

Maiden Flight for Gripen E

Defense-update

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Defense and security company Saab today completed a successful first flight of the next-generation smart fighter, Gripen E. The flight launched from Saab's airfield in Linköping, Sweden and lasted 40 minutes, flown by Marcus Wandt, the company's experimental test pilot. During the flight, the aircraft carried out a number of actions to demonstrate various test criteria including the retracting and extending of the landing gear.



Marcus Wandt, Experimental Test Pilot, SAAB was flying the Gripen E on its first flight. Photo: SAAB



Gripen E flew for 40 minutes, up to an altitude of 13,000 ft. After a short testing of landing procedures the pilot retracted the landing gear for the remaining duration of the flight. Photo: SAAB

According to Jonas Hjelm, Senior Vice President and Head of Saab Business Area Aeronautics, the aircraft that flew today is equipped with the fully qualified software for the advanced avionics developed for Gripen E. "This is about giving our customers a smart fighter system with the future designed in from the start." Hjelm said, "The flight test activities will continue to build on this achievement with the program on track to achieve the 2019 delivery schedule to our Swedish and Brazilian customers," Hjelm added. On its maiden flight, Wandt took the Gripen E to an altitude of 13,000 ft. but the new fighter will be able to reach a ceiling limit of 52,000 ft.

The new aircraft uses the General Electric GE 414G turbofan engine rated at 22,000 lb (98 kN). With this powerful engine, Gripen E can fly up to a speed of Mach 2 or 1,400 km/h at sea level, its main advantage is the ability to cruise at supersonic speed without afterburner, thus saving fuel and achieving longer mission endurance.



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General Electric GE-414G turbofan engine undergoing static tests. Developing up to 22,000 pounds of thrust, this engine takes the Gripen E to supersonic without the use of afterburner. Photo: SAAB

Higher thrust is translated to better performance – at an empty weight of 8,000 kg, Gripen E is rated for maximum takeoff weight of 16.5 tons can carry over five tons of ordnance carried on 10 hardpoints, plus 3,400 kg of fuel on a mission. Defined by Saab as the ‘smart fighter’, Gripen E uses newly designed avionics and software package designed for quick modification and upgrading. These include a new and agile Active Electronically Scanned Array (AESA) radar and infraRed Search Track, and advanced Electronic Warfare (EW) capabilities.

Brazil and Sweden placed orders for 36 and 60-70 of these advanced jets, Brazil will receive newly built aircraft beginning in 2019 and Sweden will modernize 60 Gripen C models. Saab expects other opportunities in India, Finland, Belgium which already announced their plans to buy modern fighter jets. Saab has not given up hope on Switzerland, that has canceled plans to buy 22 Gripen Es in the past.



The Gripen E prototype (39-8) touches down at Linköping on the end of the 40 minute flight. Photo: SAAB