Attempt to fly hoverboard across English Channel ends in failure

A French inventor's attempt to become the first man to cross the English Channel on a hoverboard has ended in failure after he crashed while trying to land on a re-fueling station in the middle of the Channel, *BBC News* reports. Franky Zapata, who invented the jet-powered Flyboard Air, took off from near Calais earlier this morning, and had hoped to make the crossing to St Margaret's Bay on the English coast in around 20 minutes.

Zapata, who was not injured by his fall into the water, had previously indicated that he only thought he had around a 30 percent chance of successfully making the crossing. Nevertheless, his failure suggests that the difficulty of piloting the noisy Flyboard Air means it has limited practical use. The inventor has previously said that it takes a minimum of 50 to 100 hours of practice just to stand up on his invention.

The Flyboard Air that Zapata used in the attempted crossing is powered by five mini turbo engines which are capable of producing around 250 horsepower each. As a result, the hoverboard is capable of reaching speeds of up to 118 mph according to *The Guardian.* As well as the board itself, the setup also includes a fuel tank filled with kerosene which Zapata wears on his back, and a handheld remote control.

Due to the length of the crossing and the limited range of the Flyboard Air, Zapata had to make a refueling stop in the middle of the Channel. However, he was limited to just a

single stop, after the French maritime authority raised concerns about the crossing taking place over such a busy stretch of water.

It was while attempting to land on this refueling platform that Zapata fell into the water, missing the platform by just “a few centimeters,” a member of his team said on BFM television (via *Mail Online*). The team member blamed the size of the waves for his failure to make the landing, which exaggerated the movement of the deck.

We got our first glimpse of the Flyboard Air back in 2016, when footage emerged of Zapata flying the Flyboard Air above a lake. At the time the footage was so unbelievable that many claimed it had to be a hoax, but as more footage emerged it became clear that the jet-powered hoverboard was real, especially when Zapata set a world record for the farthest hoverboard flight with a 2,252 meter (7,388 feet) long Flyboard Air flight along France’s south coast.

Zapata announced his intention to attempt to cross the 35 km (around 22 miles) stretch of water earlier this month, after making an appearance at France’s annual Bastille Day celebrations where he brandished a rifle as he flew above the crowds. His invention could one day end up being used by the French military, who have expressed an interest in using the Flyboard Air as a logistical or assault tool, according to *The Guardian*. The French government defense and procurement agency has also invested in the development of the Flyboard Air with a €1.3m grant it gave to Zapata last year.

https://www.theverge.com/2019/7/25/20708726/jet-powered-hoverboard-english-channel-crossing-attempt-flyboard-franky-zapata