

Press Release

Successful first tests for Airbus new 'delivery by drone' initiative in northern France

- Successful first tests demonstrate the viability of this innovative project.
- Target is the short term launch of operational cargo drone fleets.
- French and European air safety regulatory authorities part of the project.

Cambrai, 7 November 2019 – A multi drone combined flight tracked by a fleet management station was successfully tested at the E-Valley Park, on the site of the former Cambrai airbase in northern France as part of the test campaign phase to assess economic development of drone air deliveries respecting a given route. A fixed-wing Survey Copter DVF200ER thermal propulsion high endurance versatile system, and a Drone Volt VTOL (Vertical Take Off and Landing) electric mini drone specifically equipped with Airbus avionics, both successfully demonstrated via the simulation of a delivery mission, the feasibility of such logistic flights.

Airbus and the Hauts-de-France Region via its innovation and development agency (HDFID) joined forces in June this year under a framework agreement to assess the economic development potential of air deliveries on a regional scale.

Three different phases mark the project study. The first one, the study phase, including needs, commercial and regulatory aspects, occurred between June and July this past summer. The current phase is a three months test campaign, which will be followed by a phase of synthesis and projection for potential later development, including a demonstrator. This study is carried out in coordination and with the support of the French Civil Aviation Authority (DGAC).

It is the first time a French local state authority supports and launches such a proposal, incorporating simultaneously a selected drone industry player and the French and European aviation and air safety regulatory authorities.

A new step towards the future of autonomous air mobility, this ongoing study integrates a whole new reflection of drone flight on a given route over semi-urban and surrounding countryside environments. And Survey Copter, one of the first ever drone manufacturing enterprise in France, a full subsidiary of Airbus, supported by the skills and know-how from all Airbus areas of expertise, is actively conducting the project, and thus further expanding its footprint into the civilian sector.

“Linking drone fleets between various logistic hubs in the Hauts de France Region was, still recently, just a clear possibility. It now appears as a viable objective, marking a further successful step in our project for the region’s economic development, reinforcing again our vision of innovation as a fundamental tool to boost our local economy.” said Xavier Bertrand, President of the Hauts de France Region.

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“We are extremely pleased with the results of this very innovative cooperation with this northern Province of France and the French and European aviation authorities, opening new doors to a promising cargo drone business. It is actually a whole new reflection on drone flights, over semi-urban and surrounding countryside environments and into the principles of fleet management over these particular territories.” said Nicolas Askamp, Head of Airbus drones subsidiary Survey Copter.

France’s regulatory framework is particularly favourable to this kind of study as they enhance standard scenarios which are subsequently submitted to EASA to consolidate European regulations on unmanned autonomous transport.

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About Airbus

Airbus is a global leader in aeronautics, space and related services. In 2018 it generated revenues of € 64 billion and employed a workforce of around 134,000. Airbus offers the most comprehensive range of passenger airliners. 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.

About Survey Copter

Expert in mini-UAV since 1996, Survey Copter became an Airbus subsidiary in 2011. Survey Copter is offering a wide range of products ideally adapted to perform ISR, protection or monitoring missions, for military and civil applications as well. It provides global competences in systems development including aerial platform, ground control station, autopilot, data link, encryption, EO/IR payload (GX-5), RVT (Remote Video Terminal) as well as a provision of comprehensive services including spare parts, trainings and in service support.

About the Hauts-de-France region

The Hauts-de-France region is the youngest in France, with a third of its six million inhabitants being under the age of 25 years. Marked by a very strong industrial heritage, its economy is multi-faceted: Hauts-de-France is France’s leading agricultural region; it is the driver of the French Tech ecosystem; it attracts more foreign investors than any other region in France; and it is a craft industry region. Employment is the top priority: regional authorities have introduced several schemes to assist job-seekers in their job searches, but also to help the working population as well as businesses struggling to find employee profiles suited to their needs. The region believes in the industry of the future and innovation: it is France’s number one rail region; is home to a number of leading industrial firms; and is the birthplace of several economic drivers and the Third Industrial Revolution.

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