Flight summary: Sunday August 10, 2008

To sum up, today Sunday August 10, we had a very narrow window of time to operate before airspace over Jeju and surrounding ocean areas is closed due to severe weathers. But we succeeded to fly MAC-6, albeit in a very short flight of 30 minutes, basically 15 minutes obit within visual range to test engine and communication (today we flew with both C2 radio and Iridium link fully operational, the first time ever), then had one aerosol profile to 3000 AGL, then landed about 15 minutes before the sky literally closed down with black clouds and torrential rains, and just before all flight operations in the region were ordered to halt by Jeju Aviation Organization (JAO). If you like to have more details, please read on.

As you might have known, today Sunday, weather turns to the worse, on satellite pictures that Jeongseok ATC received from KMA, Jeju was at the center of a huge cloud system that spreads from mid/southern China to Japan. We were given a small window to launch and recover the aircraft, basically from 9 AM to noon, but be ready to land anytime. In the words of Jeongseok operations manager, Mr Yongchan Kim, the situation was marginal even for VFR. JAO, which has overall authority in airspace in southern Korea has issued alerts to all regional airports.

Yesterday we flew MAC-3 and MAC-5 already, so today was MAC-6 turn. All three aircraft must be proven airworthiness prior to Safety Inspection tomorrow Monday.

When MAC-6 was test flown in Tucson, AZ its engine surged rapidly in level flight. The problem was fixed prior to returning to La Jolla. However, on Tuesday when we tested engines of all three aircraft on the ground, the problem was detected again. Subsequently, the magneto was isolated then replaced per instructions from ACR engineering in Tucson.

This morning, MAC-6 was fitted with aerosol radiation instruments, this was the first time ever that instruments were installed in this aircraft. It was brought to the Maldives in MAC but never was flown. Like MAC-3 and MAC-5 yesterday, MAC-6 performed very well in rains and high winds.

Everything was waterproofed at best as we could. The ground station was set up inside our turbo diesel passenger minivan (it gets 30 miles per gallon, but of course the higher emission standards in the US does not allow this type of vehicles. BTW, it is almost $9/gallon here). Everyone was assigned a space in the two vehicles to get out of torrential rains which came in waves. Dan being the pilot sitting comfortably inside the van with his various screens. Hung, the van driver, was given the driver seat, Sangcheon the passenger seat. Ramana, Craig Baldwin and ManHe were assigned to the cab of the flatbed truck which is our aircraft carrier, on loan per courtesy of Jeongseok general manager.