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## FIRST FUTURE STRATEGIC TANKER AIRCRAFT TAKES TO THE SKIES

**Toulouse, 4 June 2009** – AirTanker is delighted to report that the first of the Future Strategic Tanker Aircraft (FSTA) successfully completed its maiden flight today, in accordance with the requirements of the programme.

The FSTA programme will replace the RAF's current fleet of VC-10 and TriStar aircraft with 14 Airbus A330-200 aircraft. These brand new aircraft will be owned and supported by AirTanker, while the service will be staffed by a mixture of service and civilian personnel.

This first aircraft is currently in civil fit and the next production stage will be its militarisation and tanker conversion.

Photo courtesy of Airbus.

**ENDS**

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**Notes to Editors:**

1. *AirTanker has five shareholders: Cobham, EADS, Rolls-Royce, Thales UK and VT Group plc.*
2. *The Future Strategic Tanker Aircraft (FSTA) programme is a 27-year MOD Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contract to provide air refuelling and air transport services to the RAF. With a value of up to £13 billion, the FSTA contract is the world's largest defence PFI.*
3. *The FSTA programme will replace the RAF's current fleet of VC-10 and TriStar aircraft with 14 Airbus A330-200 aircraft, the first of which will be delivered in 2011. These new aircraft will be owned and supported by AirTanker, while the service will be staffed by a mixture of service and civilian personnel.*
4. *AirTanker will provide a fleet of Airbus A330 FSTA aircraft, each powered by two Rolls-Royce Trent 700 engines, to meet the UK FSTA requirement. Approximately 50% of the basic aircraft and 100% of its*

**The Strategic Solution**

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conversion work for 12 of the FSTA fleet will be carried out in the UK (the first two aircraft will be converted at Airbus Military facilities in Madrid).

5. *The FSTA contract also includes the provision of all necessary infrastructure, including a state-of-the-art two-bay hangar, training, maintenance, flight operations, fleet management and ground services to enable worldwide air-to-air refuelling and air transport missions.*
6. *AirTanker will create and sustain high-value, high-quality UK jobs. It will directly sustain up to 3,000 jobs and indirectly sustain up to a further 4,500 jobs. Principal work locations are Brize Norton (construction of facilities and service delivery), Airbus UK at Broughton and Filton (wing manufacture), Cobham at Wimborne (refuelling equipment) and Bournemouth (aircraft conversion), Rolls-Royce at Derby (engine assembly) and Bristol (project management) and Thales UK at Crawley (mission simulators, defensive aids), Raynes Park (avionics) and Wells (mission planning systems). VT will provide infrastructure and communications/information systems, design, build and support, and certain elements of technical support to the aircraft.*
7. *The A330 tanker derivative is the most capable tanker offered world-wide and has now won major recent international tanker procurement contracts including the Australian, United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabian air forces. It will provide a quantum leap in reliability, performance and economy to the RAF with around twice the refuelling capability of the current VC-10s and will be able to offload 80 tonnes of fuel at 1,000 miles from base, whilst remaining two hours on station. The A330 FSTA delivers substantial operational enhancements through its own fuel efficiency.*
8. *Conversion is straightforward and low risk and follows the similar A330-200 MRTT tanker programme for the Royal Australian Air Force, over two years in advance of the FSTA project and currently in the final stages of flight tests before delivery next year. The fuel necessary for refuelling operations, as well as for the A330 FSTA itself, will be carried in the same tanks as fitted to the standard Airbus A330 airliner, leaving the cabin free for transporting up to 290 personnel, and the cargo holds free to carry equipment and supplies up to a maximum total payload of 44 tonnes. With no reconfiguration required (other than for specialist medical evacuations) the tanker can be assigned quickly to a wider range of missions than the existing fleet, significantly enhancing fleet productivity. A number of the aircraft will operated on the Civil Register, flying commercial air transport tasks when not subject to operational requirements, thereby enabling greater productivity for the fleet. Within the PFI agreement, the MOD will only pay for the service once it is available and then only for the capacity that it uses, subject to agreed minimum usage levels.*
9. *The FSTA fleet will customarily carry a minimum of 80 tonnes (100,000 litres) of aviation fuel per aircraft. The fuel dispensing rate from the aircraft is approximately 5,000 litres/minute or about 80 litres per second. The wing pods alone refuel twice as fast as an F1 pit stop. All this equates to:*
  - *80 tonnes = 53 Mini Coopers (gross weight 1515 kg each)*
  - *100,000 litres = 2,500 Mini Cooper petrol tanks (40 litres each)*
  - *5,000 litres/minute = would fill a Mini Cooper petrol tank in under two seconds. Using all three refuelling points you could fill 125 Mini Coopers per minute.*

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