BONKERS-LOOKING AIRCRAFT WITH 18 ROTORS TAKE ITS FIRST CREWED FLIGHT

News / Manufacturer



Is the Volocopter the 'dawn of a revolution in urban mobility'?

The Volocopter, a helicopter-drone hybrid with 18 rotors, took its first manned flight in Southern Germany on March 30th, the company e-volo announced. With e-volo's managing director Alexander Zosel in the cockpit, the truly strange-looking aircraft took to the skies above an airfield, hovered for several minutes, and then landed. A video chronicling the feat features heavy electronic dance music, because Germany.

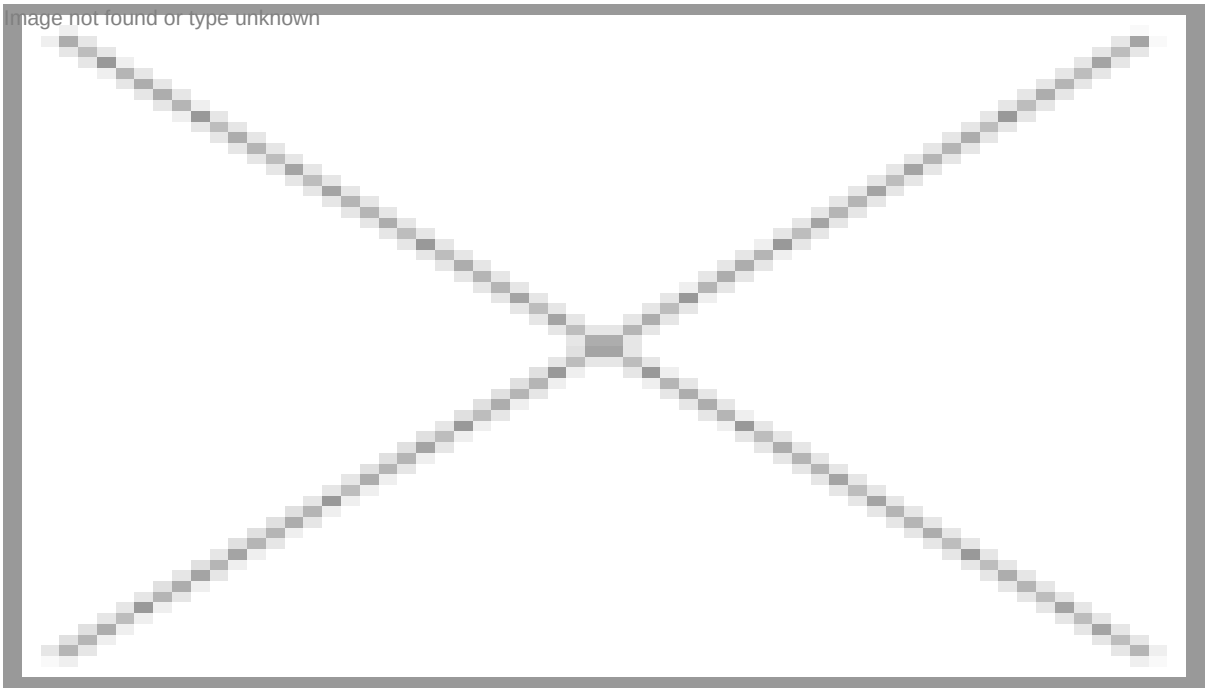
Zosel was excited to have executed the first manned flight. Like very excited. "It was unbelievable," he said, "it hovered totally weightlessly, I mean it didn't at all feel like there were crazy forces at work, it was all just totally light and the Volocopter immediately converted every movement I made with the joystick."

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He continued, "It is definitely a sublime feeling to lift off, fly the first few meters, and then actually take my hand off the joystick and think that, yeah, it's really as if I'm standing on the ground, and then I look down and there are 20-25 meters beneath me. So it's definitely unbelievable what we've achieved here. It's seriously unbelievable!"

The company claims its ultralight "multicopter," which is electric, emissions-free, and easy to operate thanks to its touchscreen display and joystick control, marks "the first time humans' dream of personal flight as a daily routine becomes attainable." The company claims that NASA is interested in the Volocopter as a means of alleviating traffic congestion in Silicon Valley.



All of which are bold claims for what appears to be a bunch of drones stitched together in the

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shape of a dream catcher. It's unclear how exactly the Volocopter will revolutionize urban mobility, or what its practical uses will be. In its announcement, e-volo says it plans to begin producing "large quantities" of the Volocopter, with the intention of both entering the "air sports market" and "air taxi services." Also, the Volocopter will also have the capability to fly autonomously. (Autopilot is not uncommon in the aviation industry, and not necessarily as complex as a self-driving car.)

In its first manned flight, the Volocopter only ascended several meters off the ground. E-volo says its next test will include higher altitudes at speeds of 30 mph. The third testing phase will attempt the Volocopter's top speed of 62 mph. E-volo's engineers built the Volocopter with assistance from drone company Ascending Technologies, which is owned by Intel. (The chip makers are also own shares of e-volo.)

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