

Press Release

Zephyr S set to break aircraft world endurance record



Farnborough, 25 July 2018 – Zephyr S, Airbus’ High-Altitude-Pseudo-Satellite, has surpassed the current flight endurance record of an aircraft without refueling of 14 days, 22 minutes and 8 seconds and continues to pioneer the stratosphere.

The Zephyr aircraft departed for its maiden flight from Arizona, USA on 11th July 2018.

This first flight of the Zephyr S aims to prove and demonstrate the aircraft capabilities, with the final endurance record to be confirmed on landing.

About the Airbus Zephyr Programme:

The original target mission of the Zephyr is to provide local persistence at an affordable price with a re-usable solar-powered aircraft, providing a wide scope of applications, ranging for example from maritime surveillance and services, border patrol missions, communications, forest fire detection and monitoring, or navigation. Operating in the stratosphere at an average altitude of 70,000 feet / 21 kilometers, the ultra-lightweight Zephyr has a wingspan of 25 meters and a weight of less than 75kg, and flies above weather (clouds, jet streams) and above regular air traffic, covering local or regional footprints.

Press Release

Ideally suited for "local persistence" (ISR/Intelligence, Surveillance & Reconnaissance), the Zephyr has the ability to stay focused on a specific area of interest (which can be hundreds of miles wide) while providing it with satellite-like communications and Earth observation services (with greater imagery granularity) over long periods of time without interruption. Not quite an aircraft and not quite a satellite, but incorporating aspects of both, the Zephyr has the persistence of a satellite with the flexibility of a UAV. The only civil aircraft that used to fly at this altitude was Concorde and only the famous military U2 and SR-71 Blackbird could operate at similar levels. The Zephyr successfully achieved several world records, including the longest flight duration without refueling.

About Airbus

Airbus is a global leader in aeronautics, space and related services. In 2017 it generated revenues of € 59 billion restated for IFRS 15 and employed a workforce of around 129,000. Airbus offers the most comprehensive range of passenger airliners from 100 to more than 600 seats. Airbus is also a European leader providing tanker, combat, transport and mission aircraft, as well as one of the world's leading space companies. In helicopters, Airbus provides the most efficient civil and military rotorcraft solutions worldwide.

Media contact

Florian Taitsch / +49 151 16 83 10 52 / florian.taitsch@airbus.com