



Airbus Group CEO joins Perlan II stratospheric glider team as pressurized test flights begin

MINDEN, Nevada – March 7, 2016 – Airbus Group CEO Tom Enders worked alongside the all-volunteer flight test team for Airbus Perlan Mission II this weekend, as the program achieved a historic milestone with the start of pressurized flights. The Perlan 2 glider is designed to soar on wind currents to 90,000 feet as it researches high-altitude flight, climate change and the potential for wing-borne travel on Mars.

“It was a pleasure to meet with the devoted innovators behind a scientific mission that will break the world altitude record for level, controlled flight,” Enders said. “This project began as the inspiration of a small group of talented volunteers, and has evolved into one of the boldest endeavors in modern aviation. We’re proud to support a program that so perfectly embodies the pioneering spirit of Airbus.”

Enders received a detailed briefing on the custom-built glider and its systems from Airbus Perlan Mission II chief pilot Jim Payne in the program’s home hangar in Minden, Nevada. Perlan 2 relies on mountain waves – updrafts generated by winds crossing mountain ranges – to carry it aloft. To reach the record-breaking altitudes necessary for its research program, however, the team will deploy later this year to a region in Argentina where mountain waves fed by the polar vortex travel all the way to the stratosphere.

The test flight program took a significant leap forward last week with a successful first pressurized flight, validating the system that will keep the crew alive in atmospheric conditions similar to those on Mars.

Enders joined Payne inside the pressurized aircraft for ground testing of its life-sustaining systems, though adverse weather conditions during his visit prevented the two from making a test flight.

Although the air density at 90,000 feet is just two percent the density at sea level, the pressurization system will maintain a cabin altitude of 15,000 feet. The system allows pilots to safely operate without wearing the bulky pressure suits that hampered previous efforts to soar to the stratosphere in the unpressurized Perlan 1 glider. The crew of Perlan 2 breathes 100 percent oxygen from a rebreather system similar to what astronauts use in space.

“This aircraft will fly in a region of our atmosphere where no other aircraft has operated for sustained periods, and in doing so it will change our fundamental understanding of how our atmosphere works,” Enders said. “But we also hope it will change people’s thinking about what is possible, and inspire a new generation of aerospace pioneers to push beyond their limits.”

Interested observers can track the progress of the Airbus Perlan Mission II flight test program via Twitter @PerlanProject.

For a video, images and other press kit materials, visit www.airbusgroup.com/Perlan.

About Airbus Group

Airbus Group is a global leader in aeronautics, space and related services. In 2015, the Group – comprising Airbus, Airbus Defence and Space and Airbus Helicopters – generated revenues of € 64.5 billion and employed a workforce of around 136,600.

About Airbus Perlan Mission II

Airbus Perlan Mission II is an initiative to fly an engineless glider to the edge of space, higher than any other winged aircraft has operated in level, controlled flight, to open up a world of new discoveries related to high-altitude flight, climate change and space exploration. This historic endeavor is the culmination of decades of research and engineering innovation, and the work of a tireless international team of aviators and scientists who volunteer their time and expertise for the non-profit [Perlan Project](#). The project is supported by Airbus Group and a group of other sponsors that includes [Weather Extreme Ltd.](#), [United Technologies](#) and [BRS Aerospace](#). [For more information go to www.perlanproject.org; for press kit and visuals go to www.airbusgroup.com/Perlan.](#)

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