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Czech Pilots Reach 20,000 Gripen Flight Hours

Defence and security company Saab participated in the 2015 NATO Days and Czech Air Force Days at Ostrava, Czech Republic earlier this month. At this event, Czech Gripen pilots were honoured for reaching the milestone of 20,000 Gripen flight hours. Their successful recent operational deployments for NATO to Iceland and the Baltic States were also recognised.

For the fifth consecutive year Saab was a partner to Ostrava's NATO Days and Czech Air Force event; the largest public airshow and defence display in Central Europe. Over the weekend of 19-20 September 2015, visitors got to see Gripen fighters of the Czech Air Force conduct an operational demonstration, while others had the opportunity to experience a 'flight' in the Gripen simulator. A flypast of some of Saab's classic military jets, including the famous Viggen, Draken and Tunnan fighters (operated by the Swedish Air Force Historic Flight), was joined on this special occasion by a Czech Air Force Gripen.

Commander of the Czech Air Force General Libor Štefánik thanked Swedish Minister of Defence Peter Hultqvist for the excellent cooperation between the two countries within the framework of the Gripen programme. General Štefánik awarded certificates of merit to the technical support group of the Swedish Air Force, which has supported Czech Air Force Gripen operations over the past 10 years.

Saab's Deputy CEO, Lennart Sindhal, presented a commemorative glass plaque to the 21st Tactical Air Force Squadron, to mark its 20,000 Gripen flight hours and successful operational deployments within NATO. The





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award was accepted by Colonel Petr Hromek, commander of the 21st Air Force Base, Čáslav.

Saab also presented awards for the best operators of the Saab RBS 70 air defence system to Corporal Milan Šlehubr and Staff Sergeant Denis Humr.

“We are proud that Czech pilots from Čáslav Air Base have surpassed 20,000 flight hours with the Gripen. It is a pleasure for Saab to be a partner to this great show, and 2015 is particularly important because Sweden is the special partner country for NATO Days. It was wonderful to see Gripen join the Swedish Air Force Historic Flight in Czech skies,” said Daniel Boestad, head of Gripen for Central and Eastern Europe.

“Gripen is an excellent option for nations in this region, as can clearly be seen from its successful operation over many years in the Czech Republic and Hungary,” adds Boestad.

Saab has a significant presence in Central Europe, with the Czech Republic and Hungary each operating a 14-strong fleet of NATO-interoperable Gripen aircraft. Elsewhere, Gripen fighters are flying with the air forces of Sweden, South Africa and Thailand. Brazil has also ordered 36 Gripen NG aircraft. Alongside its Gripen activities in the Czech Republic, Saab also operates a major facility for the development and production of training and simulation equipment.

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