

## Sikorsky puts high-speed copter through its paces

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Chief test pilot [Kevin Bredenbeck](#) sliced through the Florida sky at 250 knots Wednesday morning aboard Sikorsky's X2 helicopter, opening the door to what could be a new era in helicopter development.



The Sikorsky's X2 has two counter rotating blades on top of the aircraft and a prop that pushes from behind This was the 17th flight of the X2, an aircraft wholly funded by Sikorsky. Photo: Contributed Photo/C. David LaBianca , Contributed Photo/C. David LaBianca / Connecticut Post Contributed C. David LaBianca

"The aircraft is doing a little better than predicted," Bredenbeck said in a conference call with reporters, adding that the X2 hasn't hit its top speed, which could be 15 knots faster.

During the more than one-hour flight, Sikorsky's X2, which has two counter-rotating blades on top and a prop that pushes from behind, actually hit 260 knots, or just shy of 300 mph, when it entered a slight dive. The helicopter took off about 7 a.m. from Sikorsky's West Palm Beach, Fla., flight testing facility and flew at more than 200 knots, or roughly twice the speed of a conventional helicopter of this size, for more than 45 minutes, including cruising at 250 knots. This was the 17th flight of the X2, which is expected to be tested four more times.

The flight did not set an official speed record because Sikorsky did not have a representative of the [National Aeronautic Association](#) on hand to witness it, but the company said it is looking into that. The official record for a helicopter still belongs to the British-made Westland Lynx ZB-500, flown by [John Egginton](#) in 1986, which achieved 216 knots, or 249.09 mph.

The flight took place 71 years and one day after the anniversary of [Igor Sikorsky's](#) first flight in his VS-300, the first practical helicopter ever built.

"It's always significant when a manufacturer like Sikorsky sets a goal and achieves it," said [Raymond Jaworowski](#), senior aerospace analyst at Newtown-based Forecast International.

[Jaworowski](#) and [Richard Aboulafia](#), vice president of analysis for the Teal Group Corp., see the military as the most likely buyer of this technology. Aboulafia said, however, the military is just as likely to spend its money on unmanned aerial vehicles and derivatives of helicopters already in service than investing in new technology.