

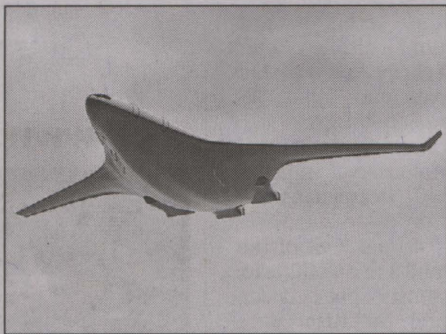
Near-silent jet no flight of fancy

CAMBRIDGE, England: A radically designed passenger jet could alleviate a major complaint of people living near major airports — the deafening sound of planes taking off and landing.

A team of 40 researchers from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Cambridge University spent three years working on the wide, streamlined jet, which was due to be unveiled in London last night.

The “silent jet”, which from outside the boundaries of an airport would sound no more noisy than a washing machine, would carry 215 passengers and could be in the air by 2030.

The MIT-Cambridge team set out to design a new passenger plane from the ground up. Instead of the normal tube-and-



Radical: A conceptual drawing of the aircraft

wing model, the silent jet is a flying wing, evoking stealth military aircraft. It lacks the central vertical stabiliser common at the tail of passenger jets, instead using stabilisers at the wing-tips.

The plane has a wingspan of

68m and is 44m from nose to tail, comparable in size to a Boeing 767.

“You take the fuselage and you squish it, and you spread it out, and it’s an all-lifting body,” said MIT associate professor Zoltan Spakovsky.

The design allows the plane to remain in the air at slower speeds, helping it to land more quietly. And the jet’s three engines take in air from above the wing, which helps to insulate people on the ground from noise at takeoff.

Reuters

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John Palazzi Sydney Australia