AIRBUS PERLAN MISSION II REACHES NEW HIGH ALTITUDE

News / Manufacturer

Airbus Perlan Mission II, an initiative to fly a glider without an engine to the edge of space to collect ground-breaking insights on climate change, weather and high-altitude flight, this week reached a new high altitude in its second season of flight testing in El Calafate, Argentina. Pilots Jim Payne, Morgan Sandercock, Tim Gardner and Miguel Iturmendi have soared the pressurized Perlan 2 glider in a series of flights reaching a maximum altitude to date of 32,500 feet.

El Calafate, in the Patagonian region of Argentina, is in one of a few places on earth where a combination of mountain winds and the polar vortex create the world's highest "stratospheric mountain waves" – rising air currents that Perlan pilots believe can eventually carry their experimental aircraft to the edge of space.

Over the next two months, the all-volunteer exploration team sponsored by Airbus will seek for the rare waves in an attempt to break the world gliding altitude record of 50,727 feet, set by Einar Enevoldsen and Steve Fossett in Perlan 1 in 2006. Along the way, the aircraft will continue to collect scientific data on the atmosphere made possible by the Perlan 2 aircraft's unique attributes.

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“Just last month the world witnessed another reminder of the importance of understanding climate change, with the fracture from the Antarctic ice shelf of an iceberg the size of the state of Delaware,” said Perlan Project CEO Ed Warnock. “Airbus Perlan Mission II will allow us to study a range of atmospheric phenomenon that ultimately will give us more accurate models of our upper atmosphere and the climatic changes that matter to every world citizen.”

The engineless design of the Perlan 2 sail plane enables it to collect uncontaminated air samples from a range of altitudes. Unlike a weather balloon, it can be steered, can stay in one area, and can take off and land in the same location.

Besides studying factors influencing climate change, Airbus Perlan Mission II will also provide insights into high altitude turbulence and radiation effects on pilots and aircraft.

“As demand for air travel rises, and we are faced with questions about how to safely and more efficiently transport a growing population, the insights that Airbus Perlan Mission II will be

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collecting are invaluable," said Allan McArtor, Chairman of Airbus Americas. "Perlan's discoveries will help us shape the future of aerospace with innovations related to design and engineering, more efficient air travel and even aviation science related to travel on Mars."

Tune in to live flights of the Perlan 2 this summer on the Airbus Perlan Mission II Virtual Cockpit at http://bit.ly/VirtualPerlan2. Stay updated on flight schedules by following The Perlan Project on Twitter @PerlanProject and on Facebook at www.facebook.com/perlanproject.

For more information about Airbus Perlan Mission II, please go to www.perlanproject.org.

03 AUGUST 2017

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