

# On Floats for ALINGHI



The Alinghi defence team for the America's Cup used two Australian Airborne XT-912 Merlins with experienced pilots, as weather platforms. These trikes on floats can take off from the water and fly, but the idea is that they can measure the wind speed at any height. With a boat you're stuck at a maximum of six metres but these trikes can go to the height of the mast which is the equivalent of a 17-storey building.

They were used like a weather boat to measure wind speed and direction. They can fly relatively slow: from 25 knots up to 60 and can cover a large area. The last America's Cup was a race area of nine square miles but this year's race covered an area of 450 square miles, so different equipment was needed to do that effectively.

The two trikes were used pretty much every day that the conditions were good for sailing Alinghi and the trike crew consisted of the pilot and a weather observer / computer operator.

Back in San Diego, they used helicopters for wind observation, so there were some sailors up in those helicopters to look at wind on the water, but this is quite a different application because they were actually measuring the wind speed and direction. It's quite hard to measure the wind speed and direction on a helicopter because of the down-draft, but on these trikes it can be done very accurately.

*Pity Alinghi was not able to beat Oracle.*

