

Police Aviation News



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PAN Reports from:

Helitech Portugal

Aerial Emergency Response

Helishow Dubai

AERIAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia 27 - 28 October 2010

A tentative initial event by Tangent Link seems to have ticked all the boxes for most of the attendees. AER was held in the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia [bottom image]. The two day city centre Conference & Exhibition focussed on the technology utilised when aerial assets respond to natural disasters and emergencies.

Right up to the last few days the confirmed Key Note Speaker was SAC Dato' Chuah Ghee Lye, Commander, Royal Malaysia Police [RMP] Air Unit but developments got the better of that. He was promoted away from air support and replaced – very much at the last minute - by a colleague from the air unit, Superintendent S Sathiya Seeland SAP KMN PPP PPB [right]. He coped very well and added his own flavour to what was effectively his bosses words. Congratulations then are due to both of them.

Effectively the event opened with the keynote address highlighting the December 2004 tsunami that killed 230,000. Someone up there arranged for a new tsunami to strike nearby Indonesia the night before, fortunately fewer than 500 were reported to have died this time, and equally fortunately it did not empty the room of professional rescuer visitors [as it might easily have done]. Just to add to the emergency a volcano erupted in the same region.

Tangent Link, believe the latest high profile disasters in Pakistan, India, China and Europe have made this year's conference all the more relevant. They are confident that this will lead to greater participation in future events but were successful enough on this the first in attracting around 100 delegates drawn from the RMP, Malaysian Maritime Emergency Agency (MMEA), Indian Coastguard, Shanghai Aviation Police, Japanese Coastguard, The Malaysian Bomba, China Rescue & Salvage Bureau and the Indonesian Search & Rescue Agency. Simply contacting the potential attendees in a manner preferred by them rather than the organisers was a major lesson learned.

Steering and coaxing the speakers over the two days was Chairman Lee Benson, former Chief Pilot of LA County Fire and a regular in the speaking circuit these days. Often his primary task seemed to be ensuring that the speakers were questioned after their presentation – not a particularly easy task at times when most present were struggling with other than their first language. Aside from the Keynote Address, policing related presentations were given by such as Bruce Thomas, Victoria Police, and the pretty much new kid on the block the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency. Much of the rest of the non-commercial pro-





programme was about rescue and training of all kinds. The seal of approval on conferences such as this relates pretty much to the final hours. Although it was not full to the end – many had attended a single day of their choice only – there was a significant presence in the hall. That is a strong sign of satisfaction with the product.

A small supporting exhibition drew a number of Southern Hemisphere representatives of AgustaWestland, Becker Helicopters, Bombardier, Breeze Eastern, Erickson Air-crane, Eurocopter, Flightcell, Imarsat Services, ShinMaywa, SRT Helicopters, Technical Rescue and TrakkaCorp. The latter was present but also represented by Alan Fairclough of Aero Avia who also represents the interests of Skyquest, Sonix and Curtiss Wright locally.

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TrakkaCorp appear to be going from strength to strength. It has been a long haul since the early units appeared on show at such as Helitech Duxford in a substantial sensor ball style mount. At the time this publication raised the question of whether this was indeed a new dawn. It looks as if it is. The eventual change to the far sleeker design that looks to have origins in theatre land and certification turned the corner for the development team. Their competitors bulky designs are still not certified, and they do not appear inclined to tackle the question of enhanced product testing. Meanwhile Thommen is taking that route with the introduction of a fully certified conventional design.

The Trakka can be carried at higher speeds which brings it into the wholly new fixed wing arena. I recall all of those feeble attempts to provide fixed wing police aircraft in the UK with a viable moveable searchlight and the answer was always a less than ideal torch/flashlight handheld with nowhere near enough output and a farcical need to poke the device out of the sliding window.

Just as the answer hits the market UK fixed wing policing is reduced to the one Defender airframe based in Greater Manchester. No matter how sleek they are though these things cause drag and tend to be taken off the aircraft in daylight. In South Africa a fixed wing aircraft is flying with a retractable belly mounted Trakka. The light unit operates at cool enough temperature to do that, there is no way any conventional searchlight could be flipped up inside shortly after use.

The operator will be the final arbiter of whether conventional or Trakka is best but the long history of dissatisfaction with blistering hot bulbs that act as paint stripper is just one aspect to be considered by the users. In the end the product has to adequately light the scene in conventional as well as IR light and be economical and easy to maintain; certification is a plus that for all too long the opposition has not sought to address - but it is not a prerequisite and it is potentially expensive.

It has long been known that certain US Homeland Security operators have been using Trakka but the manufacturer has been unable to advertise the fact, let alone release images of them. As that substantial fleet gets larger more images are getting into the public domain by other means – and it is clear that even more US Government departments are buying into the new technology in preference to the old.

Over in Europe there are still only a handful of units, only one police helicopter in the UK but my understanding is that low presence situation itself may be short lived and that the new need for night time air ambulances will see Trakka units shifting to HEMS work in the not too distant future. Meanwhile on the mainland of Europe there are stirrings that will see the start of Trakka on police helicopters there too.



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Flightcell are a New Zealand company intent on spreading its wings across the rest of the globe. So far they have done quite well in their aim.

The prime product they are bringing to market at the moment is the Flightcell DZM3 an aviation satellite communications suite that offers voice communications, data and GPS tracking in a single neat unit. It also offers an optional cellular phone modem, thereby allowing the unit to choose the cheaper option to make that call if there is a terrestrial signal. The unit is linked into the Iridium satellite system and effectively allows the user to call any telephone in the world by 'direct dialling' rather than using third party connections and can guarantee a signal most of the time. The stated exceptions are if the helicopter is perhaps in a deep canyon out of line of sight from a satellite – but other than that it is any desert, mountain or over the sea. To further enhance the capability they offer the broadly similar DZM2 which includes a handset that can be taken off the aircraft to incidents.

The GPS tracking function, although 'Big Brother' in some ways, does offer a measure of crew safety in that others can track where the DZM was last visible – perhaps before it descended into that deep canyon with engine failure.

Naturally the company can show plenty of interest for their equipment in the southern oceans with units sold to the Western Australia Police. More important to company growth is the acceptance of the unit by a number of US Government departments for a range of nine military aircraft types. In the police field both the Massachusetts State Police and the Texas Department of Public Safety have aircraft already equipped and another user with a large fleet of AS350s in California will soon be equipped.

Erickson Air-Crane is in their area of expertise in this region. Primarily there for heavy lift and fire suppression [their fleet in Australia looks set to grow this season]. While they are looking to widen their core market they are also addressing their own take on that long standing 'hot potato' of rescuing lots of people in one go [from burning things – high rises or ships].

The product takes the more familiar basket rescue systems and multiplies the content in keeping with the capabilities of their S-64s. The USCG can snatch a couple of bodies in their Billy Pugh's, the Israeli's [and Bell for a while], special rescue cars for 2-3, others can offer cages with a capacity of a perhaps a dozen, but the S-64 is a real lifter and they are talking 30 or so.

AIRS, the Aircrane Incident Response System, is not just about baskets full of rescued humanity. It is more about moving all types of equipment around a disaster area, bags, boxes, living units - and of course the utility baskets.

The S-64 outperforms most of the alternatives in the market and there are only a limited number of airframes to work with [around 90 built] so any heavy lift plans intent on placing resources around the world for potential use is finite. Erickson have the type certificate but no-one is yet looking at building new.

The lifesaving aspect is attractive but it does still face the ultimate problem in that if you present a 30 person escape system to 200 people on top of a burning building [or ship etc] there will be no orderly queue. They are already looking at modifying their utility design to





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something like a 'teardrop' that may just be a shape that would repel the unwelcome 31st passenger and his multitude of friends but it remains a difficult call.

You may need to place 30 policemen with guns in harms way to control an orderly loading procedure. That may be alright if there is no real rush to depart the structure but we all saw what happened oh so suddenly to the twin towers in New York so nothing is guaranteed. Who makes that call?

Representing SRT Helicopters of Bakersfield, California, Chris Gadbois and his team were in town, Chris to talk to the audience and each of them to seek new customers at their booth. The product is training and that is kept shiny, up to date and current by each of the team members having either of both an existing law enforcement or fire fighting capability – or both.

Chris has a 30 year passion for work in the emergency services and aviation. Having started his career as an explorer with the Los Angeles County Fire Department, his experience includes over 20 years in the US Army with various assignments in Special Ops and aviation. He is a commercial pilot, paramedic and rescue specialist but specialises in rescue and instructs in Swift Water, Dive and Heavy Rescue for the California State Fire Marshall's Office. In addition he owns SRT which trains others in a range of skills worldwide after being able to cite impressive presences at the World Trade Center, as well as various tsunami's, hurricanes, earthquakes and floods. Fortunately mainly in the post event rescues. With all of this background his first love remains locked into CalFire. If something is burning in the State of California that is where he is likely to be.

SRT have some important customers in the Asian region and naturally are seeking more; putting their message out at selected trade shows is getting to be a way of life – although from time to time fire fighting and natural disaster do get in the way.

Kuala Lumpur worked fine but Dubai was to be a disappointment. He was scheduled to speak at the 'Military & Homeland Security' conference there – as he did in 2008 – but at the last moment [actually at the Helitech Portugal event so uncomfortably close to the event] the designated organisers, the Shephard Group pulled the plug. Not a very good start for the Dubai Helishow.

To underline the comments made earlier about the 'poor' quality of the Helitech event in Portugal, this conference and exhibition seems to have ticked all the boxes with the attendees and there was not an aircraft in sight.



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