



Alex flies with the green ShelterBox attached to the front of the trike at Ordis Aerodrome, Spain

# Paramotor first response

Paramotor pilots could play a vital role in helping to deliver aid in future disaster relief operations.

BY Dan Tye

**W**E'VE had our fair share of natural disasters already in 2010. First there was the earthquake in Haiti, then the flooding in Peru then in Madeira. In all three cases, the use of aircraft, be it for flying in supplies or lifting people out with helicopters, has been key to the rescue efforts. But there's one form of flying which may well play a bigger part in future humanitarian crises – the paramotor.

It's the idea of SkySchool director, Alex Ledger to create a First Response Paramotor Team capable of mobilising within 48 hours to assist aid agencies and crisis support organisations.

Alex, 26, has already supported the Scientific Exploration Society to search for a remote meteorite crater in Bolivia using a paramotor and SkySchool's associate company, Parajet, also manufactured the paramotor which was flown over the height of Mount Everest in the Himalayas by Gilo Cardozo and Bear Grylls. Alex has continued to develop the practical application of paramotors ever since and says, "We've already used them to do aerial filming and photography for rally car teams, gas pipeline inspections and TV production companies."

But this latest idea, to use paramotors and also paratrikes on tasks that currently require helicopters, has caught the interest of a number of agencies including ShelterBox, a disaster relief charity that delivers emergency supplies in a simple green box.



PHOTO: ShelterBox/Mark Pearson

ShelterBoxes are currently delivered by all kinds of methods.

The main photo here shows Alex flying with the box for the very first time. For now, it's secured with a ratchet strap but in time he hopes to manufacture a more formal attachment method. He said, "With only the box in the place of a passenger, the paratrike flies a little slower than usual as I do not have the extra weight of a person which increases the airspeed of the wing. Apart from that it worked very well."

Ben Spurway at ShelterBox says the company is watching Alex's developments with huge interest. "We're always trying to improve the way we deliver aid and have an inherent passion, which stems from our Founder Tom Henderson, in research and development," he says. "Our aim is to do the most for the most and to respond to disasters as quickly as possible. Alex's idea could potentially help us deliver aid to places that'd be impossible to reach otherwise."

Paramotors are already being put to use by the Palm Bay Police department in Florida and Alex is now approaching aid agencies with the hope his team can be of assistance in the future. He says, "Due to a paramotor's manoeuvrability, the pilot's unobstructed view of the surroundings and the ability to fly less than 30 mph, it's an ideal aerial platform to observe large areas efficiently. I'm confident that paramotor pilots can make a real difference." ■ [www.skyschooluk.com](http://www.skyschooluk.com)



Alex Ledger hopes that disaster relief agencies will see the value in using paramotors.