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P R E S S R E L E A S E

ONE YEAR ON AND THE FSTA SERVICE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME IS OFF TO A FLYING START

Carterton, 27 March 2009 – Following on from the signature of the Future Strategic Tanker Aircraft (FSTA) contract a year ago today, AirTanker Services (ATrS) has been engaged in the delivery of the key infrastructure and detailed development of the FSTA service. ATrS is now pleased to announce that the first programme milestones have been achieved on time or, in some cases, ahead of schedule. These successes include:

- The infrastructure building programme at RAF Brize Norton has transformed a selection of pre-1960 RAF amenities into modern, updated facilities. In mid-November 2008, ATrS completed and handed over these re-provided facilities at RAF Brize Norton. These included:
 - Bulk diesel and waste fuel tanks
 - Wash pan drainage facilities
 - Air side motor transport parking
 - Petrol, oil and lubricants store
- Work has started on the next stage of the FSTA service infrastructure: the construction of a two-bay hangar and associated workshops. Backing on to the hangar, on four floors, will be the office accommodation for the RAF's two FSTA Squadrons, the MOD's Integrated Project Team and AirTanker personnel
- Training and Information Systems development work is well under way, with good progress and all contract milestones achieved to programme
- The recruitment drive to build up the ATrS team with experienced, highly competent personnel has been successful with over 30 new recruits delivering good results
- The ATrS team has relocated its HQ from Bristol, to Carterton, Oxfordshire, on the doorstep of RAF Brize Norton
- To optimise overall business delivery, the ATrS team has established strong collaborative relationships with its strategic partners
- All essential business processes have been established and externally validated through the award of ISO 9001:2008 accreditation in March 2009.

Whilst ATrS is primarily involved with establishing the support solution for FSTA, it is pleasing to note that the Aircraft development programme is also on schedule. On 25 February 2009, the first FSTA wingset was completed at Airbus UK's Broughton factory. Witnessed by Quentin Davies MP, Minister for Defence Equipment and Support, the wings were loaded onto a Beluga aircraft for their onward journey to Bremen, Germany, for final equipping and then Toulouse, France, for final assembly.

The Strategic Solution

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Dave Mitchard, Managing Director of ATRs, said:

"I am delighted to be in a position to announce these early successes in the delivery of the FSTA programme. I am really proud of our highly motivated and results-orientated team, who have hit the ground running. We are all committed to building on these achievements and will strive to deliver the next project milestones in equally good time.

"Working with the MOD at RAF Brize Norton has been a most rewarding experience and we look forward to continuing to develop these positive relationships.

"The FSTA programme will provide the MOD and the RAF with the most advanced air transport and refuelling equipment, representing a step-change in performance. The new Airbus A330 FSTA fleet will deliver unrivalled levels of capability, and AirTanker Services, working with the MOD, will put in place the new fleet and service."

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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 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*

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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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