

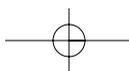


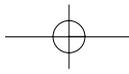
WELCOME TO THE 2007 AL AIN AEROBATIC SHOW

Al Ain aeros offer a winter break



Russian female pilot Svetlana Kapanina outclassed the male competitors to win the solo aerobatic contest at the annual Al Ain Aerobatic Show in the United Arab Emirates. The 39 year old was competing with five other world class pilots and maintained her lead right from the first day. A Russian formation aerobatic team flying the MiG 29 performed daily alongside teams from the Royal Saudi Air Force and the Royal Jordanian Air Force flying four Extra-300 aircraft. The five-day event held at Al Ain International Airport in Abu Dhabi is held during January and is the focus of increasing attention. This year it attracted over 100,000 visitors and a display of static aircraft. The show is organised by the Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority and the UAE Air Force. Al Ain is a large oasis town frequently referred to in the UAE as the 'Garden City' situated 150 km from the UAE capital Abu Dhabi, on the edge of the Hajar mountains and offers excellent flying conditions during the European winter months. – Mike Derrett





Made in Britain?

By Mike Derrett



The development of the aircraft they call the Kestrel is an object lesson to any mad fool with wild ideas about designing, certificating and manufacturing an aeroplane in Britain today. The project was begun well before the turn of the century by Richard Noble, a man with more Thrust than most, and has suffered more vicissitudes than Job, most of them well-documented. But thanks to the bloody-mindedness of a large number of people the dream lives on in the form of a real, living aircraft which had its first public showing at the Middle East Business Aviation Show in Dubai.

The six-seat turboprop was exhibited by Gulf Aircraft Partnership, a consortium formed by developers Farnborough Aircraft Corporation and their potential Abu Dhabi-based airframe manufacturer GAMCO, and attracted a lot of interest despite being somewhat overshadowed on the ramp by much larger business jets.

What Farnborough Aircraft has achieved so far is quite extraordinary. Despite all the setbacks, they are on track to become the first UK company to certificate a passenger aircraft in more than three decades. The most recent headline event in the Kestrel's chequered

history concerns the settlement of legal battles over its development in the USA. With the prototype aircraft flown to Britain in August 2006 and the 'intellectual property' now firmly in the hands of UK based Farnborough Aircraft, the outlook for the project is more promising. Commercial Director Richard Blain has decided to look east rather than west for prospective partners and a production location. He says: "The Gulf region is attractive to us for two reasons. Firstly, it is an area with a developing aerospace industry, and with GAMCO we identified a partner to work with. Secondly, the Gulf is one of the world's fastest-growing aviation markets, especially in the field of business aircraft. Additionally we identified India, which is relatively close to the Gulf, as having very good potential for the Kestrel as we can operate the aircraft with minimum infrastructure and from semi-prepared runways as short as 500 metres. Working with GAMCO in Abu Dhabi for nearly three years has been an excellent experience and we look forward to developing our business relationship further."

The prototype Kestrel is currently powered by a 1,200 hp PT6A-67A turboprop driving a

Hartzell propeller with reverse pitch. A 1,000hp -67B version of the engine is planned for production aircraft. With a pressurised cabin and service ceiling of 31,000ft, max cruise speed is 352 kts and the IFR range with four people on board is 1,567 nm. Performance is on a par with the new range of VLJs such as the Eclipse and Mustang and the very fast turboprops such as the TBM 850, yet the Kestrel's cabin is larger than most of the VLJs and features a private toilet. One of the Kestrel's unique selling points over jets is the turboprop's ability to operate out of shorter and unprepared strips. Richard Blain estimates that production aircraft will be priced at \$2.5 million with deliveries some three years away.

Finding a potential partner in the United Arab Emirates is an indication of the way the Gulf is changing; with massive oil revenues in the past few years the drive towards diversification into high-tech industries such as aerospace is intensifying. In many ways Abu Dhabi and Dubai are positioning themselves to be the Singapore of the Gulf, with higher added value industries such as aviation playing a key part. ■

