



CARIBBEAN AVIATION OF THE FUTURE

News / Business aviation



By Cdr. Bud Slabbaert?

Just imagine. A small island, or a short runway, or just a resort with ample open space. Out of the blue sky comes an airplane and lands right there, like a helicopter, and brings forty passengers. You will think that this is not just imagination, but rather hallucination pure. It would be a dreamer's island hopper.

You may call her a dreamer, yet Freshta Farzam is taking an all or nothing approach to future mobility.

Who is 'her'? Freshta is the CEO and Founder of LYTE Aviation based in Germany and the UK, that may turn the tables in Caribbean aviation from small island hoppers to an aircraft of 40 passengers that lands and takes off vertically and will have a range of 1,000km (540nm) range and top speed of 300km/h (186mph). Enough to connect the short runways of St.Barth, Saba, Nevis or Montserrat with the US hub San Juan, Puerto Rico or other hubs in the region.

The future face of regional aviation doesn't have to be complex and futuristic looking. LYTE is developing a conventional airframe design for forty passengers. But the tandem tiltwing design

allows flying forward as well as hovering. Thus, flying vertically as well as horizontally and using a square landing pad, whereas other aircraft have no alternative than only flying horizontally and using a runway stretch. The vertical dimension is where added value can be found.

In life, it is not always the strongest or the biggest who wins, but rather the fastest and smartest who wins. The new development may mean three times faster, with greater fuel efficiency, and flying throughout the Caribbean in a fast, safe, cost-effective and sustainable way. One can call smart for sure.

“They used to call me a dreamer whenever I came with bold ideas on how to scale up existing technologies,” says Farzam. “Then I understood that it is all about my own mindset to adjust first. Then I will attract the right collaborators on my journey. So, I jumped on the horse myself and researched and created for the last three years, with an amazing expert aerospace team who collectively have 200 years of aviation experience. The solution will definitely hit a nerve in aviation and tourism industries.”

For the green and sustainable energy geeks. LYTE has opted for a hybrid, partly electric VTOL. The LA-44 is powered by four conventional turbine engines, running on sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) complemented with four electric motors at the wingtips for control and stability, powered by hydrogen fuel cells. The ambition is to become fully hydrogen-electric as development progresses. It is phenomenal to become a force in the flourishing market of hydrogen, that in many ways will take over from the dominating fossil fuel industry.



Prior to founding LYTE Aviation, Freshta was responsible for scaling up innovative hydrogen technologies, from production to infrastructure. She specialized in helping companies and entrepreneurs grow their innovative renewable technology business by introducing them to the right investors or business partners for creating bold solutions.

“Some companies lack the courage to look beyond ‘what is’, and I helped them to see boldly ‘what actually can be’ with the right partners. I have been able to help my clients to really increase their engagement and grow their business by 200–300% in less than 6-12 months. And that’s what I’m passionate about, expanding my own and other company’s horizons by strategically connecting the right dots.”

LYTE Aviation first targets markets when developing, instead of like others, developing something and then trying to find a market. The company intends to create THE wow-experience by

excellence for the Caribbean. The future may be sooner than you think. Although admitting that it may take a bit of time to develop and get certified, therefore also the latest state of the art features that are currently under development in the technology industry and can be integrated in the LA-44. A full-scale prototype could realistically be ready within two years depending on the support it gets.

When making a five-year plan for air transportation in the Caribbean region, one may want to plan this as an option that rather sooner than later will become reality. LYTE may turn on a light for those who like to think brightly. The LA-44 will be their SKYBUS. “It is time to give the air travel a next-level disruption because the Caribbean needs it and is ready now,” says Freshta Farzam. “We sometimes don’t have to reinvent the wheel, we just need to look at it from a different perspective, and still, we are able to expand horizons and create necessary change in certain rigid mindsets and industries.”



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