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Saab signs new agreement with UK's test pilots' school

Test pilot students at the renowned Empire Test Pilots' School (ETPS), MOD Boscombe Down in the United Kingdom, will continue to have access to fly Sweden's new generation Gripen fighter under the recently signed agreement with Saab.

The agreement marks the 10th anniversary of collaboration between Saab and ETPS, which is an integral part of the UK Aircraft Test and Evaluation Centre (ATEC), and is operated by QinetiQ in partnership with the UK MOD.

This new agreement for 2008 will mirror the structured approach of the successful 2005-2007 campaigns, with two flying training campaigns in Sweden per year. The 2008 training campaigns will be for seven international students, each of whom will fly up to 11 hours on Gripen across seven sorties with their ETPS Instructor Pilots (IP's).

"Saab is delighted that ETPS has chosen to further extend the training of its students on the Gripen. We have a high degree of interest in the art of flight test, so we are happy to co-operate with such a prestigious flight test school and expose our aircraft to such high-level personnel. We are also fully committed to supporting the future aspirations the ETPS may have for Gripen", says Lennart Sindahl, Executive Vice President of Saab.

Since 1999, ETPS has included Gripen in its test pilot training courses, working in conjunction with Saab. Groups of trainees and their instructor pilots (IP's) have gone to Sweden to experience Gripen's advanced cockpit technology and flight characteristics.

"Modern aircraft rely on both sophisticated flight control systems and advanced integrated mission systems for their effectiveness. It is important that future generations of test pilots and flight test engineers are exposed to these technologies and are able to test and evaluate them objectively. In recent years, ETPS has been using the Saab Gripen aircraft as an important component of this training with great success and is pleased to be continuing the programme" says Ian Burrett, Director Aerospace Training at QinetiQ.

Following the highly successful 2005-2007 ETPS Gripen training campaigns, for which all syllabus requirements were met, zero flights were lost due to un-serviceability and where all teaching goals in all areas were exceeded, the new 2008 deal will build on this success, further embedding Gripen as an integral part of the ETPS course.

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In 2008, each ETPS course will contain two training campaigns (May and August/September) to be undertaken by seven (7) students with three (3) IP's. The test pilot students in 2008 will be drawn from the Royal Air Force, Switzerland, Singapore, the Netherlands and Pakistan. Each student will fly Gripen for eleven (11) hours with a complementary course of simulator flying. Flight operations will be undertaken at Saab's facility in Linköping, while simulator training will be conducted at the Swedish Air Force F7 Wing, Sâtenäs.

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

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Notes to editors:

Saab serves the global market with world-leading products, services and solutions ranging from military defence to civil security. Saab has operations and employees on all continents and constantly develops, adopts and improves new technology to meet customers' changing needs.

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, Czech Republic and Hungarian Air Forces and has also been ordered by South Africa and Thailand. The UK Empire Test Pilots' School (ETPS) is operating Gripen as its advanced fast jet training platform for test pilots worldwide.

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The Empire Test Pilots' School (ETPS) is established to provide The UK Ministry of Defence (MOD) with Service pilots for employment as test pilots for acceptance testing duties and for aerodynamics and systems research. ETPS is part of the Aircraft Test and Evaluation Centre (ATEC), which is a partnership between UK MOD and QinetiQ. The School also trains Flight Test Engineers (FTE) from the MOD and both pilots and FTEs from Commonwealth and other friendly nations. Graduate test pilots and FTEs may go on to contribute to Service equipment programs as combined test team members, procurement managers, operational requirements staff or in the increasingly crucial 'intelligent customer' role in liaison Aerospace contractors.

QinetiQ is a leading international defence and security technology business that was formed in July 2001 from the UK Government's Defence Evaluation & Research Agency (DERA). QinetiQ has approximately 13,500 employees, who deliver technology-based services and exploit QinetiQ's strengths in technology research by selling systems solutions, products and licences to government and commercial customers in a spectrum of defence, security and related commercial markets. In February 2006, QinetiQ Group plc was listed on the London Stock Exchange (main market) and joined the FTSE250 in June 2006.

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