

New
home

AWI research aircraft lands at Bremen Airport for the first time

Aircraft moves to the new German base of polar planes

[29. February 2016] It was the first landing for Polar 6 at the Bremen Airport today. The aircraft is one of two research planes that the Alfred Wegener Institute, Helmholtz Centre for Polar and Marine Research (AWI) currently uses for scientific and logistical tasks in polar regions. Bremen Airport is the new home of the Basler BT-67 aircraft, which will come here regularly for instrument checks and re-fitting.

"I am delighted that the state of Bremen will continue to be the home of the polar research planes", says Economics Senator Martin Günthner. The move had become inevitable, as the Bremerhaven Airport is no longer available. "To watch the research planes take off and arrive at Bremen City Airport shows the airport visitors that the Bremen scientists go beyond our national borders", explains Günthner.



Jürgen Bula, CEO of Bremen Airport, shares his excitement for the choice of the new base: "We are proud to welcome the first polar research plane here."

Since the beginning of October the Alfred Wegener Institute has been renting a 1,400 square metre area at the Ryanair terminal. "In the meantime our employees have been organising their new workplace and finding homes for electronic measuring equipment and spare parts", says Dr Uwe Nixdorf, head of AWI logistics and Deputy Director. About five employees from his division coordinate the aircraft missions in Bremen and equip Polar 6, and its sister plane Polar 5, with instruments and devices for the polar research missions.

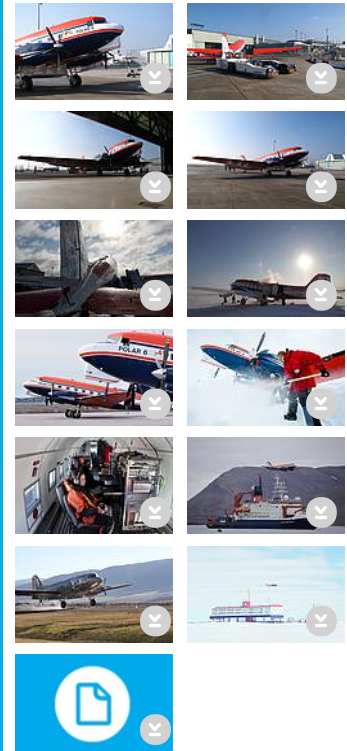
With stopovers in Keflavik (Iceland) and Scotland the Polar 6 has arrived from its mission in Muskoka, Canada, where, among other things, the AWI employees tested a new radar system for surveying glaciers and sea ice in collaboration with the company Lake Central. The new radar system is set to be used in the Arctic this year. During this typical research mission the AWI planes will employ the cutting-edge ice radar to measure, with the utmost precision, the thickness of glaciers in Greenland. After comparing the newly collected data with data from satellite surveys and ice drilling missions on site the researchers will gain insight in how much the Arctic ice caps have decreased in size due to global warming. Other missions for the research planes are, for instance, surveying sea ice or exploring the polar atmosphere.

Bremen is expecting the sister plane Polar 5 for the first time at the end of April. Until the beginning of February Polar 5 was on a mission for research and logistics in the Antarctic, where some of its tasks were glacier surveys, too. Polar 5 also picked up scientists from a camp on the Filchner ice shelf, who had spent several weeks examining the characteristics of Antarctic ice shelves with skidoos and sledges. The plane is currently undergoing maintenance work on the main base of the aircraft operator Kenn Borek Air in Calgary, Canada, as instructed by the AWI.

History of the Basler BT-67

Polar 5 and Polar 6 are Basler Bt-67 type aircraft, which are remodelled DC-3 planes. They are perfectly equipped for flights in the extreme weather conditions of the poles and the polar research missions. Thanks to their combined ski and wheel landing gear they are able to take off and land on concrete, gravel and snow runways. Since the 1930s more than 15,000 DC-3 aircraft have been built under licence in the USA, and several hundred of them are still in use today. The aircrafts played an important role in history. After the Second World War the US used DC-3 planes as raisin or candy bombers in order to provide supplies to the citizens of Berlin via the Berlin airlift.

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The Institute

The Alfred Wegener Institute pursues research in the polar regions and the

oceans of mid and high latitudes. As one of the 18 centres of the Helmholtz Association it coordinates polar research in Germany and provides ships like the research icebreaker Polarstern and stations for the international scientific community.

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