FIRST RAAF PC-21 COMPLETES MAIDEN FLIGHT

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The first Pilatus PC-21 advanced trainer for the Royal Australian Air Force has completed its first flight.

Bearing both Swiss civil registration HB-HWA and its ADF military serial A54-001, the aircraft completed its first flight from Pilatus's Stans, Switzerland facility on July 21.

"This initial flight of the first Australian PC-21, only seven months after contract signature, is a remarkable achievement and illustrates both the commitment of Pilatus and the hard work of all those involved in the project," said Pilatus chairman Oscar Schwenk in a statement.

The first of 49 PC-21s being built for the ADF's AIR 5428 Pilot Training System program, the aircraft is due be handed over to the RAAF at East Sale in June 2017 after completion of testing and verification work in Switzerland and Australia.

Prime contractor for the AIR 5428 project is Lockheed Martin, which has teamed with Pilatus and Hawker Pacific to deliver the new ADF pilot training system under a seven year, $1.2 billion contract signed in late 2015.

"This is a true testament to our teammate Pilatus and a proven aircraft that will form the backbone of future pilot training for the Australian Defence Force for the next 25 years. We offer our congratulations on this first significant step," said Raydon Gates, chief executive, Lockheed Martin

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Australia and New Zealand.

Under AIR 5428 the PC-21 will replace both the ageing PC-9 advanced trainer, which has been in service since 1988, and the CT-4 currently used for basic training. The PC-9 is due to be withdrawn in 2019 after 30 years of service and more than 500,000 flying hours.

“Having worked directly with the Australian Defence Force for many years, I am delighted to see Pilatus continuing to deliver outstanding service,” Markus Bucher, CEO of Pilatus, said.

“The first flight of this aircraft, the very first Australian PC-21, marks a very significant chapter in the continuing relationship between the Commonwealth and Pilatus. We look forward to many more.”



22 JULY 2016

SOURCE: AUSTRALIAN AVIATION
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