

Thursday, September 16, 2004
5th Cobra flight, 15th solo flight
Circled Ladrón Peak

Launched 7:05am, Landing 8:50am
Flight time: 1:45 hour (gpslog wheels up)
Total time: 29:55
Dead Calm at first, 7mph north crossing winds for final landing
8 landings

Launch Code Double Eagle predicted calm the night before. Predicted 4mph at 5am. Winds aloft 9000ft 5-10mph. Left home at 5:30. Got there around 6:15. Put in 5 gallons of gas, took off at taxied away at 7:00am. Light winds down 21.

RPM still peaks at 6840 if I mash it down, but if step a little less than that it maxes at 6660. I had the airport to myself, did 7 good touch and goes. Last three I did on engine idle. Just need to keep the speed up, one time got a little slow (35 mph) about 10 ft up and it felt mushy. Just remember to keep the speed up.

After 30 minutes of touch and goes, decided to head SW towards Ladrón Peak. I used the hand throttle to set a slow climb (100 ft.min) and slowly climbed as the terrain climbed. There were land out spots all the way up.



Heading west, slightly north of Ladrón peak

There are a series of streams, washes, arroyos that lead up to some headwaters along a ridge that stretched out to the north of Ladron Peak.

I followed these, taking care to be a few miles north of the mountain incase there were any high altitude winds that could



Creeping up the hill to
Ladron Peak



The winds were light. My GPS true speed
indicated the winds were 10 to 5mph.



Headwaters



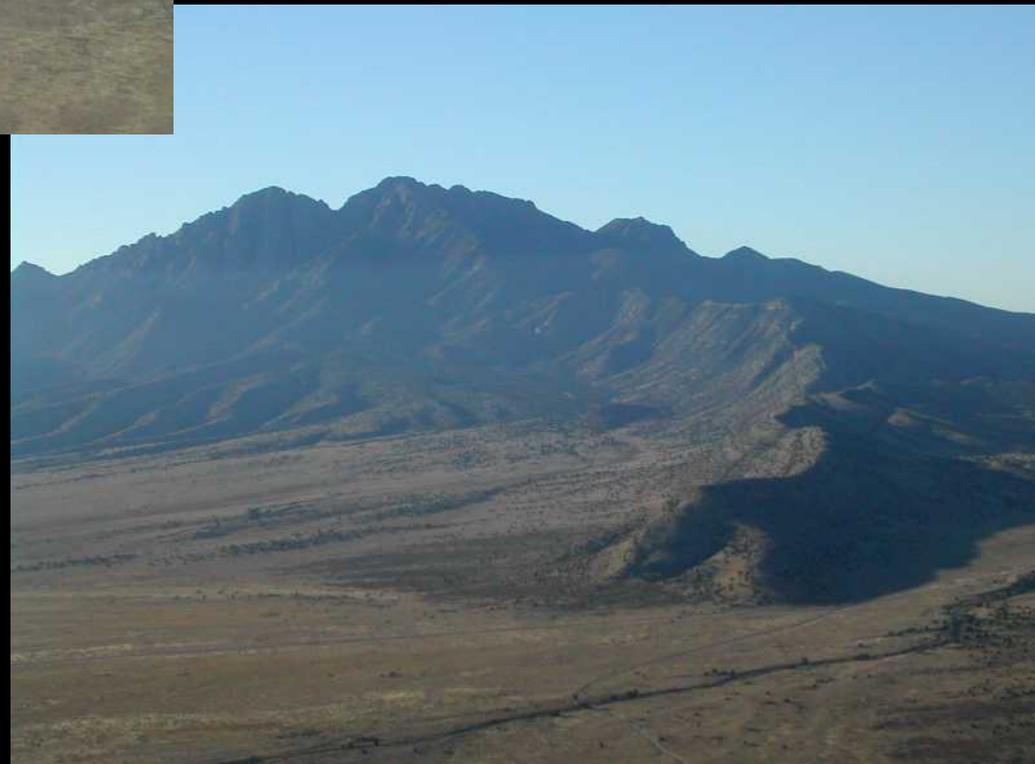
The terrain was more densely wooded the higher I climbed. And it seemed to go forever. Finally I approached a ridge that marked the back side of Ladron Peak. With a little bit of apprehension, I crossed the ridge.

Crossing the Spine

I was over the back now. I stayed high enough that I could glide back to the Rio Puerco side of Ladron Peak if I had to, then I made the jump across some rough terrain with a few emergency landing spots scattered about.



Rough terrain on the back side



Ahead I could see Rio Salado, the most sediment rich tributary of the Rio Grande.

In the early morning light, it was a silver ribbon ahead of me. I headed towards it.

Backside

Rio Salado



I followed windy bed of Rio Salado. On some dead calm day, it would be cool to fly down this canyon really low.

South Side of Ladron, Rio Salado in foreground

Around the backside, can see the flats near Belen in the distance.





I saw an interesting radio tower with some land out spots scattered around the other wise rough south side of Ladron Peak.

Just as I was passing the radio towers, I saw a black object streak by. At first I thought it was bird, but it turned out to be a pair of F-5 jets at my altitude, a mile or two north of me. They were headed to Mountainair.

I want to fly low, close to the terrain now.



I made a gentle bank or two so I could look down to the left and right.



Small Tank/Reservoir. Lots of geese down there.



I continued on, followed the Rio Puerco valley, low. Then diverted over to the 4 large circles. Are they an indian version of stonehenge, a WWII bomb target or an old irrigation circle? Some day I will land down there and find out.



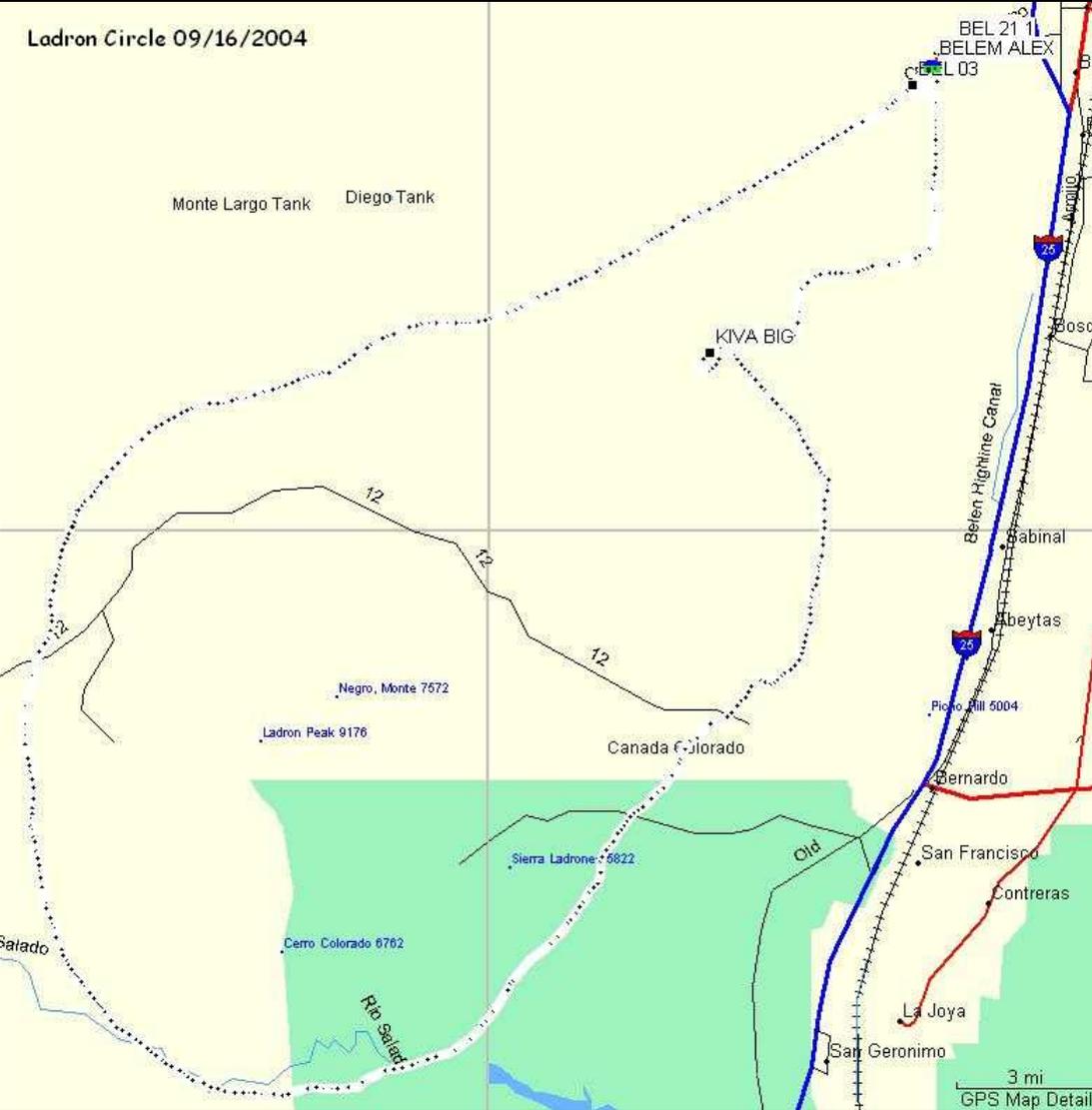
Time to head home. For most of the flight, I had set the throttle using the locking hand controller. It is kinda like cruise control on the car.

The entire way there, I was reminding myself to make sure I switched over to the foot pedal for landing. I stretched out my foot to find the gas pedal, and "it was not there". WTF??

I tried to look under the console, but I could not with my helmet on. I reached under to feel for the pedal and found the pedal was all the way forward, and jammed against the fiberglass fairing.

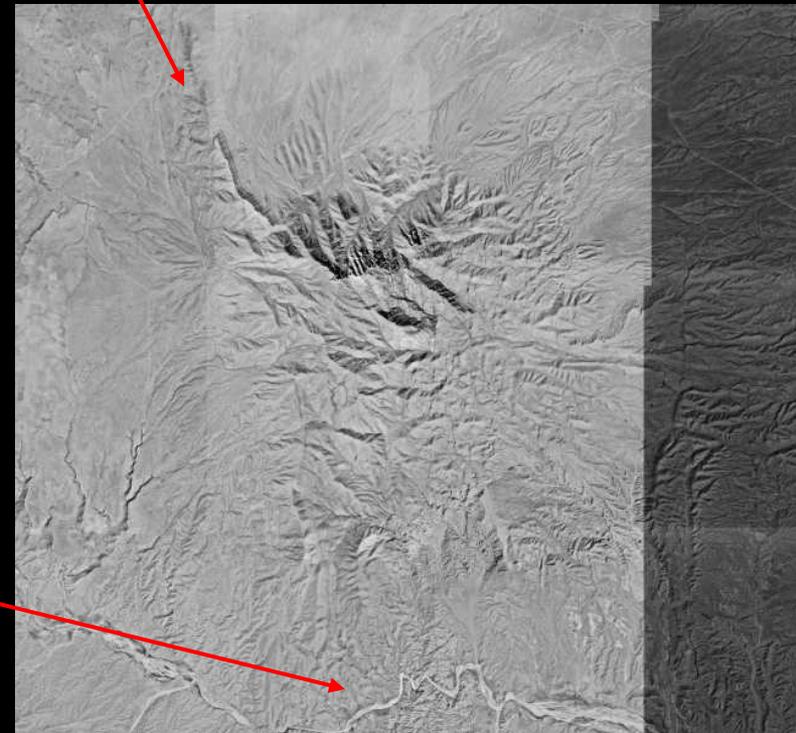
Hmm, a minor difficulty for landing. I verified that I could reduce the throttle to idle with the hand control, then figured I would land using the hand throttle. If I had to, I would hit the kill switches to stop the engine. I did not like this. I approached Belen from the south, it was much more thermally now. And there were at least 4 aircraft in the pattern. I calmed down, focused, and made a uneventful landing (glad I practiced the power off landings earlier in the morning). I taxied off to the side, killed the engine and took a look. The throttle cable had come loose for the gas pedal. A little disconcerting, but that's why I have a backup throttle.

Ladron Circle 09/16/2004



Stuck around the hanger, replaced the ignition key, set up the strobe system, mounted strobe under engine, fixed the leaky gear box (washer was on top, not bottom port), experimented with the radio antenna, topped off the gas tanks.

Spine



Nice XC flight, all by myself.

Rio Salado

Satellite imagery of Ladron