

The Ultimate Turboprop Duo Pilots of the Caribbean



Timothée Larribau



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Daher has been posting photos of the Kodiak 100 Series III and the TBM 980 in flight over the turquoise waters of the Bahamas, lately, and they couldn't have done better to fire up my imagination.



When I was a kid, my brother-in-law was Pilot of the Caribbean, flying a Piper Aztec to the Bahamas, Haiti, the Turks and Caicos. I never got the chance to fly with him, but I was captivated by the photos he would bring back from his flights. The turquoise waters, where light penetrate deep, the sand polished white by the unforgiving sun, the deeper and darker stains on the sea floor, the many islands and lagoons, bays and creeks sometimes covered with palm trees and lush vegetation as to hide some ancient secret path to a lost treasure.

When you look at that magnificent scenery and you have a historical mind like mine, you need only let your imagination wander a bit to start seeing the white sails of Spanish galleons on the horizon and to grow the damned soul of a Pirate of the Caribbean, lusting for Aztec gold...

Pirates... “Cursed pirates sail these waters.” We dare not sing about them, lest it brings them down on us. “Vile and dissolute creatures, the lot of them”. Or were they? The fact is, as often, literature and movies have done some harm to the true history of piracy in the Caribbean in the 17th and 18th centuries. According to “Jewish Pirates of the Caribbean” by Edward Kritzer or the massive work “Les Huguenots et l’Atlantique” (The French Protestants and the Atlantic) under the direction of Bertrand Van Ruymbeke, Mickaël Augeron and Didier Poton, many pirates, privateers and buccaneers had more motives than gold and treasure. Many fled the persecutions in Europe and sought revenge for the suffering of their families, by preying on the wealth of the Very Catholic Spanish Crown. Many others, choking under the rigid social rules of European societies, went to the Caribbean simply to be free. The Pirate Code, that is more a set a guidelines than actual rules, according to Captain Barbossa, has become a funny line in the Disney movies, but a study of how pirate and privateer crews functioned reveals a fascinating form of democracy and separation of powers, the Captain being elected by the crew for his combat leadership and his ability to pick the appropriate targets but with limited powers of discipline, the Quartermaster being the true “team manager”, making sure the spoils of piracy were shared equitably according to one’s merit and sacrifices in achieving the results. The Brethren of the Coast, mostly French and British protestant pirates and privateers established in Isla Tortuga, were a form of Pirate republic where freedom and individual rights of its members were quintessential.

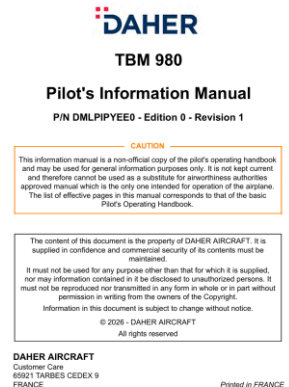
In “The curse of the Black Pearl”, on the beach of his marooning island, Jack Sparrow echoes these historical facts when he tells Elizabeth Swan:

“That’s what a ship is, you know, it’s not just a keel and hull and a deck and sails, that’s what a ship needs, but what a ship is, what the Black Pearl really is, is freedom.”



So what do I see when I see the magnificent photos of the TBM 980 and the Kodiak over the Bahamas? I see "The Curse of the Blue TBM..."

The TBM 980 is the first airplane I have worked on, when arriving at Daher, in Tarbes, France. I have been part of the team that wrote the Pilot Operating Handbook of the 980. With our office right above the Final Assembly Line, my colleagues and I went as much as we could to the aircraft so, we could describe it as best we could and give its pilots The best and most efficient handbook they could get. Our Philosophy was not that of Treasure Island. We wanted to give the pirates, sorry the pilots, The best possible indications to the treasure of flying the 980 and not get "the black spot" for having Betrayed the brotherhood.



To see "my" airplane flying over the Bahamas means I have my share of the loot!

Because I know the Pilot's Code. I may not (yet) be a Pilot of the Caribbean, but I know the Code. I must take Captain Sparrow's voice to say this:

"That's what an airplane is, you know. It's not just an engine and fuselage and a cockpit and wings, that's what an airplane needs, but what an airplane is, what the Blue TBM and the Blue Kodiak really are, is freedom."



TBM and Kodiak: Harmony in the Sky

Is it a full coincidence that "the most fearsome Pirate of the Caribbean" is called after a bird?

*Yo ho, yo ho, a pilot's life for me.
We take-off, we climb and would love to loop.
Drink up me Jet Fuel, yo ho.
We stick, throttle, rudder and don't give a hoot.
Drink up me Jet Fuel, yo ho.
Yo ho, yo ho, a pilot's life for me!*

Fly Differently with the **New TBM 980**



HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?

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