

**SAAB**

## PRESS INFORMATION

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### South African Gripen makes its maiden flight

#### **The first South African dual seat Gripen took to the skies on its maiden flight in Sweden on Friday 11 November 2005.**

Painted in South African Air Force grey livery, the aircraft took off at 13.40 from Saab's Flight Test Centre in Linköping, Sweden. The flight lasted 1 hr 10 min.

South African test pilot Charl Coetzee and Saab test pilot Magnus Olsson were at the controls for the first flight of South Africa's future multi-/swing-role fighter.

During the flight, the test team were able to validate the basic flight control systems, engine, hydraulics and electrics.

"The flight went better than expected and we were able to demonstrate some additional functionalities," explained Charl Coetzee.

"The maiden flight of South Africa's first Gripen is an important milestone which has been achieved earlier than scheduled. This is indicative of the maturity of the Gripen design and the dedicated approach taken by joint Swedish-South African teams to keep the program on track for customer deliveries commencing in March 2008," remarked Jerker Ahlqvist, Program Director, South Africa.

This aircraft will now undergo a thorough inspection and systems computer interrogation before being prepared for subsequent flight tests commencing later this month. It will be transferred to South Africa in August 2006, where it will participate in a flight development program focused on the integration of South Africa's customized avionics and weapons systems.

Photos of the flight can be downloaded from our website [www.gripen.com](http://www.gripen.com). Go to 'Gripen Images/Gripen Image Base/Basket'.

#### **Background notes to editors:**

- In 1999, South Africa ordered 28 Gripen fighters (19 single-seaters and 9 two-seaters) and 24 BAE Systems' Hawk advanced jet trainers. The Gripen aircraft, which will be delivered from 2008 onwards, will be based at AFB Makhado in South Africa's northern Limpopo Province. The combined contract for the 28 Gripen and 24 Hawk aircraft is valued at US\$2.2-billion
- An 11-strong South African Department of Defence Gripen Joint Project Team is based at Saab in Sweden overseeing the aircraft's development for South Africa. Several SA Air Force and industry pilots have undergone training at Saab's Test Flight Department.
- The Gripen aircraft program is on track. South Africa's Parliament has acknowledged Saab and BAE Systems' joint performance in achieving all of their aircraft program and industrial participation milestones to date.

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- The next significant aircraft development milestone will be the transfer of the first South African Gripen to the Test and Flight Development Centre, in South Africa, in the third Quarter of 2006.
- Saab and its partner, BAE Systems, are delivering a US\$8,7 billion Industrial Participation package to South Africa, including investments in the defense, aerospace and numerous civil industries. This obligation will be fulfilled by April 2011.

Gripen is the first of the new generation, multi-role combat aircraft to enter service. Using the latest available technology it is capable of performing an extensive range of air-to-air and air-to-surface operational missions and employing the latest weapons. Gripen is designed to meet the demands of current and future threats, while at the same time meeting strict requirements for flight safety, reliability, training efficiency and low operating costs. Gripen is in service with the Swedish and Czech Republic Air Forces and has also been ordered by the South African and Hungarian Air Forces. The UK Empire Test Pilots' School (ETPS) is operating Gripen as its advanced fast jet training platform for test pilots worldwide.

*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.*

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