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**THE FARNBOROUGH INTERNATIONAL AIRSHOW****Facts and figures**

Together with Le Bourget in Paris, with which it is held in alternate years, the Farnborough Airshow near London is the world's largest exhibition for the aerospace industry. It is organised by Farnborough International Limited, a subsidiary of the Society of British Aircraft Constructors (SBAC).

The first exhibition took place on the runways of the Hampshire Airport in 1948. While the first exhibitions were limited to the UK aeronautics industry, which was trying to keep up with advances in technology in the sector, Farnborough International is today a global event involving the whole industry. This is clearly evidenced by exhibitor numbers: 187 at the first air show after the War, rising to 1,330 in 2004 and 1,480 in 2006. This year, there will be more than 1,500 exhibitors from 39 countries, an increase of 5% compared to 2006.

The numbers of the air show today are indicative of the importance that Farnborough has acquired on the world stage. Over a total surface area of 50,000 square metres, 90,000 square metres of structures have been erected, providing an exhibition space 30 times the size of the Royal Albert Hall in London. 3,600 tonnes of temporary structures are transported to the show site and approximately 6,000 contractors create the stands, chalets, company facilities and dining areas. In 2006, the show registered orders worth USD 42 billion and 270,000 visitors, including 140,000 trade visitors and 130,000 members of the public, and brought GBP 19 million to the local economy. A total of 115 civil and military delegations representing 43 countries and 1,800 international media representatives attended the show, while around 150 aircraft were exhibited.

In many ways, 2008 is a symbolic date for Farnborough: it is the sixtieth birthday of the air show, and also the centenary of the first powered flight in the UK, which was made by Samuel Cody at Farnborough and which saw the birth of the UK aeronautics industry. To celebrate this double event, the air show will include a section exhibiting some of the aircraft that make up the history of modern aviation, an icon of industrial development that since way back in 1908, has been constantly evolving and meeting new targets. Among others, these will include a replica of the Avro Vulcan, restored to flight condition, the strategic bomber that entered the service of the RAF in 1953; the Supermarine Spitfire, one of the most important fighters of the Second World War, famous for its key contribution during the Battle of Britain against the Luftwaffe; and the Fairey Swordfish, a torpedo bomber of the UK navy, which took part in the attack on the Italian fleet at Taranto in 1940. There will also be a replica of the Vickers Vimy, which made the first non-stop crossing of the Atlantic in 1919, and of the Douglas DC-6, built in 1947, the first US-built passenger aircraft able to fly non-stop across the Atlantic.

Farnborough is also the venue for two important aviation-related events, the Accident Investigation Bureau, which researches the causes of aircraft accidents, and the Institute Aviation Medicine, which studies and analyses the effects of flight on the human body.

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## The history of Farnborough

The very close link between Farnborough and the aeronautics industry began in 1905, when the British army opened a base there. In 1908, Farnborough became the base of HM Balloon Factory and then the Royal Aircraft Factory, which would later build many of the aircraft used during the First World War. Farnborough became famous for testing new aircraft. On the morning of 16 October 1908, the British Army Aeroplane N<sup>o</sup>1 built by Samuel Franklin Cody took off from the runway there. The aircraft flew a distance of 1,390 feet at a speed of around 30 metres an hour, before crashing during landing. The flight only lasted 27 seconds, but was the first powered flight in the UK and, despite the accident, assured Farnborough a place in the history of British aviation. In 1918, Farnborough became the base of the Royal Aircraft Establishment and began to play an increasingly important role in research and development into technology for military aircraft.

After the Second World War, Farnborough took on a new lease of life, albeit one still related to aeronautics: first, with the opening of an important aerospace research centre, but above all thanks to the air show. The first show dates back to 1948, but as early as the end of October 1945, in what was then the Royal Air Force's testing centre, it hosted an event that could be considered the prologue to what over the years became one of the main events of the world aerospace industry: the exhibition of a large number of latest-generation aircraft seized from the Germans and of British prototypes under development. This was an exhibition of high-tech aircraft at that time only accessible to a handful of specialised technicians, given the secrecy that surrounded development in jet engines, avionics and aeronautic systems and armaments during wartime.

During the first show, John Derry broke the sound barrier with a De Havilland 108, while the following year, the De Havilland Comet 1, the world's first jet airliner, made its debut at Farnborough. In 1952, the show saw its first serious accident. A De Havilland 110, again piloted by John Derry, broke up over a crowd of spectators and killed 27 people, including the pilot. 1958 is remembered as the year of the Black Arrows, the British aerobatic team that set a record, which still remains unbeaten, of flying 22 fighters in formation.

In the 1950s, the Farnborough Airshow was merely a showcase for British industry, by then no longer leading the way and increasingly crushed by US industrial might and the gradual development of the aerospace industry in other European nations and then of emerging countries. But since the 1960s, with the move to a show every two years and increasing international presence, the air show took on an ever greater importance for companies worldwide.

The first year European aeronautics companies took part was 1966. Four years later in 1970, the first Concorde made its triumphant debut on the runway of the British aerodrome.

1974 was Farnborough's first international year, with the arrival of the large US manufacturers: the Lockheed SR-71, better known as the Blackbird and the first US aircraft designed with stealth technology, came to Hampshire. It broke the New York to London speed record during its flight to Farnborough. The air show's growing international vocation was confirmed in 1978, when it was renamed Farnborough International.

In 1980, the Mirage 2000, the next-generation fighter from French company Dassault, made its first spectacular appearance, along with the Tornado, which was developed jointly by Italy, Germany and the UK, and which would become the NATO's main fighter for the next decade. But Soviet technology was also a key player in the 1980s: in 1984, the Mil Mi-26 Halo, the world's largest helicopter, flew at Farnborough, in 1988, the MiG-29 fighters were exhibited, and two years later, the Antonov An-225, the world's largest transport aircraft, was displayed.

US technology returned to the fore in the 1990s: in 1996, Northrop Grumman presented the B-2A Spirit, the strategic bomber equipped with stealth technology, which represented a technological leap

forward in the modernisation programme of the US military fleet. In the same year, the show launched its official radio station, broadcast thanks to the nearby Farnborough College of Technology.

The era of the Eurofighter began in the new millennium: in 2002, four Eurofighter Typhoons flew in formation at the show. But these were also the years of the great battle in civil aviation between Boeing and Airbus: in 2004, the B747 landed at the air show for the first time, while two years later, the Airbus A380, the world's largest airliner, made its debut.