

First G.222 aircraft for Afghanistan airborne

Capodichino (Naples), Italy – August 6, 2009 – Alenia North America, a subsidiary of Alenia Aeronautica and part of the Finmeccanica Group, announced that the first of 18 G.222 aircraft refurbished and modernized by Alenia Aeronautica made its initial flight following re-manufacture at Capodichino airport near Naples.

Shortly, the aircraft will fly to Alenia Aeronautica's Test Center at Caselle, near Turin. The G.222's modernized communication systems will be tested and validated at the adjacent electronic test range facilities. The aircraft will then fly back to Capodichino for final preparation and delivery.

"The first flight of the G.222 at Capodichino is a critical part of the final stages of modernization and refurbishment and is evidence of the success of this program", said Giuseppe Giordo, President and CEO of Alenia North America and Co-COO of Alenia Aeronautica. "We are proud of the history of the G.222 aircraft and its service all over the world, and are very pleased to provide the re-built Afghan National Army Air Corps with these aircraft. This is truly an exemplary program in-line with Alenia's commitment to the United States Air Force".

Giovanni Bertolone, Chief Executive Officer of Alenia Aeronautica, said: "The first flight of the refurbished G.222 is a fundamental step, and one of the last before the delivery of the aircraft to the United States Air Force. Alenia Aeronautica and Alenia North America have proven again that they are capable of supplying products that are able to meet the specific requirements of the United States' Government. The characteristics of operative effectiveness and action capability of the G.222, further developed in the C-27J, another of Alenia Aeronautica's products, will be magnified by the complex scenario in which the aircraft will be operated. The 18 G.222s for the reconstructed Afghan Air Force will help ensure the safety and stability of the country".

Nine aircraft are currently in various stages of re-manufacture at Capodichino, where the final assembly for the original G.222 aircraft also took place. Delivery is scheduled to begin in September 2009 with this first aircraft and continue through 2011. Training for U.S. Air Advisors will begin following delivery and the aircraft will then be transferred by the Combined Air Power Transition Force in Kabul for incorporation into the Afghan National Army Air Corps (ANAAC). The G.222 will be a workhorse and serve as the backbone of the re-constituted ANAAC.

Developed as a true military airlifter, the G.222 is dependable, robust, and capable of operating in austere environments, even from short and unprepared airstrips. These aircraft will provide a critical capability to the ANAAC, enabling the Afghan government to rapidly provide humanitarian assistance, medical evacuation and logistical support to the Afghan people throughout the country, including remote areas not easily accessible by road and/or isolated by terrain.

Alenia North America, as prime contractor, is heading and managing an international team that includes Alenia Aeronautica, which is refurbishing the aircraft in Naples, Italy; and L-3 Vertex Aerospace, that is providing maintenance, logistical support and training for operating the aircraft in Afghanistan.