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Gripen E and KC-390 Millennium complete refuelling certification flights

Partnership between Saab and Embraer strengthens technological and operational integration between two strategic assets of the Brazilian Air Force (FAB).

Saab and Embraer, in cooperation with the Brazilian Air Force (FAB), have successfully completed the certification flight test campaign for in-flight refuelling of the F-39 E Gripen fighter by the KC-390 Millennium multi-mission aircraft.

Conducted at the Gripen Flight Test Centre at Embraer's facilities in Gavião Peixoto, São Paulo, under the coordination of the Department of Aerospace Science and Technology (DCTA) of the FAB, the campaign brought together engineers and test pilots from Saab, Embraer and the FAB. During the tests, a range of flight configurations, speeds and altitudes were evaluated and confirmed precision during in-flight refuelling. Both aircraft latest-generation fly-by-wire systems contributed to the successful operation with the KC-390 providing a favourable wake and Gripen E being responsive in flight.

The flight test campaign consisted of two objectives. The first involved qualifying Gripen E as a receiver for in-flight refuelling — a key step in validating the fighter's performance, stability, and structural integrity throughout the operation. The second focused on verifying the compatibility of both aircraft across the KC-390's entire flight envelope, for high-speed refuelling under both day and night conditions. The in-flight refuelling of Gripen E by the KC-390 further strengthens the interoperability between these two advanced, latest-generation aircraft, extending their operational reach and joint capability.

"This achievement reflects the high level of integration between the teams involved. The verification of in-flight refuelling is a very significant technical milestone for our business, as it demonstrates that Gripen E has reached a new level of operational reach. The success of this campaign further reinforces the strategic partnership between Brazil and Sweden and Brazil's role within the global Gripen programme ecosystem," said Mikael Olsson, Head of Flight Testing at Saab.

"This important milestone confirms the KC-390 unmatched qualities as a tanker and further strengthens our partnership with Saab and the Brazilian Air Force. Additionally, the unique multi-mission capability offered by the KC-390 which allows the airplane to be converted into a tanker in a matter of hours offers unbeatable flexibility to Air Forces worldwide", said Walter Pinto Júnior, Chief Operations Officer of Embraer Defense & Security.

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"The verification of in-flight refuelling between the KC-390 and Gripen represents the success of a cooperation that goes beyond borders. It is the result of a joint effort combining Swedish technology, Brazilian engineering and the operational excellence of the Brazilian Air Force," concluded Colonel Aviator George Luiz Guedes de Oliveira.

The Swedish Military Aviation Authority (SE-MAA) will now be able to review the verification evidence for the air-to-air refuelling capability of Gripen E as part of its certification process. This will be followed by the certification process conducted by the Industrial Promotion and Coordination Institute (IFI) of the FAB. These institutions are responsible for the technical analysis and validation of results, ensuring that safety and performance standards comply with the most demanding international criteria.

Named *Operation Samaúma* by the FAB, this test campaign involved around 40 professionals and places Brazil among the few countries capable of developing, testing and fully verifying in-flight refuelling systems using national technology.

Saab is a leading defence and security company with an enduring mission, to help nations keep their people and society safe. Empowered by its 26,000 talented people, Saab constantly pushes the boundaries of technology to create a safer and more sustainable world. Saab designs, manufactures and maintains advanced systems in aeronautics, weapons, command and control, sensors and underwater systems. Saab is headquartered in Sweden. It has major operations all over the world and is part of the domestic defence capability of several nations.

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