“Aviation Tales Quarterly”

A three-monthly look at aviation happenings around the world!

July 2026.

This Edition:

To ‘kick-off’ this first Quarterly Edition, I decided to check out where we are at with a look at developments in the multi rotor and tilt wing ‘urban mobility’ aircraft.

The goal here is to provide a ‘green’ alternative to and from our down-town areas and local airports.

The urban mobility sector is becoming involved with the rigorous certification and early commercial testing. While early wingless multirotor aircraft targeted target short-range, point-to-point niche missions, the more recent designs have emerged as the industry standard for commercial air taxis due to their superior aerodynamic efficiency and range.

Some emerging ‘trends.’

Keep looking skywards!

A recent success story:

Dawn Aerospace announced back in mid-June that they had secured significant funding with the assistance of US-based Balerion Space Ventures.

Since 2022, Dawn Aerospace has become the leading provider of non-toxic chemical propulsion worldwide with 200 thrusters in space on more than 50 satellites.

Dawn Aerospace has also flown supersonic with the Aurora suborbital spaceplane, making it the first privately developed aircraft to fly supersonic since the Concorde, and one of only two supersonic UAVs operating globally today.

These feats are all part of the New Zealand/Dutch company's mission to build scalable, sustainable space transportation to unlock the economic potential of space and solve critical national security challenges. Commercially, revenue has grown from less than $3 million in 2022 to well over $15 million with growth of over 90% in the last 12 months and with cash-flow positive operations.

This financial momentum coincides with a global surge in aerospace and defense investment. The United States' and Europe's defense and space budgets have hit historic highs.

European NATO members have pushed average defense spending past the 2% GDP threshold, and the European Space Agency (ESA) secured a record €22.3 billion budget with a renewed mandate for space security.

As space architectures, hypersonics and advanced drone technologies rapidly evolve under these expanded budgets, Dawn Aerospace is positioned to bring aircraft-like reusability to these critical sectors.

“Dawn is doing what few in this category have: building real commercial revenue and a successful pathway from in-space propulsion and refuelling to a hypersonic spaceplane, to aircraft-like payload delivery to orbit, all with extraordinary capital efficiency,” said Dan Wallman, Partner at Balerion Space Ventures and incoming Series B board member. “As the US and its closest allies build joint capability in space and hypersonics, the West needs partners who can deliver reusable, responsive access across the air and space domain. Dawn is one of them.”

Dawn's technologies now support over two dozen missions, predominantly for European,

US and Japanese customers, such as satellite constellations and lunar programs.

These missions span a range of operator types, from commercial Earth observation providers to government customers such as the Royal Netherlands Air Force, the US Air Force Research Lab and the Royal New Zealand Navy.

Recent news for around the world:

As Ukraine continues to confront the enemy’s sustained aerial bombardments, both effective interception capabilities and the ability to detect hostile targets in a timely manner remain critically important.

Among the radar systems that have strengthened the arsenal of the Defence Forces of Ukraine, the Swedish ‘Giraffe’ radar family is particularly notable.

Depending on the variant, this radar system can be deployed across different platforms, including fixed sites, trucks, tracked vehicles and pickup trucks.

This enables the development of a flexible radar reconnaissance network.

The Ministry of Defence expresses its gratitude to Sweden for supporting Ukraine’s defence capabilities, particularly its air defence.

Speaking of Ukraine;

During 2026, Ukrainian Aeronautics Research & Technology industry has completed a radical shift from Soviet-legacy heavy aviation toward hyper-scalable uncrewed aerial systems (UAS), long-range strike munitions, and AI-driven electronic warfare (EW)**.**

Motivated by wartime urgency, Ukraine's aerospace sector functions as a real-time defense innovation provider, pivoting heavily toward dual-use and defense technology.

The aerospace giant Antonov has successfully adapted its heavy-aviation engineering pedigree into the mass production of long-range strike drones such as the Antonov AN-196.

Ukraine is also gearing up to prepare for the arrival of Saab Gripen fighters from Sweden, the embattled country’s defense minister said: “We are preparing to begin training Ukrainian pilots and technical personnel.”

History items from previous months of July:

During July of 1926, a certain Sir Henry Wigram donated £2,500 for the acquisition of modern fighters, leading to the procurement of several Gloster Grebes.

Grebe NZ501; This aircraft was withdrawn from service and converted to an instructional airframe at Hobsonville during 1938 becoming INST1. Transferred to Rongotai TTS and later broken up and burnt during 1943-1944. The building of a replica is rumoured!

The Grebes used an Armstong Siddeley Jaguar IV radial engine. The engine was notorious for poor performance and required a lot of maintenance.

During July 1966, a serious accident occurred at Auckland International airport!

On 4 July 1966, an Air New Zealand Douglas DC-8-52 crashed on take-off from Auckland International Airport on a training flight, killing 2 out of the 5 crew members on board.

The crash was the first fatal accident in the history of Air New Zealand and the only accident to date of a commercial airliner in New Zealand.

The investigation concluded that during the captain's attempt to simulate an engine failure, the captain accidentally deployed the thrust reverser on the number four engine.

This resulted in the aircraft's speed falling below the minimum control speed, which resulted in the aircraft becoming uncontrollable and the eventual crash!

July 2006;

New Zealand's newest aircraft manufacturer, Alpha Aviation, celebrated the final step in its developmental phase.

The New Zealand Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has presented the company's flagship aircraft; the Alpha 160A, with its Type Certificate and the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) has reissued the Type Certificate in the name of Alpha Aviation.

The Alpha 160A two-seat aerobatic training aircraft took to the skies above Hamilton was put through its paces by veteran Australian aerobatic and test pilot, Noel Kruse.

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An interesting "Departure" or "Arrival"!

A Malaysia Airlines A350, looks amazing arriving right after sunrise.

A parting thought:

"If you put off everything till you're sure of it, you'll get nothing done."

(Norman Vincent Peale)

The 'Aviation Tales Quarterly' newsletter is produced every three months!

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