



PRESS RELEASE
For immediate release

FAI Awards Ceremony 2025: honouring the outstanding contributions and commitment in air sports

Vantaa, Finland, 23 October 2025 – **Individuals and groups who have shown outstanding passion and dedication in air sports were recognised for their contribution by FAI, the World Air Sports Federation, at a celebratory Awards Ceremony last night (22 Oct) in Vantaa, Finland.**

The annual FAI Awards Ceremony is a **highlight of the air sports calendar**, in which the contributions made by athletes, aviators, innovators and experts from around the globe are recognised with FAI diplomas and medals.

As every year, the inspirational ceremony marked the **beginning of the FAI General Conference**, this year being held in Vantaa, Finland and hosted by the Finnish Aeronautical Association.

From the long list of recipients this year come stories from around the globe, **spanning the spectrum of FAI air sports from gliding to drone racing, skydiving to astronautics**. Preservation of aeronautical heritage, long-standing commitment to air sports leadership, world record breaking feats, and boundary-pushing innovations all received recognition.

FAI President Greg Principato praised all the 2025 awardees, saying, *"Each and every individual and team recognised with an FAI award this year deserves their moment in the spotlight. **Your passion, commitment and hard work is inspirational to behold, and shows future generations that air sports have a long and thriving future.**"*

Janne Vasama, the President of the Finnish Aeronautical Association, said: *"The FAI awards represent the **highest international recognition in aviation**. They are not merely a testament to success; they are proof of boundless human determination and an unwavering passion for flight. Your accomplishments inspire all of us and drive the various air sports forward. You are role models for the younger generation who look up and dream of their own wings."*

Thirteen awardees travelled to Finland to receive their awards from Greg Principato and Janne Vasama:

FAI Silver Medal:

- Mark Sullivan (USA)
For his long-standing leadership in FAI ballooning, his pioneering achievements in hot air and gas balloon competitions, including founding the America's Challenge Gas Balloon Race, and his record-setting dedication to flight worldwide.

Paul Tissandier Diplomas

- Pasi Pirttikoski (Finland)
For his long-standing service to the FAI Skydiving Commission, including leadership of the ISC Canopy Formation Committee since 2006 and representation of Finland as deputy and full delegate.
- Tom Arppe (Finland)
For his decades of efforts and contribution to enhancing information on Finland's uncontrolled and light airfields and supporting recreational and general aviation for pilots nationwide.

- Guido Guidi (Italy)
For his role in developing aeronautical sport in Italy, his transoceanic flight experience, and his commitment to aviation safety and governance.
- Sandro Gargini (Italy)
For his exceptional career in parachuting and aviation, his role as an international judge and instructor, and his leadership of major FAI events and aeronautical commissions.
- Khalid Alkalbani (Oman)
For his passion and commitment to aviation in Oman, founding the Al Dhahirah Team, training youth, and serving as mentor and international representative.
- Kjell Dalsheim (Sweden)
For his long-term chairmanship of Vasterdalarnas Flygklubb, achievements in gliding and model flying, and contribution to promoting air sports in Sweden.
- Andy Hunziker (Switzerland)
For his decades of promoting ballooning in Switzerland, his national and European titles, pilot training, Alpine records, and creation of the world's largest hot air balloon.

FAI Group Diploma of Honour:

- Athens Aeroclub (Greece)
For providing continuous aviation training since 1929, supporting professional careers, engaging in community service, and maintaining operations from Tatoi Air Base, despite wartime destruction and post-war reorganisation.

Andrei Tupolev Aeromodelling Diploma:

- Joze Cuden (Slovenia)
For multiple World and European Championship victories, over 20 medals, technical innovations, mentoring champions, strengthening national teams, and contributing to international space modelling governance and competition development.

David Faulkner Bryant Diploma:

- Michel Pallier (France)
For building a Hatz CB1 aircraft over 22 years, completing 13,000 hours of work, achieving first flight in 2008, earning Certificate of Airworthiness, and receiving Best Workmanship recognition at the 2024 Euro Fly-In.

Phoenix Group Diploma:

- Metodej Vlach Foundation (Czechia)
For the faithful reconstruction of the Sopwith Triplane, demonstrating exceptional craftsmanship, technical precision, and enduring commitment to preserving and showcasing historic aviation heritage.

Dr. Peter Saundby Diploma:

- J. Anunano Melchor (USA)
For advancing flight safety, pilot health, and sport aviation performance through global leadership, research, and education in aerospace medicine, with lasting contributions to aviation standards, human performance, and international cooperation.

Other major FAI awards

FAI Gold Air Medal

- Oleksandr Halunenko (UKR)
For his exceptional achievement of 263 world records, his leadership as President of the Federation of Aeronautical Sports of Ukraine, his contributions to the General Designer and his outstanding test flights of legendary Antonov aircrafts.

FAI Bronze Medal

- Jia Bing (CHN)
For his longstanding leadership of the Aero Sports Federation of China, guiding the successful delivery of major FAI events, and advancing drone racing, drone soccer, and international air sports.

Sabiha Gökçen Medal

- Luisa Rizzo (ITA)
For her historic World Championship triumph in drone racing, her pioneering role as Italy's first female national team pilot, and her pioneering spirit as an inspiring role model for the next generation.

Editor's note

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About FAI

FAI, the World Air Sports Federation, is the world governing body for air sports and for certifying world aviation and space records. The FAI was founded in 1905 and is a non-governmental and non-profit-making organisation recognised by the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

FAI activities include Aerobatics, Aeromodelling, Airships, Amateur-Built and Experimental Aircraft, Balloons, Drones, Gliding, Hang Gliding, Helicopters, Manpowered Flying, Microlights, Parachuting, Paragliding, Paramotors, Power Flying and all other Aeronautic activities and Space records.

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