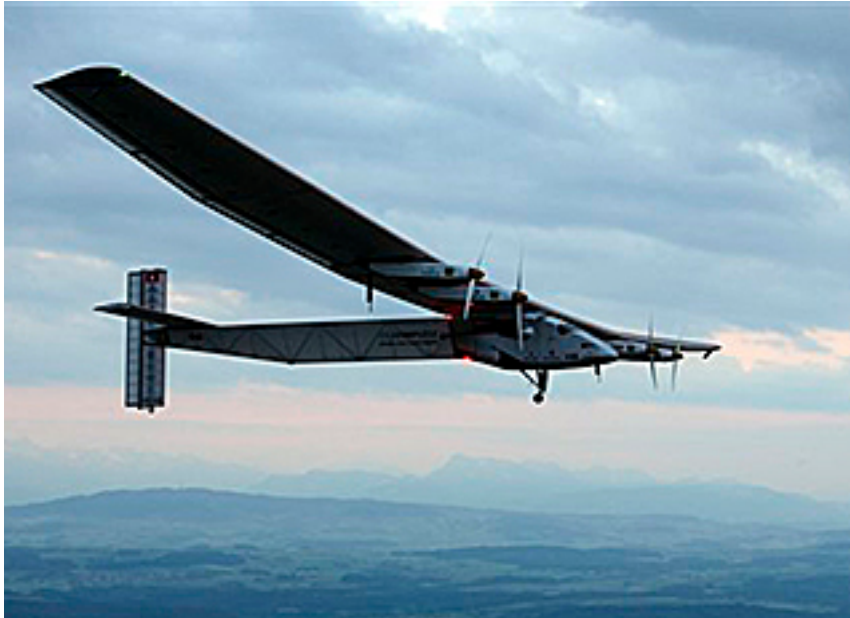


Swiss Solar Plane Designed to Stay Airborne Indefinitely

AP



BERLIN (AP) — A Swiss-made solar-powered aircraft has made a successful inaugural flight as its makers prepare for what they hope will be the first round-the-world solar flight.

The Solar Impulse 2 team said the aircraft spent two hours and 17 minutes in the air above western Switzerland on June 2, 2014. They plan several other flights over the coming months.

The Solar Impulse 2 is a bigger and better version of a single-seat prototype that first took flight five years ago. Bertrand Piccard and Andre Borschberg, the project's founders, say it theoretically can stay airborne indefinitely.

The plane soaks up energy from the sun through some 17,200 solar cells that cover its massive wings, which span 72 meters (236 feet).

Piccard and Borschberg hope to fly the aircraft around the world next year.

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