration may have implications on the mandatory insurance that the owners/operators of such aircraft are required to hold.

The FAA announced that it had informed SACI that all aircraft registered through (SACI) aircraft registration certificates are invalid because the company was in violation of US citizenship requirements when it submitted the registration applications.

SACI registered aircraft for U.S. citizens and foreign nationals using trust agreements. To register an aircraft using a trust agreement, the company/trustee must either be a U.S. citizen or a resident alien. The FAA found that SACI violated the FAA regulations relating to citizenship requirements but that may not be specific to the CIAS airframe.

It is said that some 801 aircraft are shown as registered to SACI and therefore liable to immediate grounding pending re-registration with another country. They are all registered to a company operating from a quaint four-bedroom country home in the middle of Norfolk called Glebe Cottage, Cookes Road, Bergh Apton, Norwich, Norfolk NR15 1AA

Channel Islands Air Search was returned to operations on January 21. Updated Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) registration documentation has been received and formally placed on board the aircraft.

INDUSTRY



From the start of this year, all EASP AIR Maritime Patrol Aircraft deployed in Southern European operations for Frontex will feature official **FRONTEx** branding. This step strengthens mission visibility and highlights the close cooperation between Frontex and its aviation partners in safeguarding Europe's external borders.

Effective December 31, 2025, **Air Bear Tactical Aircraft LLC**, based in Santa Ana, California has announced the closure of its operations. Air Bear specialised in airborne surveillance solutions, offering a range of mission-ready fixed-wing aircraft to the market. They marketed the Cessna 206, 208 Caravan and Gippsland Airvan. They have had some successes including selling several Airvan aircraft to the California Highway Patrol, but as this issue of PAN reports they are now being replaced by a fleet of Cessna 208 Caravan's being supplied by another source.



Their primary product on offer in the recent past has been the Diamond DA62 MPP in surveillance mode. Although Air Bear were one of the primary promoters of the aircraft on its US tour of the summer of 2022 there have been no significant sales reported.

When they announced their closure on new Years Day, they made mention of their 14 years of serving the aviation community.

An advertisement banner for FlySight. On the left, the text reads: 'OPENSIGHT' in large white letters, followed by 'EMPOWERING GEOSPATIAL MISSION PERFORMANCE' in smaller white letters. Below that, it says 'Meet FlySight @ BOOTH B9928' and 'VERTICON 2026 MAR 10-12 | Atlanta'. On the right, there is a graphic showing a blue aircraft in flight over a green landscape, with a yellow circle highlighting a specific area on the ground. The FlySight logo is in the bottom right corner.



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There will be a few anniversaries this year, including the 30th year of PAN publication in April. One of them is the arrival of the now familiar SD card in an aviation setting.

Prior to 2006 recordings of voice tracks were on to a large hard drive which needed downloading after each flight, or onto flexible tape which suffered from breakage issues. Someone had just developed a far more resilient detachable wire recorder and it was selling into the industry as the new way and then along came the security industry with what became the familiar SD card to provide a removable record of their CCTV input.

Twenty years ago at the HAI Heli-Expo in Dallas, Texas, (now Verticon) the first air certified machines were making an appearance and that wire recorder solution simply fell by the wayside.

Air Bear may have ceased trading but former veteran California Highway Patrol pilot (over 29 years) and Director of Airborne Law Enforcement/Special Missions with Air Bear for over 11 years, John Nielsen, has now struck out on his own promoting the Diamond DA62 to the US ALE market as **Air Max Patrol** operating out of Reno, Nevada.

He has in his sights ALE units and such as Cal Fire to provide a high level of ISR technology on a modern cost-effective aircraft. He says that the DA62MPP would look fantastic in Cal Fire colours and save the agency millions in annual operating costs when compared to the current fleet which is largely made up of former DoD airframes. To go with the statements, he has issued a suitable artwork. So far it is just a marketing aim.



Airbus Helicopters has been awarded a contract by the Ministry of Defence of Ghana for two H175Ms, one ACH175 and one ACH160. The H175Ms will be used as multi-mission helicopters for transport, search and rescue, emergency medical services and disaster relief. The ACH175 and ACH160 will be operated for transport.

"The commitment from Ghana marks the return of Airbus Helicopters to the country with a defined focus on customer support and partnership," said Arnaud Montalvo, Head of Africa and Middle East Region for Airbus Helicopters. "We are particularly excited that the H175M will be operated in Ghana, demonstrating the aircraft's versatility across defence and security missions."



Bryan Smith, currently a First officer pilot with PSA Airlines flying Bombardier 70-90 seat CRJ 700/900 airliners is best remembered for his law enforcement flying and safety role with ALEA/APSA prior to 2024.

Bryan as a pilot with several Florida based ALE units (Gainesville, Lee County, Seminole County 2014-17 and finally the Chief Pilot and manager of Pinellas County, Tampa Bay until he left in June 2024. He was the Safety Program Manager for ALEA/APSA for over 10 years and a prominent figure at numerous flight safety events including PAVCon Europe in the period.

Having completed his transit from law enforcement to airlines he is again promoting Sentinel Aviation LLC which he set up in 2012 to expand its outreach to deliver training, safety management, and auditing to the industry. Over the last year, he has been developing new courses in CRM, human factors, law enforcement tactics and techniques (TFO/sensor operator training), unit management, and others. He has also expanded the audit programme and SMS resources. A new book will appear later this year.

www.sentinelaviation.org

Trakka Systems announced the latest in a long line of successful integrations on Airbus helicopters with the installation of the class-leading A800 TrakkaBeam searchlight.

Trakka's partnership with Airbus has extended over 15 years, bringing mission-critical capabilities to the skies, this time on the cutting-edge H-160 helicopter for the French Gendarmerie Nationale.



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David Howell, Director

www.ableandrush.com



The addition of H-160 aircraft to the Gendarmerie Nationale fleet brings expanded mission capabilities with the largest helicopter ever operated by this venerable organization.

The TrakkaBeam A800 is a high-intensity searchlight designed to integrate on a wide variety of fixed- and rotor-wing airborne platforms. The multi-mission A800 searchlight delivers powerful tactical illumination with an integrated, easy-to-use, operator-accessible multispectral filter wheel that improves visual acuity and mission effectiveness. The A800 slews at 0-60° per second in elevation or azimuth and can be easily installed on new or existing searchlight mounts.

The most advanced searchlight available for airborne law enforcement, search & rescue, firefighting, and military applications, the A800 delivers the benefits of the world's leading innovation in searchlight technology.

The TrakkaBeam A800's unique Xenon lamp and optical design create a superior beam profile that delivers a more consistent and intense beam when and where it is needed.

The A800 includes an embedded real-time, multi-filter solution. Operators can activate one of up to six different filters with the touch of a button. These filters can provide covert illumination, reduce the glare from fog, snow, or moisture, and enhance the scene's natural colour.

Air Methods has reported that 2025 was one of their busier years. Over 20 aircraft transactions, new fleet agreements that secure the most capable aircraft for both crews and patients, securing the next generation of EMS aircraft in future years and initiatives to refurbish the existing fleet to ensure the availability of the reliable and capable fleet serving the US EMS industry.

[Michael Mitchell Snr Director]



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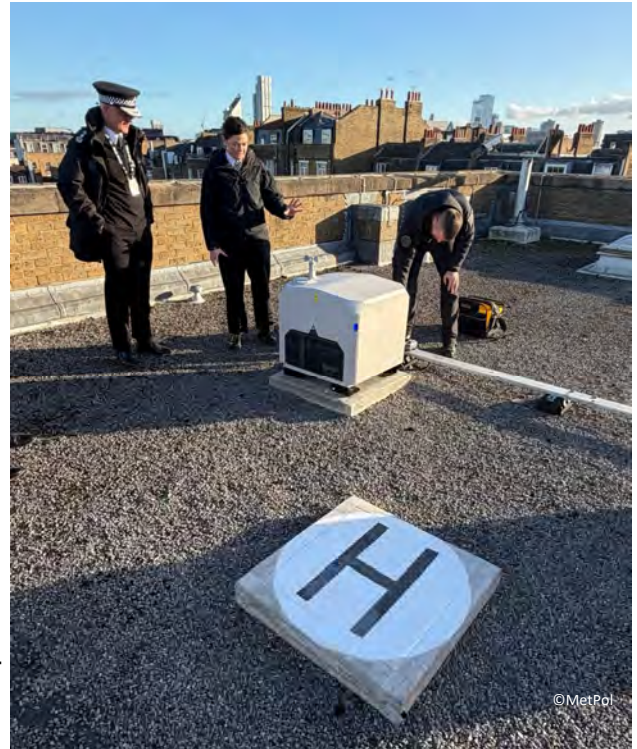
UNMANNED

UK DFR

On the eve of the New Year, Taryn Evans the Strategic Lead for UK policing's BVLOS Pathway Programme posted a message stating that "2025 has been a huge year for Drone as First Responder in UK Policing. We have tested, developed and integrated technology that supports our policing mission whilst demonstrating the highest standards of safety. We are now flying from 16 sites across six police forces every day: searching for suspects or vulnerable people, capturing early evidence and assisting decision-making on what resource is right for the job."

"We have also taken huge strides forward in understanding how longer-range BVLOS drone use can be scaled up across the country: watch this space for more updates!"

"It was a wonderful end to the year to show the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police one of the three sites currently operating in central London and for him to meet the team working on New Year's Eve."



With the new year new drone ownership and use rules have been introduced in the United Kingdom.

Drone pilots must take a theory test on the Civil Aviation Authority's (CAA) website to obtain a Flyer ID if their drone weighs more than 100 grams. The on-line instructions for this are in a 48-page document on the CAA website. Having a camera on the drone requires another document, an operator ID.

This restriction was previously set at 250g, meaning existing pilots flying some of the most popular brands of drones will need to complete the free Flyer ID test.

New drone owners must also register with the CAA for an Operator ID, which identifies an individual as the person responsible for a drone or model aircraft.

Flying a drone without the necessary ID is against the law and is punishable by a fine, or in the most serious cases, can lead to prosecution and prison sentences.

Pilots who own a drone with a camera must also register with the CAA to get an Operator ID, in addition to obtaining a Flyer ID.

Children aged under 13 must obtain a Flyer ID and have a parent or guardian present when they take the theory test.

Children aged under 12 must be supervised by someone aged over 16 to fly drones, with parents also required to obtain an Operator ID. [Nottinghamshire Police]



The proposed **Commercial UAV Forum** in Amsterdam in April has been cancelled. The organisers have decided that the industry is going to be better served by their concentration on the annual event in Las Vegas each September.



The Annual Event



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www.bapco-show.co.uk



The new manufacturing facility for **Tekever** drones at Swindon in the UK is externally complete. Officials of the company made a technical visit to the iconic Spectrum Building last month.

This project is an example of what can be achieved when industry, local government (Swindon Borough Council) and ambition align. The transformation of this Grade II* listed building into a world-class advanced manufacturing hub is no small feat — but it's one that will bring long-term value to Swindon, the UK defence ecosystem and the wider community.



When completed the Spectrum Building will be a centre of excellence for innovation, manufacturing and future capability in the drone industry.

ADVERTISING WITH POLICE AVIATION NEWS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Airbus Helicopters logged 544 gross orders (net: 536) in 2025, highlighting a strong market growth across the civil and military range. The orders came from 205 customers in 50 countries. The Company also saw a strong market momentum for its Uncrewed Aerial Systems (UAS) in 2025. Airbus Helicopters secured a market share of 51% of the civil and parapublic market and its military market share rose to 28%. The Company delivered 392 helicopters in 2025.

As regularly recorded in the pages of PAN in the last year, the light twin segment was robust, with Spain placing an order for 13 H135 helicopters and the UK National Police Air Service ordering seven H135s. With 149 orders, the H145 has once again reaffirmed its position as the best seller on the civil and parapublic and military markets.

Airbus signalled a new chapter in vertical lift at VERTICON 2025 with the unveiling of the H140, a next-generation light twin-engine helicopter. Incorporating techno-bricks like the T-tail configuration, the H140 has already secured 61 firm orders. Innovation also reached new heights with Racer which surpassed its original performance targets to achieve a cruise speed of 440 km/h (240 kts), reaffirming Airbus' ability to deliver speed with a simpler aerodynamically optimised architecture.

As if selling aircraft was not hard enough already, as this issue closed there were moves against the future of **Bell Helicopter** by the US administration.

On January 29 President Trump posted on his Truth Social network and intention to "decertify" all aircraft built in Canada. The US President said it was in retaliation for Canada not yet certifying four Gulfstream aircraft types. It is unclear how many, if any, of these models have been ordered by Canadian buyers, particularly given that there are just 14 Gulfstream 450, 550, 650 and 650ERs on the Canadian register, compared to 120 Challengers and 46 Globals.

Parapex Media have analysed the Canadian-built helicopter fleet. Every Bell 407, 427, 429 and 505 has been built in Canada, along with many 206, 206L, 212 and 412 – a total of 6,266 helicopters to date. Of these, 2,040 are currently on the FAA register with valid N numbers. Trump's post says "we are hereby decertifying their Bombardier Global Expresses, and all Aircraft made in Canada", which would have the potential of grounding these 2,040 Bell helicopters. The actual intended process is unclear.

More detail on the Parapex comment can be found at <https://www.helihub.com/2026/01/30/trump-to-ground-2040-bell-helicopters/>





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ACCIDENTS & INCIDENTS

2 January 2026 Eurocopter EC135P2+ EC-KDA Air ambulance of Sistema d'Emergències Mèdiques (SEM) operated by TAF Helicópters. n Eurocopter EC 135P2+, owned by TAF Helicópters operating for Generalitat de Catalunya, Sistema d'Emergències Mèdiques (SEM), struck electrical wires in Vinebre, Tarragona Province, while attempting to reach a patient. The crew temporarily lost control of the helicopter before recovering and landing safely on a road. Damage to leading edge of the right vertical stabiliser and leading edge of the vertical Fenestron fin [Media/ASN]

11 January 2026 Ayers S2R-T660 Turbo Thrush EC-NNE Fire Fighting aircraft operated by PlySAa on a 2023 contract with Ministerio de Agricultura de Chile. The aircraft was being operated on firefighting flights in the vicinity of La Fortuna Road, Lebu, Chile by Valencia, Spain, company Planificación y Soluciones Aéreas when it crashed injuring the pilot. The aircraft was severely damaged but came down in rough vegetation upright and did not burn. The pilot was taken to Hospital Santa Isabel, Lebu, for medical attention. [Informa Al Minuto/ASN]



17 January 2026 ATR 42-512 PK-THT Surveillance aircraft operated by Indonesia Air for the Marine and Fisheries Resources Surveillance (PSDKP). The aircraft impacted a mountain on approach to Makassar-Sultan Hasanuddin International Airport killing the 10 persons aboard and destroying the aircraft. During the nighttime approach, ATC identified that the aircraft was not on the correct approach path and subsequently instructed the crew to adjust its position. They issued several course instructions, but the aircraft impacted a cliff on Mount Bulusaraung, with debris falling into a ravine below. The ATR was carrying seven crew members and three passengers. [ASN]

17 January 2026 CASA C-212 Aviocar 200M 532. Air ambulance of the Fuerza Aérea Uruguaya, 3 Squadron. experienced a bird strike into one of the engines and aborted the take-off from Artigas Airport in Uruguay. The aircraft was taken out of service for inspection, and the patient was transported by road. [ASN]



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PEOPLE

Kathryn Marsden OBE is to be the new Chief Executive Officer of Yorkshire Air Ambulance from next month.

Kathryn will take up the role from March 9, 2026, joining the charity from the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE), where she is currently CEO. She brings more than 36 years' experience leading health and social care organisations across the UK and was awarded an OBE in the King's New Year Honours 2025 for services to social care.

This appointment comes at a significant time for the charity, following the recent celebration of its 25th anniversary and as it delivers a new long-term clinical strategy, alongside progress on a brand-new Northern airbase in North Yorkshire, due to become operational in late summer 2026.

Yorkshire Air Ambulance Charity (YAA) has today announced the appointment of Kathryn Marsden OBE as its new Chief Executive Officer. Kathryn will take up the position from 9th March 2026.

Kathryn brings over 36 years' experience working and leading social care and health organisations across the UK and will join YAA from the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE), where she is currently CEO. Kathryn was also recognised in the King's New Years Honors list 2025 with an OBE for services to social care.



Other recent changes in the air ambulance charities include:

Cornwall AA	Appointment of Mrs Angela Melissa Novell as a director on 15 October 2025
	Appointment of Mr Bertrand Jean Philippe Francois Louveaux as a director on 5 November 2025
County (HELP)	Appointment of Mrs Meera Dilesh Naran as a director on 1 November 2025
Dorset/Somerset	Appointment of Ms Tracey Anne Killen as a director on 14 September 2021
East Anglia AA	Appointment of Mrs Eilish Elizabeth Ann Midlane as a director on 16 December 2025
Essex/Herts AA	Termination of appointment of Ellisa Estrin as a director on 20 November 2025
Magpas AA	Termination of appointment of Mary Read as a director on 29 October 2025
Midlands AA	Termination of appointment of Anna Victoria Cross as a director on 4 November 2025
TAAS	Termination of appointment of Roma Grant as a director on 14 November 2025
	Termination of appointment of Timothy Sean Boxell as a director on 2 December 2025
Welsh AA	Termination of appointment of James Wagstaffe as a director on 13 November 2025
	Termination of appointment of Owain Spencer Davies as a director on 2 December 2025
Wiltshire/Bath AA	Termination of appointment of Rachael Karen Judy Lawes as a director on 19 November 2025

[Source Companies House]



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HISTORY 3

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

The October and the January editions of Police Aviation News included reports about the history of police aviation, with aeroplanes, in the UK. Starting with the deHavilland DH60 biplane, a two-seat training aircraft, the then Reigate Borough Police in Surrey formed an aeroplane unit in 1935. Pilots were recruited from the local flying club at Redhill and were then sworn in as special constables, before flying for the police, with regular officers crewing the aircraft as police air observers.

In the following years the UK police gained experience with a number of different aeroplanes, the DHC1 Chipmunk, flown by RAF pilots, Cessna's, singles and twins, the futuristic, although disappointing Edgley Optica, flown by Hampshire Police, and the iconic BN Islander, both the standard, 10-seat variant and the larger, 'stretched' BN Defender 4000. The latter two aircraft types, BN Islander and BN Defender, are currently flown by the Police Service of Northern Ireland.



At the turn of the century there were some 30 police air support units in England and Wales. Most had helicopters, some had both an aeroplane and a helicopter and two, Cheshire Constabulary and Hampshire Constabulary each operated a single aeroplane, the ubiquitous BN Islander.

NATIONAL POLICE AIR SERVICE

The National Police Air Service, for England and Wales, was formed in 2012, originally with 23 bases. However, in 2015, it was announced that in 2016-2017 the number of bases would be reduced to the current 15 bases with a fleet of 19 helicopters, Airbus H135 and H145 and 4 Vulcanair P68R aeroplanes. All 4 aeroplanes are based at East Midlands Airport. At the time, in 2015, it was agreed that all 15 bases would be 24/7, 365 days a year. This optimal availability is no longer the case. Of the 15 bases, 5 are still 24/7, 4 are 20/7 and 6, including the aeroplane base, are just 12/7. The latter bases generally operate for 12 hours from midday to midnight.



There are fifteen NPAS bases in England Wales, including the base at Lippitts Hill in London. All NPAS aeroplanes, the Vulcanair P68R, are based centrally at East Midlands Airport.

NPAS

The NPAS aeroplane base is at East Midlands Airport, southwest of Nottingham. All 4 aircraft, the Vulcanair P68R, are at the same location. This unit has an establishment of a base manager, 5 pilots and 6 tactical flight officers (TFOs) who work 12-hour shifts. Theoretically, there are sufficient numbers of pilots and TFOs, to operate 2 aircraft with one in reserve and the fourth aircraft in maintenance.

VULCANAIR P68R

In 2014 NPAS invited the aviation industry to tender for a fixed-wing aircraft, an aeroplane for police duties. The specification required an aeroplane with two piston engines, certified for flying day and night with a single pilot, operating under visual and instrument flight rules. Also, capable of flying in known icing conditions, although this requirement was deferred to a later date. A further requirement was to be capable of a minimum of 3 hours endurance with 3 crew each weighing 100kg (220lbs). Also, capable of flying with 2 pilots and 2 TFOs for training, at one extreme, and operating with just the pilot and one TFO when flying police air support missions. The specification, a mandatory requirement, also stipulated a high wing with retractable landing gear. This specification pointed towards the Vulcanair P68R with retractable landing gear.

At the time the Vulcanair P68 Observer, with a glazed nose and fixed landing gear was, and still is, a popular light observation aircraft flown by the Italian National Police, the Polizia di Stato, and with the French Police Nationale.

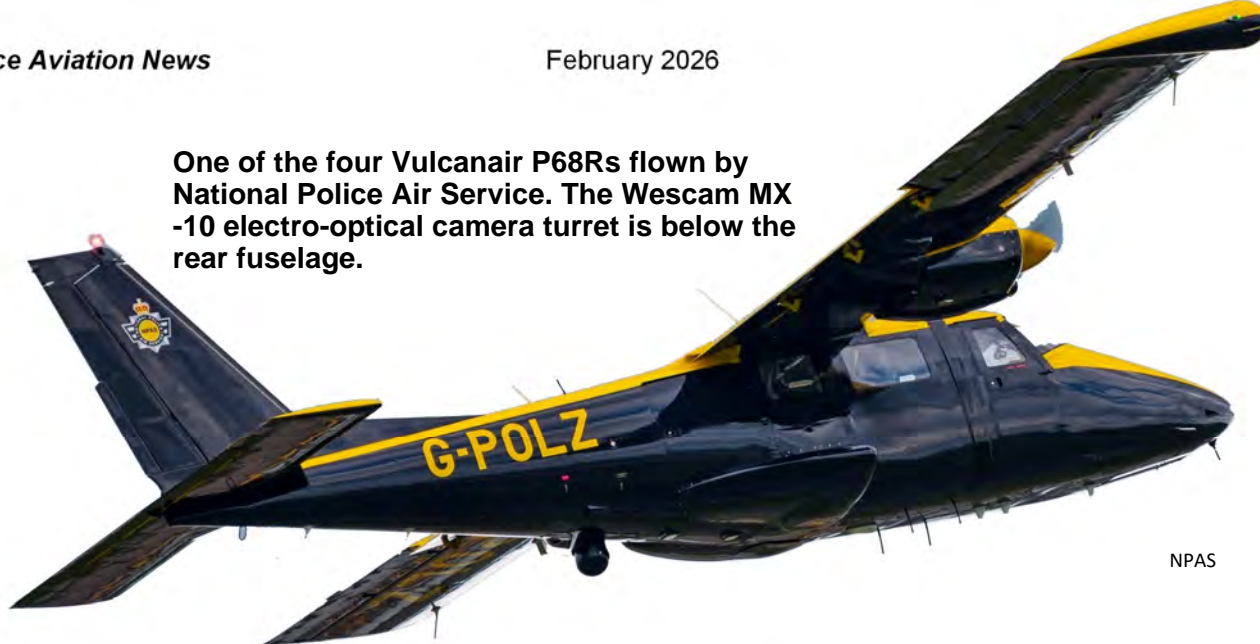


The Vulcanair P68, with its glazed nose, is a popular light observation aircraft, flown by the Polizia di Stato and the French Police Nationale.

Police Nationale

Although it's unclear as to why NPAS insisted on a retractable landing gear, which adds weight for a marginal increase in cruising speed, it is worth reviewing the performance figures. First, the basic weight of each of the 4 NPAS aircraft, with police role equipment, is, on average, 3,518lbs. The fuel tanks hold 142 USG, 852lbs of Avgas. With a maximum take-off weight (MTOW) of 4,548lbs, with full fuel tanks, this leaves just 178lbs available, for the pilot flying the aircraft!

One of the four Vulcanair P68Rs flown by National Police Air Service. The Wescam MX-10 electro-optical camera turret is below the rear fuselage.



NPAS

Can the P68R meet the NPAS specification of 3 hours endurance carrying 3 crew, each weighing 220lbs? Yes, it can. The basic weight plus 660lbs equals 4,178lbs which, with the MTOW of 4,548lbs, leaves 370lbs for Avgas, or 60 USG. With a fuel consumption of 20 USG per hour, 3 hours flight endurance is possible. With a crew of 2 the fuel load may be increased. At cruising speed, 55% power, the fuel consumption is reduced around 16 USG per hour with a flight endurance close to 6 hours. With 2 crew, the pilot and the TFO, each weighing 220 lbs, the maximum fuel load, for MTOW, is 590 lbs, or 98 USG.

A complication is that the P68R has a maximum landing weight (MLW) of 4,321lbs. Therefore, without the provision to dump fuel and at the MTOW of 4,548lbs the weight must reduce by 227lbs, or 38 USG of fuel, around 2 hours flight time, before landing! A further complication, with all 4 aircraft at one, central base is that it takes time and fuel to travel to a distant incident. With a fast transit, together with a commensurate increase in fuel flow, there's still no guarantee that the aircraft will arrive in time to be of assistance to those officers requesting air support. There is a strong argument to move 2 of these aircraft to permanent forward operating bases whilst retaining the engineering base at East Midlands Airport. The map shows large areas in England, in the north and in the east, without any immediately available air support. Moreover, when it comes to weight and balance calculations this is an aircraft which, in the police air support role, requires a very numerate pilot!"



The workstation, in the cabin of the NPAS Vulcanair P68R. The 'office' for the tactical flight officer. One TFO crewing the aircraft with one pilot.

Airborne Technologies



In the day, my own 'office' was the flight deck of an RAF Nimrod MR2P, 'The Mighty Hunter' see note below.....

CONCLUSION

Police air support in the UK has come full circle in 90 years although the police aeroplanes are now based at East Midlands Airport, rather than at Redhill in Surrey. The aeroplanes are still crewed by 2, a pilot and an observer, although the role equipment, electro-optical camera turret, synthetic vision and weather radar, together with an integrated mapping system is well beyond the equipment, a pair of binoculars (?), carried by the crew of the 2-seat biplanes of yesteryear. (See NPAS, G-POLZ walkaround on YouTube).

Interestingly, the Danish Home Guard who, at one time, operated the ubiquitous BN Islander, have now taken delivery of 2, somewhat larger, fully customised deHavilland DHC-3-600 surveillance aircraft which, like the BN Islander, has a high wing and fixed landing gear. These aircraft have been customised by Airborne Technologies in Austria. This multi-role aircraft will be used for defence and police air support duties, together with maritime patrol and search and rescue. A third aircraft is on order.



The Danish Home Guard have taking delivery of 2 DHC-3-600 surveillance aircraft for defence and police air support duties.

Airborne Technologies

James A Cowan MBE

The author is a former member of the Royal Air Force and a former police and air ambulance pilot. And it is worth noting that a little bit of his personal history is in the news right now. Potentially....

A BIGGER STORY STILL...

As ever there is a bit of aviation history looking for a caring new home. Recent news that Coventry Airport is for the chopping block has placed several preserved airframes in danger. One of these is the former RAF Hawker Siddeley Nimrod MR2P XV232 maritime recce aircraft.

This former sub hunter and SAR aircraft has its own bit of history in that it undertook the record-breaking flight to the Falkland Islands in 1982 thanks to being fitted with a 'war duties' inflight refuelling probe.

In the almost forgotten but, nevertheless, decisive war nearly 44 years ago, in May 1982, a Nimrod, XV232, flown by No.201 Squadron, Crew 7, took off from Wideawake airfield on Ascension Island and flew south towards the Falkland Islands and Argentina. One of the pilots, the captain of the aircraft, was Tony Cowan. The mission required multiple air to air refuelling linkups by Victor tankers, before the aircraft flew a radar sweep the length of the coast of Argentina to confirm that the Argentine fleet remained in port. Seeking out any warships, or submarines that could threaten the British fleet, including the troop ships, Queen Elizabeth II and Canberra. The Nimrod crew were credited with the longest operational sortie by an aircraft of the Royal Air Force, 19 hours and 5 minutes, a record that has not been broken to this day."

The same month XV232 returned to the UK briefly and was fitted with four Sidewinder air-to-air missiles, 2 under each wing, using the hard points that had been used to trial the Martel, wire guided, anti-ship missile – resulting in the Nimrod aircraft earning the title of being "the world's largest jet fighter" in various national newspapers of the day! Other Nimrods were later converted to carry Sidewinders (intended mostly to counter Argentine Boeing 707 sea patrols) but they were never fired in anger during the war.

XV232 made her final flight into Coventry Airport in May 2010 and has been well looked after by a team of dedicated volunteers ever since. The *Nimrod Preservation Group* has kept the aircraft in a runnable state and in great shape internally. In October 2025 for the group and all other airport tenants were told to cease all operations and vacate the airport site by May 2026.



What may be considered as the 'final' engine run of the aircraft in January showed it to be in extremely good condition and hopefully destined for preservation on a new site. Manston, in the news itself this month for other reasons, seems likely – all they need do is get it there. A daunting prospect in the timeframe they have - it has been a long time since any Nimrod has graced the skies. The aircraft has now been dragged off the grass it once inhabited and now awaits a survey to see if it can make one last flight to another place for preservation.





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1 April 2026 30 years of PAN

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

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

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

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