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Rose-painted plane lands safely after

almost 29,000 km

Hanover pilots fly round Africa in a small plane

Shortly after 3 p.m. today, the rose-painted Cessna, now known all over the world, touched down on the runway at Hanover Airport. This landing marked the end of private pilot Uwe Thomas Carstensen's and his co-pilot Martin Grohgan's African adventure. Since 1 November 2010 they had been flying the single-engine plane around the African continent. It was a trip that included unpredictable factors, not just regarding the expected meteorological conditions, but also the now explosive political situation. As a result, the pilots' families and friends were relieved to welcome them back.

"Africa's in turmoil. Virtually everywhere we went we sensed people's spirit of optimism. And all in all, we found Africa a more positive place than information solely from the media would have us believe. We experienced friendly, honest and reliable people everywhere. Nevertheless, terrorism and the crime rate are still major problems in some countries", said Carstensen at a reception in the airport building. Towards the end of their almost 29,000 km trip, the latest crises forced the pilots to make key changes to the flight route planned. The German Foreign Office warned against travelling to the Sahara region because it had received reports that Al Qaeda in Maghreb was targeting Germans to kidnap. They also stated that Islamic terrorist attacks could be expected. The tricky political developments over the last few weeks in North Africa were also the reason why the two Germans abandoned their flight to the north of Mali and Algeria. "Safety is paramount, even if the flight over the Sahara definitely would have been fascinating", explained Carstensen.

Cameroon's Police President receives pilots

On their departure from Cameroon, the pilots had to change their scheduled course. Following information from the tower in Duala they flew out over the sea to avoid the risk of being shot down by a terrorist group. This group had recently used state-of-the-art weapons to attack a Cameroon army control point on the border with Nigeria from the sea.

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But Cameroon had a few pleasant surprises in store for the Africa-bound pilots too. At passport control, the two of them had to spend four hours waiting and then unnecessarily pay 220 dollars for a transit visa. The handling agency complained to the police - and the consequences turned out to be far reaching. The chief of police in Yaoundé asked to meet Carstensen and Grohgan. It then transpired that the passport officer had issued the wrong type of residence visa to incur charges. "We wanted to let the matter rest, but in the end even the Police President Martin Mbarga Nguete invited us to his office to apologise personally and clear up this case of corruption", said Carstensen.

The Germans also got to know officials in Ethiopia too: The Ethiopian Minister for Women, Youth and Children received them in Addis Ababa. In Ethiopia and Uganda they were also guests at the German embassies.

Support for the DSW youth projects

In addition to typical tourist spots, Carstensen and Grohgan had planned to visit projects sponsored by the German Foundation for World Population (DSW). In Uganda, Ethiopia and Tanzania they found out more about the work on sex education and HIV prophylaxis. Carsten seemed very impressed by the obvious successes. "We talked to young people in youth clubs and educational institutions who were managing their lives confidently. This generation will sustainably and positively change the African continent".

During the airport reception Carstensen and his wife Maria handed over a symbolic 80,000 euro cheque from their MUT foundation to the DSW whose projects the couple have been sponsoring for some time. DSW member of the board Knut Gerschau offered his thanks for the donation which is to be used for sex education material and training courses in youth clubs in Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.

The whole African flight online

Anyone interested in reading about all the impressions the two pilots to Africa gained and their encounters with people and nature will find log book entries and reports of all the places they went to at www.globeflight-rallye.com.

The first leg of the flight round Africa started on 1 November 2010 in Hanover. It took them 16,400 km via Croatia, Greece, Egypt, the Sudan, Ethiopia, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Botswana, South Africa to Windhoek in Namibia. At the beginning of February they continued on from there to the Republic of Congo, to Cameroon, Togo, Burkina Faso, Mali and



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Senegal. The last stops on the 12,550 second leg were Gran Canaria, Lisbon and Agen.

Captions

Photo 1: Martin Grohganz and Uwe Thomas Carstensen drink an obligatory landing beer

Photo 2: The first interviews right after landing in Hanover

Photo 3: The MUT Foundation hands over a cheque with a donation to the German Foundation for World Population (from left: Uwe Thomas Carstensen, Maria Carstensen, Knut Gerschau)

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