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RTAF PRESS RELEASE

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Cabinet Approved Royal Thai Air Force Purchase of Gripen 39 C/D Aircraft

The cabinet approved the Royal Thai Air Force (RTAF) purchase of Gripen 39 C/D aircraft on 8 January 2008. The Gripen 39 C/D will replace the ageing F-5B/E at Squadron 701, Wing 7 in Surat Thani Province. The F-5B/E aircraft will be completely phased out by the end of 2011. The approval included the RTAF budgetary commitment from 2008-2012 to procure the first batch of six Gripen 39 C/D aircraft with spare parts, training courses, facilities renovation, and project management in the budget amount of 19,000 million baht. The procurement will be done under the government-to-government process using annual budget. Air Chief Marshal Chalit Pukbhasuk, RTAF Commander-in-Chief, signed the agreement on behalf of the Royal Thai Government and made certain that the RTAF receive special offers from the Swedish Government according to the agreement draft. Details of the project were clarified at the Royal Thai Government House by the RTAF Commander-in-Chief accompanied by Air Chief Marshal Itthaporn Subhawong, Chief of the Air Staff.

After receiving the approval from the Cabinet on 16 October 2007 in the procurement project of the multi-purpose fighter aircraft to replace the F-5 B/E, the RTAF has appointed a procurement committee presided over by Air Chief Marshal Paisal Sitabutr, RTAF Deputy Commander-in-Chief. The committee represented the RTAF in the negotiation with the representatives from the Swedish Government on the purchasing issue of the Gripen 39 C/D aircraft. Meanwhile, a Swedish working group was also formed with the members selected from the FMV (Försvarets materielverk -- Swedish Defense Materiel Administration, which is a component of the Swedish Ministry of Defence responsible for preparing materiel for the Swedish armed forces and exporting materiel to allied countries) to represent the Swedish Government in the negotiation and drafting the agreement. The agreement was completed with the contents covering terms and conditions concerning the aircraft delivery, pilot and staff training, logistics, and terms of payment. The RTAF received cooperation from the Office of the Attorney General and the Department of Treaties and Legal Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs in providing consults and advice to the procurement committee to guarantee the legal and precise process and to optimize national benefits.

Major subjects of the Purchase Agreement Draft can be concluded as follow:

1. Key offers and facilities renovation and project management

The offers include six Gripen 39 C/D aircraft, two of which are single-seat aircraft and four of which are tandem-seat aircraft. In addition to the aircraft, there are also provided the support equipment and systems, logistics, training, project management under the responsibility of the Swedish party, other equipment and services altogether in the amount of 18,284 million baht.

The facilities renovation and the project management comprises the facilities renovation and infrastructure at Wing 7, the project training trip, and the project management under the responsibility of the RTAF with the remaining amount of 716 million baht. The afore-mentioned budget allocation was approved by the Cabinet on 16 October 2550.

2. Special offers from the Swedish government

The RTAF will be provided with one Saab 340 aircraft for the training and one Erieye airborne early warning radar equipped Saab 340 aircraft.

Additionally, the RTAF will receive more offers as a bilateral cooperation as follow:

The RTAF and Royal Thai Armed Forces will receive technology transfer in various fields according to the requirement of the Thai party.

Ninety-two scholarships for the master's degrees in the top-ranking universities in Sweden, for example, Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm, Chalmers Technical University of Technology in Gothenburg and Linköping University. The scholarships will be granted from 2009-2012.

There will be an industrial cooperation in the academic matter, investment, product manufacturing, and services. The details will be provided after the signing of the agreement.

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 agreement;

- Training, delivery of the spare parts and equipment, and preparation for the project delivery shall be completed prior to the aircraft delivery. The technology transfer and training in Sweden will begin in 2008 and the delivery of the spare parts and equipment will begin in 2010.

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

- The batch of six Gripen 39 C/D aircraft will be delivered early in 2011. The first three Gripen will be delivered in January 2011 and the remaining three aircraft will be delivered in March. The delivered batch of aircraft will be used in the supplementary training for the operational readiness by September of the same year in accordance with the decommission plan for the F-5 aircraft at Wing 7, Surat Thani.

Benefits from this procurement project

Six new multi-purpose fighter aircraft will replace the F-5 aircraft to fulfill the operational requirement in a timely manner.

The RTAF will sustain its capability in the aircraft and ground and maritime target detection as well as the command and control.

Thailand will be further developed by the personnel development in the modern technological knowledge and skill and the technology adoption.

Materiel 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.