

Saab's Flight Plan for the Future



Gripen E: “an intelligent fighter system”

In the last week of August 2019, maiden flight of the first Brazilian Saab Gripen E fighter took place, less than five years since the formal contract was signed. This aircraft is the first Brazilian production aircraft and will also be used in the joint test programme as a test aircraft: this milestone is testament to the partnership between Sweden and Brazil.

The main differences with the previous test aircraft are that the Brazilian Gripen E has a totally new cockpit layout, with a large Wide Area Display (WAD), two small Head Down Displays (sHDD) and a new Head Up Display (HUD), but also incorporates modifications both in hardware and software.

There are four outstanding aspects to be recorded: first, for an almost completely new aircraft, there are two distinct configurations being developed simultaneously for the Swedish and the Brazilian Air Force.

Second, the speed of development continues unabated with the Brazilian aircraft having a further updated flight control system as compared with the Gripen E test aircraft (39-8) that first flew a little over two years ago.

Third, is the complete development and production of an aircraft built as per Brazilian Air Force specifications in less than

5 years from contract.

Fourth, the Swedish Air Force has decided to incorporate the Wide Area Display produced in Brazil on its own fighters, an inverse process that of transferring technology to Saab. So Brazil first specified this, the WAD was developed and produced in Brazil and the Swedish Air Force followed, incorporating this on its own on Gripens.

But far more has been achieved. By now, Saab have trained numbers of Brazilian pilots, technicians, engineers, designers and assembly line personnel. The technology transfer programme has been divided into more than 60 segments. By end of the programme, 350 Brazilian engineers, technicians and pilots will have worked in Sweden for up to 2 years, taking part in the theoretical and on-the-job training, before they return to Brazil to apply and multiply their new knowledge and skills. Till now more than 200 Brazilians have been trained in Sweden, and are now back in Brazil engaged with development work on the Gripen, particularly the twin-seater variant and specific developments related to the Brazilian configuration.

The Brazilian company Akaer has partnered with Saab since 2009 and has accumulated more than half a million

hours of work dedicated to the Gripen programme, including on development of structural details, the rear fuselage and are now involved in development of the two-seater aircraft.

The Brazilian programme is a contemporary of the Indian MMRCA case, which began in 2007, involving most of the same contending aircraft. The Brazilian order for 36 aircraft was won by Gripen in 2013. Today, there is not only production and flight of the first Brazilian Gripen, but a robust transfer of technology has been underway with co-development of the product, continuous upgrades, with benefits for Saab, the Brazilian industry and of course, the Swedish and Brazilian Air Forces.



The Gripen's smart cockpit