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Up, Up, and Away with Icom Radios

“Using gas balloons is unlike any other flying.” said Jonathan R. Trappe, world record holder for the longest gas balloon flight (68 hours, 46 minutes and 1,214 miles). “There is no sound. No propellers, no jet engines. No burner, no heart-thumping rotors of a helicopter. Not even the wind that gliders experience. You’re going 25 knots with the wind without making a sound. This is true, silent flight.” In May of this year, he crossed the English Channel.



Safety is the most important aspect of this type of flying says Trappe. That takes meticulous strategic and tactical planning and equipment. In addition to an aircraft radio, he and his crew uses Icom IC-F14/S Series radios to coordinate the flight with the crew on the surface.

“When I’m high in the air, the range of the Icom radio is a hundred miles.” said Trappe. “It’s a good thing, too. Coordinating with the ground crew is extremely important. They need to be there right when I come down. It’s not like we are landing in an airport.” And they aren’t able to see him easily. He has reached altitudes of 17,930 feet, flown over open water, and at night.

Other equipment he carries is an altitude encoding transponder, aviator’s breathing oxygen, pilot parachute, GPS, cell phone for ground communication (usually after landing), Sat phone to talk with his meteorologist that is not part of the chase team, and emergency locator beacon.

On one flight, some enterprising ham radio operators were following his flight in the skies. His Icom crew radio has a ‘privacy code’ (PL / CTCSS tone) programmed, so even if they found his frequency, he wouldn’t hear them.

“Being the enterprising amateur radio hams that they are, they just tried all the privacy codes!” said Trappe. “There are 52 of them. My radio woke up and I heard their voices. I was very surprised to hear them calling me. It was awesome, actually. We talked for a while.” Trappe is also a licensed ham operator.

The night had grown very cold a mile up in the air and he was very happy to hear their voices break the quiet. They told him his flight was being covered on WRAL, the local CBS affiliate.

“I spoke with several different individuals and it was a welcome addition to the flight.” Trappe said. “One of the hams was an experienced commercial pilot, a 737 captain. Before

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I reached the Raleigh Durham airport, he telephoned the tower and briefed them on my flight, pointing the controller to our website and tracking information. It was this 737 captain that suggested on my Icom F14 that I flash the tower with my spotlight, so they could get a fix on me. It worked!”

Thanks to that 737 pilot, the interaction with his Icom IC-F14/S added a substantial safety factor by giving the tower an idea of what kind of aircraft he was, where he was, and the location of other aircraft in the sky.

Tom Ohlsson of Red Dog Radios is the dealer that supplies Trappe with Icom radios. He said, “Jonathan is an extreme sports guy and his professional approach is just like all other pros that participate in mountain climbing, Indy Car racing, SnoCats in Antarctica, or other extreme activities. You won’t find a lot of holes in his safety plans, team, or equipment. He thinks of everything.”

“Jonathan’s relationship with Red Dog Radios started when he did a Google search for ‘VHF Portable Radio’,” said Ohlsson. “He needed some custom tuned lightweight VHF airband antennas to deploy from his balloon. I built a portable J-Pole antenna fashioned from 300 ohm ladder line. In the course of our communications, Jonathan realized he needed an air-to-ground chase radio system. Icom has an excellent reputation in the avionics world, and Jonathan was very comfortable going with Icom land mobile products based on his prior experience with Icom airband radios.”



At the time of purchase, the Icom F14 was the only economical VHF land mobile radio with a high capacity Lithium Ion battery, which was a hugely critical factor to Trappe. Now Icom offers two more excellent entry level radios with li-ion batteries, the F3011 and the F3001.

Trappe and his team have been invited to his next big flight, the Mexican Bicentennial celebrations in Leon, Mexico in November. He will be flying a red, white, and green balloon cluster named ‘La Independencia.’ The colors represent Mexico’s flag. Icom will be there, in the skies and on the ground, connecting the pilot to the chase crews on the roads of Mexico.

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For People Who Make Smart Choices

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IDAS™
ICOM DIGITAL ADVANCED SYSTEM
The Time Is Now!

IDAS Solutions
IDAS Features
IDAS Downloads
IDAS Did You Know

What's New with IDAS

Intrinsically Safe (IS) operation comes to select versions of the F3161 portables series. Now use IDAS in more places than ever! Ideal for dangerous areas, like:

- >> Petrochemical plants and storage facilities
- >> Grain silos
- >> Railroads and ports

Did You Know ...?

IDAS radios are packed full of great features to make communication a sinch. Learn more about what your IDAS radios offer with our monthly Did You Know features.

- >> You can have a Split Dispatch System on one frequency with IDAS
- >> You can track your mobile Fleet using IDAS
- >> You can roam with IDAS

Product Highlights

IDAS repeaters and other systems products are available from Icom America Systems in a variety of affordable, off-the-shelf equipment solutions. The CY-5000 is a perfect example as it features:

- >> Icom's UR-5000 VHF or UR-6000 UHF repeater module mounted in a self-contained
- >> 19 rack mountable case that's only 4RU high
- >> Optional gear includes a pre-selector and/or a duplexer

Look to Icom America Systems for IDAS 6.25kHz very narrowband digital solutions that'll meet your agency's or company's needs in a variety of smart and affordable ways.

IDAS Videos

IC-FR5000 IC-FR6000 Series

- 19-inch rack mount and 1RU high design
- 12-digit dot-matrix display
- 50W versions and 29W versions
- D-Sub 25-pin accessory connector for connecting external devices
- Ready for single-site trunking and IP network connection with optional UC-FR5000
- Two RF modules can be installed in a unit for a "2Ch in 1 box" configuration

New layout, new case studies, new information... Oh my! We are happy to hear your feedback - let us know if you have anything that you would like to see added.

For People Who Make Smart Choices