

The AAM Rewind

AutoFlight breaks Joby Aviation's world record for longest eVTOL flight

AutoFlight broke Joby Aviation's world record for the longest eVTOL flight after their Gen4 Prosperity flew 250.3 km at their testing facility on February 23. Joby had held the record since 2021 when their eVTOL covered a total distance of 248.8 km.

SMG's take

AutoFlight is one of the very few AAM OEMs to have achieved transition with multiple full-scale prototypes. The flight demonstrates the high level of maturity of the design, and it is a positive leading indicator for the upcoming rollout of the conforming aircraft.



AIRO Group merges with Kernal Group Holdings, targets Nasdaq listing

AIRO Group, the parent company of Jaunt Air Mobility and Aspen Avionics, has announced a merger with special purpose acquisition company (SPAC) Kernal Group Holdings. It also unveiled plans to become a publicly listed company on the Nasdaq stock exchange in Q3 2023.

SMG's take

The successful listing of the AIRO Group in the coming months will unlock the funds needed by Jaunt to jumpstart their Journey program that has progressed at a very slow pace due to funding constraints. It will also be an interesting market test to gauge if investors' interest in SPACs is back.

Archer announces Midnight aircraft nearing completion

Archer Aviation confirmed its Midnight aircraft, initially unveiled in November 2022, is close to being built. Once completed, the company hopes to flight test it in mid-2023 before going on to conduct "for credit" certification testing and attain Type Certification from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

SMG's take

Archer went in less five months from the Midnight eVTOL wooden mock-up to the carbon-fibre full-scale prototype. While the development speed is remarkable, will only six months of testing, as opposed to almost five years at Joby, work out all the possible design kinks before the conforming aircraft is rolled out at the end of the year?



Sikorsky has big plans for eVTOL industry with HEX prototype

Sikorsky plans to stamp its authority on the eVTOL market with the production of its Hybrid-Electric Demonstrator (HEX) prototype. The Lockheed Martin company aims to have the fully-autonomous hybrid unmanned aircraft travel 500 nautical miles (926 km), which would put it above and beyond any of its competitors.

SMG's take

Of the triumvirate that leads the helicopter market, Airbus was the only one with public AAM plans. While it is not a surprise to see Sikorsky join the market, we think that the choice of hybrid propulsion is ultimately indicative of the development of a large, long-range multi-role commercial and military vehicle.

Airbus aims to build CityAirbus NextGen eVTOL prototype this year

Airbus' CityAirbus NextGen electric vertical-take-off-and-landing (eVTOL) prototype could be built this year as the aerospace giant is likely to start obtaining parts to begin the construction process soon. Once the aircraft is complete, Airbus plans to flight test it in 2024.

SMG's take

Airbus is developing a conservative vehicle and bringing to the AAM market their leadership experience from the commercial helo market. The testing schedule aligns with their 2026 EIS plans for a machine that will target initially helicopter-replacement use cases, like EMS and tourism.

