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Skunk Works Mailing List

Re: Perseus B Crashes

Date: Fri, 01 Oct 1999 19:10:27 -0500
From: Dave Bethke
Subject: Re: Perseus B Crashes

wings wrote:

>
> Just noticed that NASA's unmanned High-Altitude vehicle, Perseus B
> crashed on the westbound lane of I-40, about 4 miles east of Barstow, Ca.

ARSTOW, Calif. (AP) _ An unmanned experimental NASA aircraft being tested for environmental research crash landed in the Mojave Desert on Friday, sustaining moderate damage and partially blocking a highway.

No one was injured when the Perseus aircraft crash landed at 8:45 a.m. crash 4 miles east of Barstow, said Leslie Mathews, a spokeswoman for the NASA's Dryden Flight Research Center at Edwards Air Force Base.

There were no immediate details on the damage. The aircraft, appearing intact but its nose resting on the ground, blocked the westbound side of Interstate 40 through the morning.

California Highway Patrol Officer Randy Lefebure said the craft

came down like a helicopter and hit on its nose shortly before 9 a.m. The Perseus, 26 feet long with a wingspan of nearly 59 feet, has an extremely large tail-mounted pusher propeller.

The single-engine aircraft had been in the air 2¼ hours under remote control by a pilot on the ground, Mathews said.

Perseus is part of NASA's Environmental Research Aircraft and Sensor Technology program to develop a variety of unmanned aircraft that can carry science packages for long duration and at very high altitudes.

Perseus aircraft are intended to be able to reach 82,000 feet with a 165-pound science payload.

The plane that went down Friday was Perseus B, a model expected to reach a maximum altitude of 65,000 feet and stay aloft for up to 96 hours.

Perseus A was lost in a crash in November 1994, a little less than a year after the first Perseus flight. The aircraft were built by Aurora Flight Sciences Corp. of Manassas, Va. Development of each plane cost \$1.5 million.

According to NASA, Perseus' 14.4-foot-diameter propeller requires an unusual launch technique. With its engine running but the propeller locked in a horizontal position, the aircraft is towed into the air by a ground vehicle. At a certain altitude, the tow line separates and the propeller is engaged by remote control.

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