PROFILE: Aero Vodochody L-29 Delfin

(<u>Variants / Other Names:</u> L-29A Delfin Akrobat)

HISTORY:

 The prototype of the L-29 Delfin ("Dolphin") trainer, called the **XL-29**, first flew in Czechoslovakia on 5 April 1959, powered by a Bristol Siddeley Viper turbojet engine. The second prototype, first flown in July 1960, was powered by the Czech-designed M701 engine, which was to become the standard installation.

In 1961, the L-29 was entered in a competitive design evaluation to find a new Warsaw pact basic/advanced jet trainer to replace the piston-engine trainer fleet. The other competitors were the Russian Yakovlev Yak-30 and the Polish TS-11 Iskra. The **L-29** won and subsequently became the standard trainer in all Eastern-bloc counties except Poland.

The first production Delfin rolled off the assembly line in April 1963, and production continued for more than 11 years, a huge statement of its success. More than 2,000 were eventually supplied to the Soviet air force, and 400 more to the Czech air force. Others were supplied to Bulgaria, East Germany, Hungary and Romania.

Straightforward, rugged and easy to fly, the L-29 was ideal as both a primary jet trainer and as an advanced combat/weapons trainer. The Delfin was later exported to several other nations including Egypt and Indonesia. A small number of a single-seat version, the **L-29A Delfin Akrobat**, was produced, but it never caught on.

In recent years, the L-29 has become popular on the jet warbird market, mostly in the USA, but also in England, Italy and South Africa.

NICKNAMES:

 Maya (NATO Code name)

SPECIFICATIONS:

    Engine: One 1,960-lb thrust Motorlet M701 VC-150 or S-50 turbojet
    Weight: Empty 5,027 lbs., Max Takeoff 7,231lbs.
    Wing Span: 33ft. 9in.
    Length: 35ft. 5.5in.
    Height: 10ft. 3in.
    Performance:
        Maximum Speed at 16,000 ft: 407 mph
        Ceiling: 36,100 ft.
        Range: 397 miles with internal fuel
    Armament: None

NUMBER BUILT: Approximately 3,500

NUMBER STILL AIRWORTHY: At least 50