

Former astronaut killed in Cirrus VK30 test crash

GRAHAM WARWICK/ATLANTA

FORMER US astronaut Robert Overmyer was killed on 22 March while flight-testing a Cirrus Design VK30 kitplane. Overmyer was conducting full-flap stall tests of a VK30 prototype equipped with a new wing when the crash occurred near Duluth International Airport, Minnesota. A former Space Shuttle pilot, he had joined Cirrus as a test pilot in November 1995.

Cirrus had announced plans to

develop a replacement wing for some 28 VK30 kits supplied to customers between 1987 and 1993, when the company discontinued production to concentrate on certification of its SR20 light aircraft. Overmyer was responsible for SR20 certification flight-testing, but Cirrus does not expect the accident to delay the programme.

The VK30 is an all-composite pusher-propeller aircraft. The prototype which crashed was powered by an Allison 250-B17

turboprop, which had been installed as part of a research programme unrelated to development of the stronger wing.

A VK30 kitplane, modified by its owner for aerial photography, crashed at Lake in the Hills, Illinois, in mid-1994.

Cirrus has flown two SR20 prototypes and certification is scheduled for 1997. The VK30 formed the basis of the ST50 single-turboprop business aircraft now under development by Israiviation of Israel. □

Polish I-23 to fly by year-end

ANDRZEJ JEZIORSKI/WARSAW

THE WARSAW-BASED Aviation Institute (IL) is planning a year-end debut for its I-23 all-composite light aircraft.

The Institute completed wind-tunnel testing on the aircraft in 1995, and is now carrying out structural tests on aircraft components in preparation for the first flight at the end of this year.

The I-23, to be produced in co-operation with manufacturer PZL-Swidnik, will be the first all-composite aircraft built in Poland. The light aircraft will also be the first Polish aircraft on which "pre-preg" composite production techniques are used — all composite work in Poland to date has involved "wet" lay-up of components.

The IL's design and development work on the four-seat aircraft is being funded by a grant from the Government Scientific Research Committee.

The aircraft has a conventional, low-wing, monoplane configuration with retractable undercarriage. Power comes from a single, 130kW (180hp) Textron Lycoming O-360 piston engine with a Hartzell constant-speed propeller.

The cheapest version of the aircraft could be equipped with an 85kW (115hp) Lycoming O-235 engine as an alternative powerplant.

The IL hopes for US Federal Aviation Regulations Part 23 certification in the utility category for pilot training and basic aerobatics, and in the normal category for private flights under visual and instrument flight rules. The Institute hopes to offer the aircraft with AlliedSignal Bendix/King avionics.

The I-23 is to have a maximum take-off weight of 1,050kg, with a maximum range of 1,430km (770nm). Maximum speed will be 160kt (300km/h), with a cruise speed of 140kt. □

Helipro Shortsky enters service

HELIPRO International's shortened Sikorsky S-61 "Shortsky" has entered heli-logging service with two Canadian operators.

The first aircraft, a converted S-61N, entered service with VIH Logging on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, in mid-March, just a month after the type's first flight (*Flight International*, 28 February-5 March, P9).

A second aircraft has entered service with Canadian Helicopters, also on Vancouver Island. The operator has ordered two

S-61L-to-Shortsky conversions, with the second scheduled to arrive by early April.

British Columbia-based Hayes Forest Services Group, meanwhile, has traded in a newly acquired S-61N for a Shortsky, to be delivered in the second quarter.

Bellingham, Washington-based Helipro has removed 1.27m from the forward cabin of the S-61L/N, providing a 450kg increase in external-lift capacity.

The conversion has received US and Canadian supplemental type-certification for passenger

and cargo use. Helipro is now seeking UK and European certification for Category A single-engined operation.

The company says that offshore-support operators of the S-61N on the North Sea and in South-East Asia are interested because the conversion reduces empty weight and improves both hot-and-high and one-engine-inoperative performance.

The latter is attracting North Sea operators facing new rules requiring Cat A certification, Helipro says. □

SJ30-2 windtunnel testing completed

SINO SWEARINGEN Aircraft has completed windtunnel testing of the SJ30-2 business jet at the University of Washington, Seattle. Model tests were intended to fine-tune the revised design. The SJ30 prototype, meanwhile, is being modified to the stretched SJ30-2 and re-engined with uprated Williams Rolls-Royce FJ44-2 turbofans for configuration-verification flight-testing. Two production versions of the SJ30-2 will be used for certification testing.

