

It's a whirlybird, it's a plane

Boston designer's aircraft could change aviation

By Jay Fitzgerald, Boston Herald
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Boston's AeroCopter Inc. is quietly hovering beneath the aviation-development radar.

But it's hoping to be visible on every commercial- and military-industry radar screen in a few years with the Sarus and Kestrel aircraft that its founder says could revolutionize aviation.

Siamak Yassini, chief executive and founder of AeroCopter, is now tinkering with final designs for his mono-tilt-rotor aircraft, similar to the U.S. military's V-22 Osprey, the air-carrier that can move both vertically and horizontally.

Think of a part-airplane, part-helicopter, with a Saturn-like ring around it for a rotating propulsion system, helped by a magnetic levitation system and you have what Yassini envisions.

Yassini, a former NASA and Boeing engineer, says one of the problems with the Osprey has been its in-flight stability. But a mono-tilt-rotor - in which its propulsion system can operate from more angles surrounding an aircraft - may be

the trick to make such vertical-horizontal aircraft more reliable and viable, Yassini believes.

"People have blessed this idea and concept," said Yassini of expert reviews of the technology involved. "The military is looking into this type of technology. The customers (ultimately) would be aircraft companies and the military."

With a little luck and a lot of funding, AeroCopter could conceivably build a prototype within 24 months, he said.

A two-passenger commercial aircraft, nicknamed **Sarus** at AeroCopter, could eventually sell for less than \$1 million. An unmanned military aircraft, dubbed **Kestrel**, could sell for about \$3 million, said the 52-year-old Yassini.

AeroCopter isn't the only Boston-area aircraft company dreaming about the future.

Woburn's Terrafugia Inc. is set within a few weeks to test its own Jetsons-like flying car and its founders are hoping it will be a commercial hit.

But AeroCopter isn't nearly as close to building an actual prototype aircraft - let alone testing it.



Staff Photo By Matthew West
FLYING HIGH: Siamak Yassini, Chief executive and founder of Newbury Street-Based AeroCopter, is working on the final design for two vertical/horizontal aircraft, including Sarus, below, a two-passenger commercial aircraft.

The four-employee AeroCopter has received all of its funding so far from Yassini's brother, Rouzbeh Yassini, head of YAS Ventures.

Siamak Yassini said he ended up in Boston and operating out of an office on hip Newbury Street, of all places - because this is where his family is now located.

Though his vision may seem like science-fiction to many, Yassini said he's convinced he's now producing a product for a future highway in the sky.

