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PRESS INFORMATION

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Gripen expands links with ETPS

Trainee test pilots at Britain's renowned Empire Test Pilots' School will soon be spending even more time flying the world's first operational fourth-generation fighter.

Trainee test pilots at ETPS (Empire Test Pilots' School), Britain's world-class test pilot training school, will gain greater access to flying the world's first operational fourth-generation fighter under a new agreement with Saab, brokered by Gripen International. The deal agreed this month, sees an extension of flying hours for ETPS students, as well as greater flying autonomy.

Since 1999 Saab has been co-operating with ETPS, to include Gripen in the School's test pilot training courses. Select groups of trainees and their instructor pilots (IPs) have come to Sweden to experience Gripen's advanced cockpit technology and flight characteristics. The students gain invaluable insight into the design of a fourth-generation platform and learn how to apply their test pilot techniques in an agile fly-by-wire combat aircraft.

This year will see a significant step forward in Gripen's relationship with the ETPS as the aircraft is fully integrated into the School's training syllabus. For the first time, Gripen will be flown exclusively by ETPS personnel – with two-seat aircraft occupied by an ETPS IP and student on every flight. Up to now a Saab test pilot has always been on board, but for 2005 Gripen will be released entirely to the ETPS.

Two training courses will be undertaken, each involving five students and two IPs. The instructors will undergo a three-week conversion exercise to qualify them on Gripen. The test pilot trainees will be drawn from Britain's Royal Air Force and the Royal Australian Air Force. Each student will fly Gripen for 11 hours over a 10 flight program, with a complementary course of simulator flying. Flight operations will be undertaken at Linköping, while simulator training will be conducted at F7 Wing, Sätenäs.

Saab Aerosystems' Director, After Sales Torsten Öhman, said "Saab is delighted that the world's foremost test pilot's school has chosen to train its students on the Gripen.

Saab is a company with a high degree of interest in the art of flight test, so we are very happy to co-operate with such a prestigious flight test school and

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PRESS INFORMATION

Sida Page

2

expose our aircraft to such high-level personnel. We are fully committed to supporting whatever future aspirations the ETPS may have for Gripen.”

The expanded ETPS project is being carried out in close co-operation with Saab Aerosystems and the Swedish Air Force, and will further strengthen the excellent relations that already exist between these highly skilled operators.

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

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