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Czech Air Force Gripen fleet completes MS20 upgrade giving enhanced operational capabilities

The Czech Air Force has successfully completed the MS20 capability upgrade to its fleet of Gripen fighter aircraft. The upgrade greatly increases Gripen's combat and communication capabilities.

The MS20 upgrade brings a number of improvements. The upgrade greatly enhances Gripen's ability to engage ground targets by incorporating unguided and laser-guided bombs into the aircraft payload and the air-to-air capability is enhanced by introduction of new radar modes.

Another key element will be the integration of the targeting electro-optical pod Litening III, which will be used not only for guiding missiles and bombs, but also in aerial reconnaissance and combat. The upgrade also implements the Alliance datalink - Link 16 - as well as cryptomodules for covert communication.

"Thanks to the modernization of the Czech Gripen aircraft, the operational capabilities of the Czech Air Force will be significantly increased. Our staff has appreciated a close and fruitful cooperation with the Swedish side on this specific modernization project as well as the cooperation during the 13 years that we have operated Gripen aircraft," said Colonel Petr Tománek, Commander of the Czech Air Force's Caslav Air Base.

The capability upgrade involves both hardware and software upgrades. On 12 March 2018, a symbolic date marking the 19th anniversary of Czech Republic's entry into NATO, the new software package was integrated into the single and double seat versions of the Czech Gripen. After successful flight tests the MS20 software was integrated into the remaining fighters. This enabled a smooth and instant transition to the new MS20 upgrade.

"We are very pleased with the success of this capability upgrade. We are honoured to have a long-term partner in the Czech Air Force. It is largely due to this long-term mutual cooperation between Swedish FMV, the Czech Air Force and Saab that the upgrade went smoothly and according to plan. We wish the pilots and the whole Air Force continued success in meeting their objectives both within their airspace protection operations and their joint NATO operations," says Jonas Hjelm, head of Saab business area Aeronautics.

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