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# First jet flight made on biodiesel: Around the world flight is next, company says

February 22, 2008 by Tom Norton [Leave a Comment](#)

Aviation history was made earlier this month when an L-29 jet trainer flown by Carol Sugars and Douglas Rodante completed the world's first jet flight powered by 100% biodiesel fuel, over the high desert near Reno, Nevada.

The flight was backed by the partnership of Green Flight International and Biodiesel Solutions. The former was founded "to promote wider adoption of environmentally-friendly fuels in commercial aviation." The latter, based in Sparks, Nevada, claims to be "the world's leading manufacturer of biodiesel production equipment, empowering communities worldwide to produce their own clean biodiesel fuel from their own locally-grown materials."

The Czechoslovakian-built L-29 was chosen for its ability to fly on a variety of fuels, including heating oil, "making it the preferred platform for testing biodiesel in jet engines," according to Chief Pilot Sugars, who conducted the test program. "The experimental test flights were conducted starting with a blend of jet fuel and biodiesel. The engine data were measured and the performance was evaluated ... eventually resulting in the landmark flight using 100% renewable biodiesel fuel."

Flight tests were conducted at altitudes up to 17,000 feet, Sugars said, and showed no significant difference in performance from conventional jet fuel. There is no word on whether the jet exhaust – like that of biodiesel fuels being used in trucks and diesel cars – smells of French fries.

The Nevada test flights were precursors to a much bolder around-the world flight set for later this year. That will be flown in a Learjet powered by a more highly-refined biofuel and flown by Rodante, who is president and CEO of Green Flight International and president of Orlando Apopka Airport in Florida. He has been in the television industry for more than 20 years and plans to televise the globe-girdling adventure. His advisors on the project include Bill Lear, Jr., former CEO of Lear Inc., and astronaut Story Musgrave.

Rodante says he started Green Flight International to promote environmentally-

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friendly fuels in commercial aviation. “The significance is that, if it can be done in a jet, then land-based transportation can use it because it’s a little more critical in an aircraft,” he said. “The carbon output is significantly reduced in biofuel compared to petroleum, diesel or jet fuel. We can prevent the emission of millions of tons of pollutants per year into our atmosphere by implementing a few simple measures into our existing system.”

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