



**AEROSPATIALE
TAMPICO**

STUDENT TEACHER

*The Tampico gets
its first classroom
assignment.*

BY MARK R. TWOMBLY

One airplane does not constitute much of a market penetration, but you have to start somewhere. One airplane is the extent of the fleet of French-built Aerospatiale TB-9 Tampicos currently flying in the United States. More will be arriving soon, but at the moment, the only one is in service at Westair, a flight school at Westchester County Airport in White Plains, New York.

The TB-9 is the entry-level model in Aerospatiale's Caribbean series of piston singles, the others being the TB-10 Tobago, TB-20 Trinidad, and turbo-



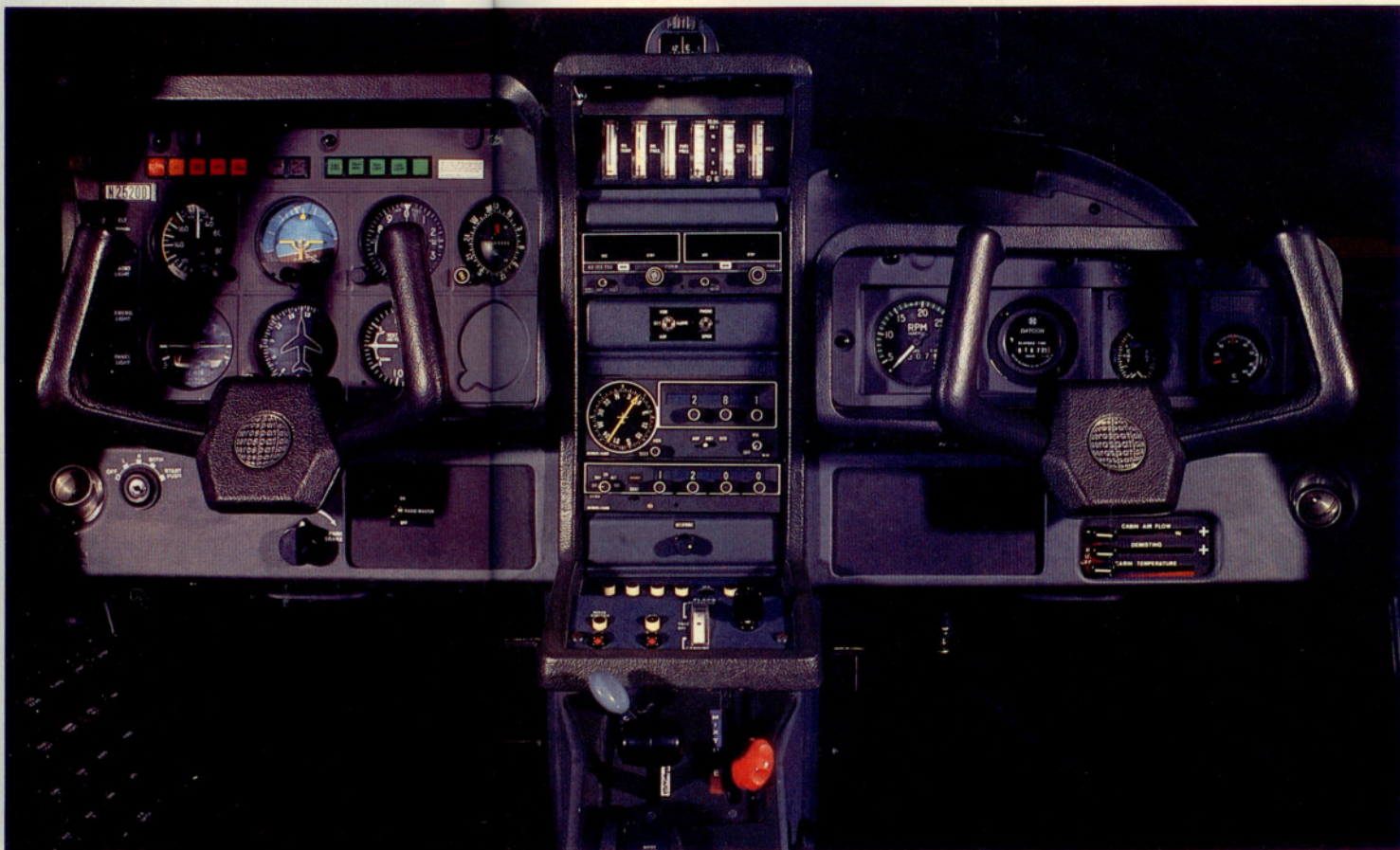
charged TB-21 Trinidad TC. Aerospatiale General Aviation in Grand Prairie, Texas, hopes to find a place for the Tampico in the United States, and Westair's flight school is the starting point.

The Tampico is an interesting contrast to Westair's collection of well-worn Cherokee 140 trainers. The Cherokees have the edge in price; Westair rents a 140 for \$52 an hour, including fuel, while the Tampico goes for \$66 an hour,

also including fuel. A \$14-an-hour higher rental price would seem to be an insurmountable disadvantage in attracting customers, but the Tampico has a trump card. The Cherokees look every bit their age and more, whereas the Tampico's swooping fuselage lines, gull-wing doors, and sports-car interior look modern and enticing. Many of Westair's students prefer to fly the Tampico exclusively despite the price gap.

The TB-9 has the same basic airframe as the Tobago and Trinidad, with some important differences ahead of the fire wall. It is powered by a 160-horsepower Lycoming O-320 and fixed-pitch Sensenich propeller. Actually, two versions of the TB-9 exist—the Tampico and the Tampico Club. The Tampico has a full interior, wheelpants, and a cruise propeller. It was introduced in 1979 in Europe as a lower cost alternative to the 180-hp Tobago. The Tampico Club has a more utilitarian interior, no wheelpants, and a climb prop. Thanks to its lighter weight and low-pitch propeller, it has better takeoff and climb performance than the Tampico. It is intended specifically as a trainer and has proven popular with European aero clubs (hence the name Club), where most gen-

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eral aviation pilot training is conducted. Only the Club will be available in the United States.

Takeoff and climb performance is impressive. Departing Westchester with Westair instructor Dan Lungen in the right seat, we saw an initial climb rate of more than 1,000 feet per minute. Visibility over the Tampico's long nose is poor at a best-climb-rate pitch attitude, and in busy New York City airspace, visibility is vital. Putting the tip of the nose on the horizon struck an acceptable compromise between rate of climb and visibility. Aerospatiale chose a climb prop for the club to ensure good takeoff and climb performance in high density altitude conditions.

The cabin is utilitarian in comparison to the plusher accommodations in the Tobago and Trinidad. The front bucket seats and the rear bench seat are upholstered in fabric, but that's about all the cloth you'll find. Westair has no complaints with the Spartan finish. It is a frequently flown trainer, after all, and durability counts.

Once you've settled into the left seat, the Tampico's finer characteristics become evident. The view is superb. The huge windows extend up over the top of

the fuselage and down the sides to elbow level. Visibility in turns, overhead, even behind the airplane, is excellent. It encourages students to keep their heads up and swiveling.

Aerospatiale's singles are praised for the layout of the cockpit and justifiably so. The instrument panel is divided into three distinct sections. A large, attention-getting row of annunciators in the left panel is positioned just below the glareshield in the pilot's line of sight. The right panel section contains exhaust gas, cylinder head, and outside air temperature gauges, which are canted toward the pilot. The center section with the avionics stack extends down and then out between the two front seats.

Circuit breaker switches, engine controls, stabilator trim, fuel selector, and hand-held microphone are located between the front seats at arm level, which is a convenient and comfortable arrangement. The vertical engine and fuel gauges at the top of the center stack take some getting used to. They all look alike, and initially, it is difficult to quickly distinguish among them, but after a couple of flights, it becomes a nonissue.

You soon learn to keep an eye on the fuel gauge needles because they descend quickly. Total fuel capacity in the two wing tanks is 40.2 gallons, which is good for about 3.5 hours of cruising, plus a conservative reserve.

In the air, the Tampico is as docile as they come. Control forces are relatively heavy, but the ailerons and stabilator are actuated with rods and bellcranks, so there is no slop in the system.

In slow flight and steep turns, the Tampico is reassuringly steady and solid. Extending the flaps the full 25 degrees pitches the nose down to improve over-the-nose visibility at slower pattern speeds.

A sustained power-off stall



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leads to nothing more pulse quickening than a slight shudder through the airframe and bobbing of the nose, coupled

Aerospatiale TB-9 Tampico Club

Base price: \$74,700

Specifications

Powerplant	Textron Lycoming O-320-D2A, 160 hp @ 2,700 rpm
Recommended TBO	2,000 hr
Propeller	Sensenich, two-blade, fixed-pitch
Length	25.26 ft
Height	9.91 ft
Wingspan	32.05 ft
Wing area	128.1 sq ft
Wing loading	18.2 lb/sq ft
Power loading	14.6 lb/hp
Seats	4
Cabin length	8.3 ft
Cabin width	4.2 ft
Cabin height	3.67 ft
Empty weight	1,411 lb
Max ramp weight	2,348 lb
Gross weight	2,337 lb
Useful load	926 lb
Payload w/full fuel	685 lb
Max takeoff weight	2,337 lb
Max landing weight	2,337 lb
Fuel capacity, std	41.7 gal (40.2 gal usable)
	250.2 lb (241.2 lb usable)

with a brisk descent rate shown on the vertical speed indicator. The two strakes under the aft fuselage contribute to yaw

Oil capacity	8 qt
Baggage capacity	143 lb

Performance

Takeoff distance, ground roll	1,116 ft
Takeoff distance over 50-ft obstacle	1,706 ft
Max demonstrated crosswind component	25 kt
Rate of climb, sea level	738 fpm
Max level speed, 8,000 ft	107 kt
Cruise speed/endurance w/45-min rsv, std fuel (fuel consumption)	
@ 65% power, best economy	101 kt/3.8 hr
6,000 ft	(53.4 pph/8.9 gph)

Service ceiling	10,500 ft
Landing distance over 50-ft obstacle	1,378 ft
Landing distance, ground roll	640 ft

Limiting and Recommended Airspeeds

Vx (best angle of climb)	67 KIAS
Vy (best rate of climb)	78 KIAS
Va (design maneuvering)	122 KIAS
Vfe (max flap extended)	95 KIAS
Vno (max structural cruising)	128 KIAS
Vne (never exceed)	165 KIAS
Vs1 (stall, clean)	58 KIAS
Vso (stall, in landing configuration)	50 KIAS

All specifications are based on manufacturer's calculations. All performance figures are based on standard day, standard atmosphere, sea level, gross weight conditions unless otherwise noted. □

stability and spin recovery, according to Aerospatiale. The Tampico is certified in both the Normal and Utility categories, but aerobatic maneuvers, including spins, are prohibited.

Base price of the Tampico is \$74,700, which does not include avionics or night lighting. A 1990 Tampico equipped with a nav/com, VOR/localizer/glideslope indicator, transponder with altitude encoder, ADF, audio panel, and night lighting package will sell for \$98,735, according to Aerospatiale.

Westair, which is leasing the Tampico for two years, began flying it last winter. The airplane has averaged about six gallons per hour in the training role, which is a gallon an hour less than the Cherokees use. Mechanics like the stainless steel battery box and the easy access to instruments and avionics. Instructors appreciate the two doors, the visibility, and the good looks. Students also go for the looks and the docile handling.

Westair is pleased—so pleased, in fact, that the company is negotiating to replace its tired 140s with an all-new fleet of Tampicos. □