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PRESS INFORMATION

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Maiden flight of first Czech Gripen

Monday October 18 saw the take-off of the first Gripen fighter ordered for export. The aircraft, which will be delivered to the Czech Republic, was marked with Czech colors.

“This maiden flight marks an important milestone for Gripen on the export market. Today’s flight demonstrates that Saab is world leading when it comes to developing modern fighters and that we will stay in that position for a long time”, says Johan Lehander, head of Gripen operations at Saab Aerosystems.

The Czech Air Force will be the first NATO country to operate Gripen, one of the world’s most modern, fourth generation fighter aircraft. The fighters will be delivered by FMV to the Czech Republic from April 2005.

Gripen was up for 1 hour and 25 minutes and was flown by Mats Thorbiörnson, one of Saab’s test pilots. Following today’s maiden flight there will be a period of further air and ground tests to verify that the systems are working in line with the Czech specifications.

The fighter that made the historical flight is the first of 14 aircraft that the Swedish state (FMV) is leasing to the Czech armed forces.

The contract also includes training. Since August, the first Czech pilots have been re-training for the Gripen systems at the F7 Swedish Air Force base in Såtenäs, western central Sweden. Approximately 40 engineers are also being trained in Gripen systems at the Armed Forces Halmstad Schools (FMHS) on the south-west coast

Saab is one of the world’s leading high-technology companies, with its main operations focusing on defence, aviation and space. The group covers a broad spectrum of competence and capabilities in systems integration.

Gripen is the most cost-effective and capable supersonic, multi-role/swing-role fighter aircraft in operational service today. In service with the Swedish Air Force since 1997, it will also equip the South African, Hungarian and Czech Air Forces. Read more about Gripen and Gripen International at www.gripen.com

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