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RTAF PRESS RELEASE

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Signing of Gripen 39 C/D Purchase Agreement

It is widely known that the Royal Thai Government Cabinet granted an in-principle approval on 16 October 2007 for the Royal Thai Air Force (RTAF) to proceed with the first phase of the procurement project of the multi-purpose aircraft to replace the F-5 B/E.

The RTAF has appointed a procurement board to negotiate with the representatives from the Swedish Government. The Gripen 39 C/D purchase agreement draft was settled and on 8 January 2008, the Cabinet granted an approval for the RTAF in the procurement of six (6) Gripen 39 C/D aircraft along with equipment, spare parts, training, facilities improvement, and project management. The procurement is done under the government-to-government basis in the total budget of 19,000 million Baht. Air Chief Marshal Chalit Pukbhasuk, the RTAF Commander-in-Chief, was authorized to sign the agreement on behalf of the Royal Thai Government. The agreement is also amendable for the optimum benefits without any changes of price.

The Cabinet also agreed that the RTAF accept special offers from the Swedish Government including one radar-equipped Airborne Early Warning (AEW) aircraft, one Saab 340 cargo aircraft for the training purpose, integration of data link system with the existing southern region command and control system, master's degree scholarships, and bilateral industrial cooperation.

Now that the Cabinet of the Royal Swedish Government also approved this aircraft purchase on 24 January 2008, Air Chief Marshal Chalit thus flew to Sweden to sign the Gripen 39 C/D purchase agreement in Stockholm on 11 February 2008.

The RTAF has set up the Gripen 39 C/D procurement project administration committee would appoint a project liaison team who will be stationed in Sweden. The liaison team will be responsible for the administration and management in various matters that are yet to be discussed in details such as training, scholarships, etc. According to the agreement, the Program Management Review (PMR) meetings between administration boards from both parties are to be held four times a year in Thailand and Sweden. The first meeting will begin in the upcoming March to ensure that the project administration is in proper and efficient progress as planned.

Important project plans include:

- Manufacturing and delivery of Gripen 39 C/D fighter aircraft with the time frame of 36 months after the signing of the purchase agreement. The first batch of three aircraft will be delivered in January 2011 and three more of the second batch in March of the same year.

- Facilities upgrade and maintenance system installation at Wing 7, Surat Thani to be started in 2008.

- Technology transfer and training in Sweden starting in 2008.

- Training courses for ten pilots including pilots, instructor pilots, and test pilots. The training will take approximately twelve months. Gripen and Saab 340 aircraft technicians will also receive training. All of the above training courses will be taken in Sweden in 2010. Apart from this, two Swedish pilots and technical experts will be assigned to provide support in Thailand for two more years.

- Delivery of the two Saab 340 aircraft will begin in late 2010.

- Delivery of spare parts and equipment as well as acceptance preparation will be completed within 2010 prior to the aircraft delivery.

- Logistic support for the Gripen 39 C/D with the supply of equipment, tools, gears, maintenance and necessary spare parts for the first two years. These items will be constantly brought into the logistic support system.

The important plans as mentioned earlier will get the six Gripen 39 C/D ready for the operations by September 2011. This will comply with the decommissioning plan for the F-5 aircraft at Wing 7, Surat Thani.

Apart from the capability of the air power in the southern region in accordance with its national security strategy, the Kingdoms of Thailand and Sweden will benefit from other bilateral cooperation with Sweden as follows:

- Technology transfer for the RTAF and Royal Thai Armed Forces technicians to be specified in details and begin in 2008.
- Ninety-two Master's degree scholarships at the top-ranking universities in Sweden from 2009-2012. Eighty of these scholarships will be granted under the royal patronage and the twelve remaining will be granted to the RTAF and Royal Thai Armed Forces personnel.
- Industrial cooperation in the academic matter, investment, product manufacturing, and services to be specified in details by other associated government agencies

Benefits gained from this procurement project:

- Six advanced, high performance multi-purpose fighter aircraft along with equipment, spare parts, and related support system to replace the F-5 aircraft to be decommissioned in 2011;
 - Improvement of the airborne, ground, and sea targets capability as well as the command and control system in the southern region;
 - Personnel development to pursue the modern technology for the technology upgrade in the RTAF; and
 - Materiel and technology procured in this project will be used in advancing the RTAF and the Royal Thai Armed Forces to the sufficient capability and keep up with the technology to protect the sovereignty and to maintain national interests and security.
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