IS IT A BIRD? NO IT'S A WINGCOPTER

News / Manufacturer

If you spy a falcon at next month's Big Boys Toys Exhibition, you might need to look more closely.

What you will actually be seeing is a **Wingcopter**, a limited edited drone otherwise known as a vertical take-off and landing hybrid aerial system that combines the advantages of a multicopter with the benefits of a plane.

And Wingcopter's chief commercial officer, Tom Pluemmer, thinks the special UAE collector's version – set for release at the event at Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre from November 18-21 – resembles the UAE's national bird.

"We think a falcon has similar capability to a Wingcopter. It can hover, fly very fast, cover long distances and looks elegant," he says.

Prices for the flying invention, created by the German entrepreneurs Mr Pluemmer, 25, and Jonathan Hesselbarth, 29, start from €60,000 (Dh243,254). "The customer can than decide which type of sensors, high-end camera systems, thermographic cameras or transportation boxes he wants to add below the platform," says Mr Pluemmer.

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The unmanned flying invention took three years for technical engineer Mr Hesselbarth to design and build. It is the realisation of his childhood passion: “My favourite toys as a young boy were self-made paper planes,” he says.

The device is designed to start its ascent from anywhere, “even on ships, or in a forest, stormy snowscapes or deserts”, according to Mr Pluemmer.

Once up, the Wingcopter’s unique tilt rotor mechanism makes it possible to fly up to 150kph and operate in winds of up to 50kph.

“Even looping and nosedives are easily possible,” Mr Pluemmer adds, though he is keen to stress their drone is not a toy. “It is cutting-edge technology, ready to become one of the best commercial drones in the fields of delivery and logistics, crisis management, and in the film and photo industries.”

After the launch in Abu Dhabi, Wingcopter will start taking pre-orders for the new professional model. “By 2016 we are planning to deliver our new professional Wingcopter worldwide”, says Mr Pluemmer.

q&a interest in drones takes off

Wingcopter’s founder and chief commercial officer Tom Pluemmer reveals more about the device:

What can the Wingcopter carry?

Imagine the Wingcopter as a platform. The customer can decide which sensors or goods he wants to attach. We can even offer custom-build solutions. The current prototype carries 500g, the new model we’re working on carries up to a 2kg payload. This could be a camera for filming, special sensors for inspections and research, delivery parts for logistic applications and much more.

How many of these models have you made?

There are over 10 prototypes built and in the testing phase.

Have any military organisations expressed interest in the product?

Yes. However, we have decided that the new company Wingcopter will serve the civil market.

Is the market for drones growing fast?

Yes, there really is a hype, which will only increase. But time will tell which concept is the best. We are sure that drones will be doing a lot of tasks and make life easier once we use them in a civil and social way. Civil commercial drones will increase in the next years exponentially. Drones, especially Wingcopters, are perfect for such applications.

What kinds of circumstances would your drone be ideally suited to?

In crisis management, where long distance and flight time is needed and no runways or landing strips are available. It is also perfect for the delivery and logistic sector, aerial filming and all other aspects of commercial drone use.

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