

HOT! Aero-News Alert: Cirrus 'Will Not Bid' On Columbia

Mon, 19 Nov '07

MORE Major Breaking News... Klapmeier Confirms That Cirrus "Will Not Bid"

ANN has confirmed, in an exclusive conversation with Cirrus Founder Alan Klapmeier, that the company will not bid for ownership of the assets of Columbia Aircraft, currently on the block and slated to be sold in a bankruptcy auction in just a few days.



Klapmeier noted that Cirrus had been to the Bend plant, come away with strong impressions of the continued viability of the Columbia program but admitted that making Columbia a viable addition to their product line, "will not be cheap."

Among a number of concerns raised by Cirrus were their estimates that the Columbia's warranty claims are quite a bit more costly than first thought, and that additional issues with "Evade, Service Bulletins, and other concerns," were likely to drive the true cost of the acquisition, in both time and money terms, far higher than originally estimated. While not questioning the ultimate market potential for the aircraft, Cirrus noted that such an investment in resources would be considerable and that when the total costs were factored in, that continued development of 'the jet' should remain their largest priority.



Klapmeier also admitted that the reality of producing this aircraft without the chute, for the year or more that it would take to reverse engineer its installation, concerned them -- if in fact that the aircraft could be so adapted. "What do you do without the chute..." asked Klapmeier.

"...Philosophically, it just doesn't fit in well with our view of safety."

Other sources close to Cirrus, and other parties looking at a possible Columbia acquisition, also counseled ANN that while they thought that Columbia could be brought back to full production and achieve the 200 unit annual sales figure touted by many for initial survival, that upgrading the Columbia for true "High-Rate" production (in excess of 200 units, annually) would be a considerable task... and one that could conceivably be the most expensive of the many undertakings necessary to guarantee a firm future for this aircraft series.

With this announcement, there are but two "serious" players left in the bidding for Columbia... Industry behemoth Cessna Aircraft and aero-newcomer Park Electric... with just days to go, the race is narrowing but we have a feeling that the sparks are just beginning... we'll keep you updated.