

## Press Release from the Malibu-Mirage Interest Group – MMIG46

### EASA proposes unified type rating for all PA46 aircraft

After working collaboratively with EASA, MMIG46 are pleased to announce the outcome of the EASA Operational Evaluation Board (OEB) documented in their report of 28<sup>th</sup> June 2012. The proposed harmonization of type rating requirements will have a significant and positive impact on current and potential future owners of any version of the PA46 airframe.

Background – Piper introduced the original version of the PA46 in 1983 – the Piper Malibu, designated the PA46-310 and fitted with a turbocharged 310HP Continental engine (TSIO 520). This completely new design, incorporating pressurization and cabin class comfort, offered pilots a new level of capability not previously seen in general aviation aircraft. In 1989 the aircraft was fitted with an uprated engine, a turbocharged 350 HP Lycoming, and became the Malibu Mirage PA46-350. This aircraft continues in production, but has been constantly updated to keep abreast of modern avionic developments. The latest version incorporates the Garmin G1000 avionic suite.

In 1998, Rocket Engineering (Spokane, Washington, USA) was granted an FAA STC to replace the piston engine with a PT6A-34 turbine manufactured by Pratt & Whitney, Canada. With power output at 560 SHP, substantial improvements in take off and climb performance as well as high altitude cruise were seen, alongside the legendary reliability of the PT6A powerplant. This aircraft is called the JetProp and designated the P46T. More recent versions of the Jetprop have a choice of the PT6A-21 and PT6A-35. Two years later Piper introduced their own turbine version powered by a Pratt & Whitney PT6A-42 – the Meridian - also designated the P46T.

Fairly early in the life of the aircraft it was realized that the aircraft offered capabilities for which some pilots were not prepared or trained. The FAA instituted a special certification review which reached the conclusion that the aircraft was perhaps more capable than the pilots who were operating it.

In the US, this issue was very practically addressed by the insurance industry which required pilots to undergo appropriate training before offering cover. In Europe, the regulatory authorities classed the PA46 as a High Performance Aircraft (HPA) and it was made subject to a formal type rating (as opposed to a class rating).

Through an accident of history, the P46T Jetprop type rating was held to be separate from that of the P46T Meridian and the piston versions of the aircraft. So an experienced (and type rated) pilot of a piston PA46 who might wish to buy a Jetprop would have no choice but to have to repeat the complete course. The same was true of instructors and ground maintenance staff. However he/she could fly a Meridian with only 'differences training' – mainly a thorough ground briefing and minimal flight time.

It is this anomaly that has now been resolved with the recent report of the EASA OEB. It is proposed that there now be a single PA46 type rating to cover all variants (Mirage, Malibu, Matrix, Meridian and Jetprop). Some differences training will be required to move from piston to turbine versions, but Jetprop and Meridian pilots will be able to move between the aircraft types with a simple requirement for familiarization.

The substantial costs for this resolution have been met from the contributions of members of MMIG46. We would encourage all operators of PA46 aircraft to consider membership of MMIG46 so that any future challenges can be met ([www.mmig46.eu](http://www.mmig46.eu)).

Wilhelm Schroerer, Chairman of the Board: "As an interest group we are very proud of our close and positive cooperation with EASA and our ground-breaking efforts. In future all PA46 variations may be operated with a uniform rating. The only difference will be specific technical training for the relevant type. There are now fewer obstacles for continued operation of this successful aircraft. I would like to address special thanks to our General Mgr. Klaus Tepper, who ran this process with great commitment and technical skill."

The full text of the current EASA document can be accessed at –

<http://www.easa.europa.eu/certification/experts/OEB-reports.php>

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