

Eurofighter Typhoon bound for Austria

The first of 18 Eurofighter Typhoons delivered by a consortium which includes BAe Systems has successfully completed its first flight.

The aircraft was taken through a series of basic handling manoeuvres before touching down after an hour at EADS Military Air Systems in Germany.

The single seat AS001 was piloted by EADS Eurofighter test pilot Chris Worning.

AS001, described as a Block 5 standard aircraft capable of both air-to-air and air-to-ground operations, represents the last build standard of Tranche 1.

On landing the pilot said: "The aircraft handled impeccably as expected. The industrial consortium behind this next generation aircraft have already delivered unrivalled capability to the partner Air Forces, and now Austria will begin to realise the force-multiplying benefits of this world-class weapon system that is already in operation in four nations."

Managing Director for the Typhoon Chris Boardman said: "This is great news not only for the consortium but also for BAE Systems' employees, who manufactured some of the aircraft's major units. Our priority now is to focus on delivering the air-to-air and air-to-ground capability to our UK customer the RAF."

Austria will receive 18 aircraft under the contract, and deliveries are scheduled to be completed in 2009.

Eurofighter GmbH Chief Executive Aloysius Rauen said the flight of AS001, as the first Austrian and first export Typhoon was "a major milestone" in the programme.

The Austrian aircraft are temporarily adorned with German national markings and registration numbers over the original Austrian Air Force designation, while Austria is supported in the acceptance process by the German Ministry of Defence.

The second aircraft for Austria, AS002, is now undergoing final checks before engine runs and the addition of the correct colour scheme to the aircraft.

The first flight is scheduled for April.

Aircrafts AS003 through to AS006 are in final assembly, while the major components for AS007 through to AS018 are in production.

Meanwhile, a training simulator has been installed at Zeltweg, the Main Operating Base of the Austrian Air Force Typhoons.

The device is currently undergoing an upgrade to the software, allowing for a greater capability in aircrew training.

According to the US Think Tank 'Forecast International' Eurofighter Typhoon is the market leader, with 638 aircraft on order.

To date 116 series production aircraft have been delivered to the four partner nations Germany, Italy, Spain and The United Kingdom.

The Typhoon fleet of these nations have now logged more than 16,300 flying hours.