

## Luminati unveils solar and amphibious aircraft

*Flyer Magazine*

*Dave Calderwood*



Another electric aircraft has taken to the air but Luminati's solar powered VO-Substrata isn't intended for personal flight – it's part of a project to bring internet to regions of the world not currently online.

However, at the same time as the public launch of the aircraft at Calverton Air Base, Long Island, USA – from where Charles Lindberg took off in 1927 for his solo transatlantic flight – Luminati also announced a joint venture with SeaMax America. They will use Luminati's state-of-the-art facilities to manufacture the SeaMax Light Sport Amphibious aircraft.



***SeaMax amphibian will be manufactured alongside the electric Luminati VO Substrata aircraft (top) at Calverton.***

Luminati's focus is manned and unmanned aircraft for perpetual, solar-powered electric flight in the stratosphere as a platform for commercial internet and government ISR (Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance) applications. The combination of SeaMax and the VO Substrata will be the first aircraft manufacturing at Calverton since Grumman 23 years ago.

"This is a dream come true," said Daniel Preston, Luminati founder and CEO. "Long Island is known as the Cradle of Aviation, and we want to do our part to keep it here where it belongs."

The VO Substrata electric aircraft, which has wing-mounted solar panels, was flown for about 20 minutes by Luminati chief pilot Robert Lutz. The prototype aircraft is hand-flown by an onboard pilot but Luminati plans to build unmanned drones that can fly at 60,000 feet or more.

Preston refused to say who was backing the project but it's rumoured one of the tech giants like Google or Facebook is involved. But Preston did drop a hint. "I really can't think of any engineering project today that has a greater social impact than bringing communications for many people in the world that don't have it," he said.