

**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**14 APRIL 2010**

**FIRST SA AIRCRAFT TO BE CERTIFIED BY THE CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY**

Just like the Wright brothers who are credited with inventing and building the world's first powered aircraft; two brothers from Potchefstroom today (14 April 2010) saw their life-long dream of manufacturing a world-class glider aircraft come true.

Brothers Attie and Uys Jonker, the brains behind Jonker Sailplanes, were today handed an Aircraft Type Certificate by the SA Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA). The Type Certificate is the first of its kind to be issued by the SACAA since its inception in 1998. Moreover, it is believed that no other Aviation Authority on the continent has issued this type of certification.

The certificate endorses the Jonker Sailplanes glider aircraft (*named JS-1 Revelation*) as airworthy and thus certified to fly in all the signatory states of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Convention of 1944.

**No plain sailing toward the sailplane dream**

“It all started as a fantasy in our teenage years. The ambition was most probably planted during our childhood days by our father who was a glider pilot and had built his own wood-and-fibreglass glider from our family house’s garage. From there on we were hooked on flying and gliding. However, as we grew older and were allowed to fly, we soon got accustomed to the wood-and-fibreglass glider and wanted more performance out of it. That was when we decided that with modern technology we could advance this form of flying immensely,” recalled Attie Jonker.

Practically, the ‘school boy’ fantasy for the two brothers turned out to be tougher to bring to reality than they thought. So it was back to the drawing board, so to say. “We realised that in order to achieve our goal we had to get the basics right. So, we plotted everything in great detail, including the relevant school subjects, tertiary education and prospective employers to gain the necessary experience,” explained Attie Jonker.

The brothers did not only focus on the educational side of their road to success. Whilst still studying for their respective engineering-related qualifications, they made a successful attempt to rebuild a wrecked modern glider. This led to the opening of a business that focuses on rebuilding gliders. This business underpinned what Jonker Sailplanes business is today.

“The amount of work required to develop a new high performance glider is immense. First you need to develop the required technology to the level of the state of the art. This meant that we had to learn about low-speed aerodynamics, advanced composite materials, aircraft structures and flight mechanics. We also had to develop confidence in our abilities to design and therefore we did a lot of laboratory and wind-tunnel testing to hone our skills.

“Then there was also the matter of finances. Initially we had our day jobs and worked on our project in the evenings and weekends. Later on, Uys quit his day job and started a glider repair

business. This allowed us to develop manufacturing skills and to start training personnel in composite aircraft manufacturing techniques,” explained Attie Jonker.

On the other hand, Attie was employed at the North West University and was busy developing the required technological skills. A big bonus was when Johan Bosman joined the team. He did his master’s degree under the supervision of Attie and they started to work on the aerodynamic design of what was to become the *JS-1 Revelation*. Bosman is currently the chief aerodynamicist of the team and is a partner in the business.

“Key to the whole development process was the ability to do research at the university while being financially assisted through the DTI’s THRIP programme. This allowed several students to be funded while they worked on the *JS-1 Revelation* towards their master’s degrees. In addition, the Civil Aviation Authority played a critical role during the certification process which was a great learning experience on both sides,” said Attie Jonker.

### **The sky is certainly not the limit**

The younger brother, Uys Jonker explained that the turning point for Jonker Sailplanes was when the prototype made its first flight in December 2006. “The glider exceeded all of our expectations in handling and performance but the real cherry on the cake was when we won the South African Nationals in a glider competition that year, confirming the superior performance of the *JS-1 Revelation*,” said Uys Jonker.

The sky is certainly not the limit for Jonker Sailplanes. “Considering the fact that the global glider market continues to grow and that our technology has leapfrogged that of competitors significantly; Jonker Sailplanes now stands a good chance of dominating this market. Throughout the years we have built a name for ourselves and have also partnered with brokering agents in North America and Europe. This has opened a vast market for us,” explained Uys Jonker.

In terms of job creation and contributing to social upliftment, the company employs 31 permanent staff members. In addition, the company has fulfilled the dream of one of its workers, i.e. Lucky Kokwe to become the first black glider pilot in South Africa.

### **Safety first**

“One of our primary mandates is to maintain a safe and secure civil aviation environment. Coupled with that is the role of promoting the development of South Africa's civil aviation capabilities, skills and services for the benefit of the country. In terms of safety, we would not have reached this milestone if we had reservations about the safety aspects of the *JS-1 Revelation*. Moreover, we would not have granted them both the Design Organisation and Manufacturing Organisation approvals if we doubted their capabilities,” said the SACAA’s Captain Colin Jordaan, Director of Civil Aviation.

“This achievement echoes the sentiment that South Africa is alive with possibilities. The two brothers are a true inspiration and have shown that with dedication to a dream, a dedication that borders on obsession, nothing is impossible,” said Jordaan.

## - NOTE TO EDITOR-

### **About Jonker Sailplanes**

Jonker Sailplanes is at the forefront of the gliding world; and is renowned for designing, producing and selling the best racing sailplanes in the world. Since its official inception in 2004, Jonker Sailplanes has grown to become the home of the most sought-after Aeronautical, Structural Design and System Engineers and Composite Technicians. The company, its staff and primary product (JS-1 Revelation) have won numerous awards in various categories across the world.

### **Awards and Competitions won**

1. 2006 South African Glider Nationals - First Place
2. 2007 DISA Chairman's Award for Most Innovative New Product in South Africa
3. 2007 South African Glider Nationals - First Place
4. 2008 United States Glider Nationals - First Place
5. 2008 South African Glider Nationals - First Place
6. 2008 Royal Aeronautical Society - Bronze Medal for Contribution to Aerospace Engineering
7. 2009 Neel van Niekerk Award from South African Royal Aeronautical Society
8. 2009 British Glider Nationals First Place
9. 2009 South African Glider Nationals - First Place

### **About the SACAA:**

The South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA) was established on 1 October 1998 following the enactment of the South African Civil Aviation Authority Act, No.40, in September of the same year. The SACAA promotes and maintains a safe, secure and sustainable civil aviation environment, by regulating and overseeing the functioning and development of the industry in an efficient, cost-effective, and customer-friendly manner according to international standards.

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