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PRESS INFORMATION

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F17 in Ronneby becomes Sweden's fourth Gripen wing

Today sees the inauguration of Sweden's fourth Gripen wing at F17 in Ronneby. In total, 121 of the 204 Gripen aircraft ordered by the Swedish Air Force have now been delivered.

The Gripen was introduced into the Swedish Air Force in June 1996. In autumn 1997, the first squadron became operational at F7 Såtenäs. F17 Ronneby is the latest wing to receive the Gripen, after F7 Såtenäs, F10 Ängelholm and F21 Luleå. During the autumn, the two Gripen squadrons presently at F10 in Ängelholm will be transferred to F17 in Ronneby. At full strength the Swedish Air Force will have eight Gripen multi-role squadrons. Today, five of those squadrons are already operating the Gripen. So far, the Swedish Air Force has flown over 34,000 missions with its Gripen aircraft. By 2007 the Gripen system will replace all Sweden's Viggen aircraft.

"It feels great to start flying with the world's most modern combat aircraft. Major rebuilding has been carried out on both the hangars and other parts of the infrastructure. We have also trained technicians and are currently training Gripen pilots. Also, F17 will be responsible from 2004 for SWAFRAP (the Swedish Air Force Rapid Reaction Unit). All this will present a major challenge that we are really looking forward to", says Major Kent Löving, Director of Communications, at F17.

Apart from the Swedish Air Force, the Gripen has been chosen by South Africa (28 aircraft) and Hungary (loan of 14 aircraft). The Czech Republic has decided on final negotiations to purchase 24 new Gripen aircraft. Gripen International, the company jointly owned by Saab and BAE SYSTEMS, has started negotiations with the Polish government, which intends to buy up to 48 new aircraft. A bid has been submitted to the Brazilian government for 12 new Gripen aircraft and to Austria for the purchase of up to 30 new aircraft.

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