



*Drones World Editor Kartikeya In Conversation with*

**YVONNE WINTER**  
**COO, FlyNow Aviation, Austria**



**Q** FlyNow has been developing a unique modular eVTOL cargo drone concept for urban logistics. What inspired the company to focus on scalable cargo drone systems rather than passenger air mobility in the early stages?

**A** FlyNow initially focuses on cargo operations for two main reasons.

The most economically efficient use case. Urban logistics faces major challenges, especially in large cities, where heavy traffic and high delivery costs create increasing pressure on existing transport systems. A cargo eCopter can significantly reduce delivery times for time-critical missions, while keeping operating costs at a level comparable to a taxi ride. This makes cargo one of the most practical and commercially attractive early use cases for UAM.

Safer and faster market entry. Beginning with cargo operations allows FlyNow to prove the aircraft in real-world conditions, build public trust, and demonstrate safety before moving into passenger transport. As part of our safety-first approach, we aim to complete around one million miles with cargo version before launching air taxi services. At the same time, cargo deployment allows earlier market entry while certification for passenger transport is still underway.

**Q** The Middle East is rapidly emerging as

a hub for advanced air mobility and drone innovation. What opportunities does this region offer for companies like FlyNow Arabia?

**A** In 2022, FlyNow began its journey in Saudi Arabia as part of the Destination Deep Tech Program at the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST), which provided the perfect launchpad for introducing our technology. Since then, we have gained a significant support from the Saudi government. In 2024, for instance, we signed an MoU with the General Authority of Civil Aviation (GACA) and the National Industrial Development Center (NIDC) to advance the development of electric air mobility in Saudi Arabia, including regulation, airspace integration, vertiport infrastructure, and operational guidelines for air taxi services. Since last year, we have also been part of the RDID Program of the Royal Commission for Riyadh City (RCRC), which support our localisation efforts in Riyadh.

We believe that this strong institutional commitment, combined with the ambitions of Saudi Vision 2030 and GACA's AAM roadmap, makes the Kingdom one of the most promising markets for the future deployment of AAM and was a key factor in our decision to make it the first country for our technology.

**Q** FlyNow's concept focuses on

standardized modular drone fleets operating in automated networks (the eCopter technology is based on an automated approach). How do you see this model transforming urban logistics in the coming years?

**A** In the coming years, we see the eCopter creating a new logistics opportunity that can reduce pressure on road infrastructure, improve delivery reliability, and enable faster transport for urgent and high-value goods.

With a payload of up to 200 kg, the eCopter is ideal for a wide range of urban logistics missions, including last-mile delivery, the transport of sensitive goods, and emergency supplies. Depending on the operational setup, the eCopter operates automatically either along pre-programmed corridors or on routes integrated into existing air traffic management systems. Our electric version can fly up to 50 kilometres, which is already sufficient for a city like Riyadh, and with a cruising speed of around 110 km/h, it can reach its destination within just a few minutes: e.g., a 20-kilometer route could take around 10 minutes, compared to about 40 minutes by car. In the future, we also aim to deploy a hybrid version with a range of up to 200 kilometres.

In terms of financial benefit, we offer one of the most efficient solutions. The eCopter



significantly reduces delivery times by flying above road congestion, while its modular design keeps operating and maintenance costs very low and comparable to ground-based transport. This makes it a cost-efficient and commercially attractive solution for logistics companies.

**Q** Regulation remains one of the key challenges for urban air mobility. How is FlyNow Arabia working with aviation authorities to enable safe and scalable drone operations?

**A** We have been working in close collaboration with aviation authorities since day one, and even before that: prior to founding FlyNow Aviation GmbH in 2019, Jürgen Greil, CEO of the Austrian company and developer of the eCopter, presented the concept to Austro Control (ACG), Austria's national aviation authority. Development only began after receiving its support.

In December 2022, FlyNow reached its first certification milestone by obtaining SAIL II approval under the "specific category" from ACG, which allowed us to test the full prototype under the regulator's supervision.

Our next step is to certify the eCopter under SAIL IV, which would permit commercial operations over low-populated areas mark the start of cargo operations. While operating

cargo services, we then plan to achieve full certification under EASA CS-VLR and CS-27, supporting regular passenger transport operations over populated areas.

As for Saudi Arabia, as mentioned earlier, we will work closely with GACA. Our objective is to obtain EASA certification in Europe and then have it validated locally in Saudi Arabia.

**Q** FlyNow's coaxial rotor eVTOL design is quite distinctive. What advantages does this architecture offer in terms of efficiency, safety, and operational costs?

**A** The eCopter uses two counter-rotating rotors on a shared axis above the cabin, which eliminates the need for a tail rotor and significantly reduces the number of moving parts compared to conventional helicopters. Combined with a simplified electric drivetrain and direct-driven synchronous motors, this results in much lower mechanical complexity, reduced maintenance needs, lower production costs, and higher system reliability.

**Q** What type of infrastructure and ecosystem will cities need to support large-scale cargo drone networks?

**A** This is a very relevant question for us at the moment, as we are starting a sandbox this year together with our infrastructure partners within SALAAM.earth.

Together with Skyroads, a provider of digital sky infrastructure and automated flight management, FlyNow co-founded SALAAM.earth with one clear goal: to develop a complete ecosystem that makes automated air mobility safe, scalable, and deployable.

We are convinced that it is not enough to develop the aircraft alone. To successfully introduce UAM, cities will need coordinated progress in regulation, infrastructure, and digital traffic management. The eCopter requires charging and dedicated take-off and landing infrastructure. It also needs defined air corridors for safe operations, as well as strong cybersecurity and close cooperation with government authorities to authorise and integrate such aircraft into the wider transport system. Only through collaboration with all relevant stakeholders we can make UAM truly work – through SALAAM we work with partners on an entire ecosystem.

**Q** Looking ahead to the next decade, what role do you see FlyNow Arabia playing in shaping the future of automated aerial logistics and urban air mobility globally?

**A** Over the next decade, we see FlyNow Arabia as a key player in the market with the eCopter complementing ground transportation and offering UAM to the broader public at price levels comparable to a ground taxi.

Our goal is to begin commercial cargo operations in 2028 and launch passenger services in 2030, with Expo 2030 in Riyadh serving as a key milestone for this phase. Looking further ahead, another strategic reference point is the FIFA World Cup 2034.

As Saudi Arabia is the first market for our technology, FlyNow Arabia will play a central role in demonstrating how automated aerial logistics and UAM can be deployed in a real-world environment. Starting here, we plan to expand internationally and bring our technology to other markets around the world.

Finally, our broader aim is to enable true affordability and mass adoption by applying automotive-style mass production methods in aviation for the first time.