

Singapore-built aircraft complete first phase of flight tests in Germany



Two Singapore-built research aircraft developed by Nanyang Technological University students, alumni and professor James Wang have completed their first phase of flight testing in Germany. — Unsplash pic

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Summary

- Two eVTOL aircraft developed by Nanyang Technological University (NTU) students and alumni in Singapore have completed initial flight tests in Germany.
- The prototypes, which are research demonstrators and not designed for passenger use, underwent a series of test flights over two and a half weeks.
- Despite a hard landing incident, the team plans to focus on further innovations, such as autonomous flight and alternative energy sources, with a vision for commercial operations by 2035.
- The project received S\$25 million in government funding, though significantly more investment is needed to reach commercial viability.

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SINGAPORE, Aug 26 — Two electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) aircraft developed and built in Singapore have reportedly completed their first phase of flight tests in Cochstedt, Germany.

The Straits Times reported that the 8m- and 3m-wingspan prototypes were produced by more than 20 Nanyang Technological University (NTU) students and alumni together with professor James Wang, and are research demonstrators not currently designed to carry passengers.

During two and a half weeks of testing in July, the smaller aircraft reportedly recorded nearly two hours of flight time across 17 flights, while the larger model flew for a combined 43 minutes over 20 flights.

The 8m prototype reached an altitude of 92m, while the smaller aircraft climbed to 60m and attained a speed of about 120km/h.

The tests were conducted in a 1.2km by 2.4km flight area at the German Aerospace Centre, which NTU said offered more open space than was available for such testing in Singapore.

The larger prototype subsequently experienced a hard landing and is being shipped back to Singapore after the team was unable to repair it in time to assess its forward-propulsion system.

The team has yet to obtain Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore certification to operate the aircraft locally, although it has conducted tethered tests at the former Kranji Racecourse.

Wang said further work would focus on autonomous flight, range, battery capacity and the possible use of hydrogen, with future plans including a five-person aircraft with a 14m wingspan and a smaller cargo model.

According to the report, the project has received S\$25 million (RM79 million) in government funding, while Wang estimated that another S\$975 million would be needed to begin commercial operations, which he said could happen by 2035.