



Renaming the Airbus high altitude platform system to Aalto has angered Avealto, which aims to build giant airships

AIRBUS

UK start-up accuses Airbus of low trick

Robert Lea, Industrial Editor

Monday February 13 2023, 12.01am, The Times

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The decision by Airbus to change the lyrical name of Zephyr, its communications and spy drone programme, to the more prosaic Aalto has been challenged by a British start-up called Avealto.

Airbus, a company better known for its passenger aircraft, began work on the Zephyr project 20 years ago. With the solar-panel powered glider set to go into service next year, Airbus said last month that it would be changing its name.

Aalto, it said, stands for the A of Airbus, “alt” for the altitudes at which it will operate and the O for its continual

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However, Avealto has sent Airbus a “cease and desist” legal letter over the name change, not only because of the similarity to its own but also because of what it calls a change of strategy to target the mobile communications market in which Avealto hopes to play a role.

High-altitude platform stations, or Haps, come as fixed-wing drones like that of Airbus or as airships or balloons. Sometimes called pseudo satellites, they have been in the news after a [Chinese spy balloon](#) was shot down by the United States. Airbus says Aalto’s missions will involve mobile connections or “earth observations” for government and commercial customers.

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Avealto, whose name means high bird in Spanish, has been ten years in the development, with the aim of producing 100m-long, low-cost communications airships to provide or improve internet connections in developing countries. It is raising funds and says it will build its vehicles in Britain, initially for the Indonesian market.

Avealto said it had launched the legal challenge to Aalto because “it fears the infringement of its trademarked name by Airbus will threaten its ability to raise funds and market its services”.

Walt Anderson, Avealto’s founder and chief executive, said the new Aalto name would cause market confusion. “This appears

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Avealto has written to Kemi Badenoch, the business and trade secretary, asking her to support and protect a British business interest as she has promised to do.

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Airbus declined to comment.

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