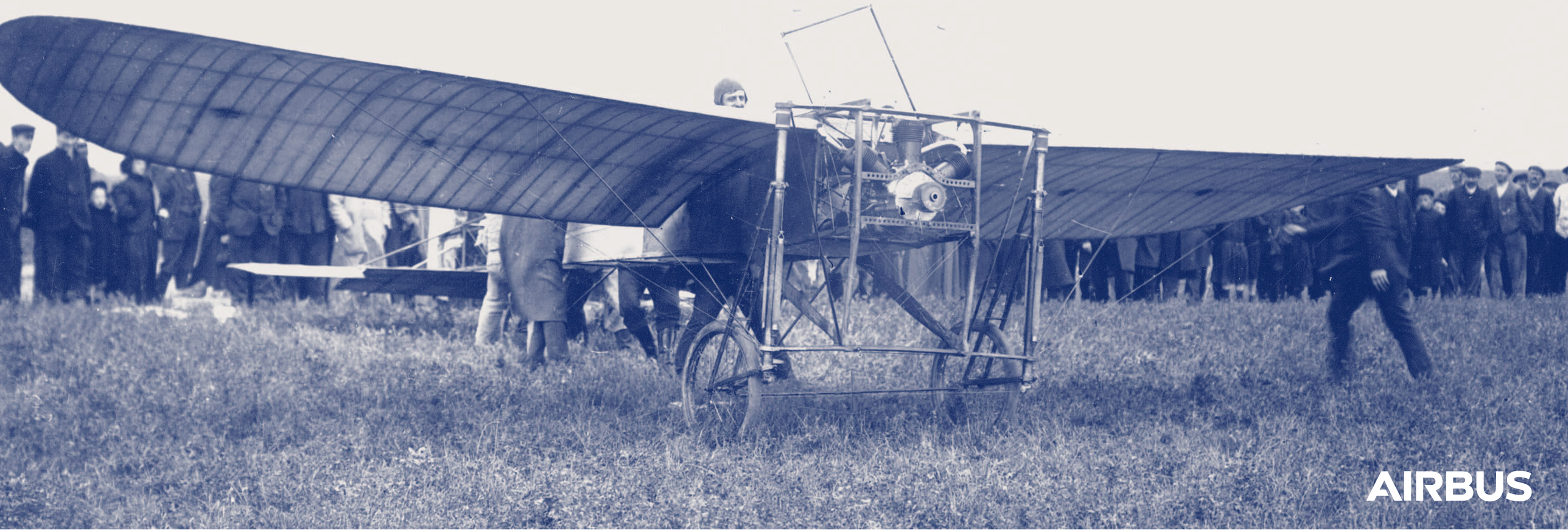
OUR JOURNEY



FLIGHT

The journey begins

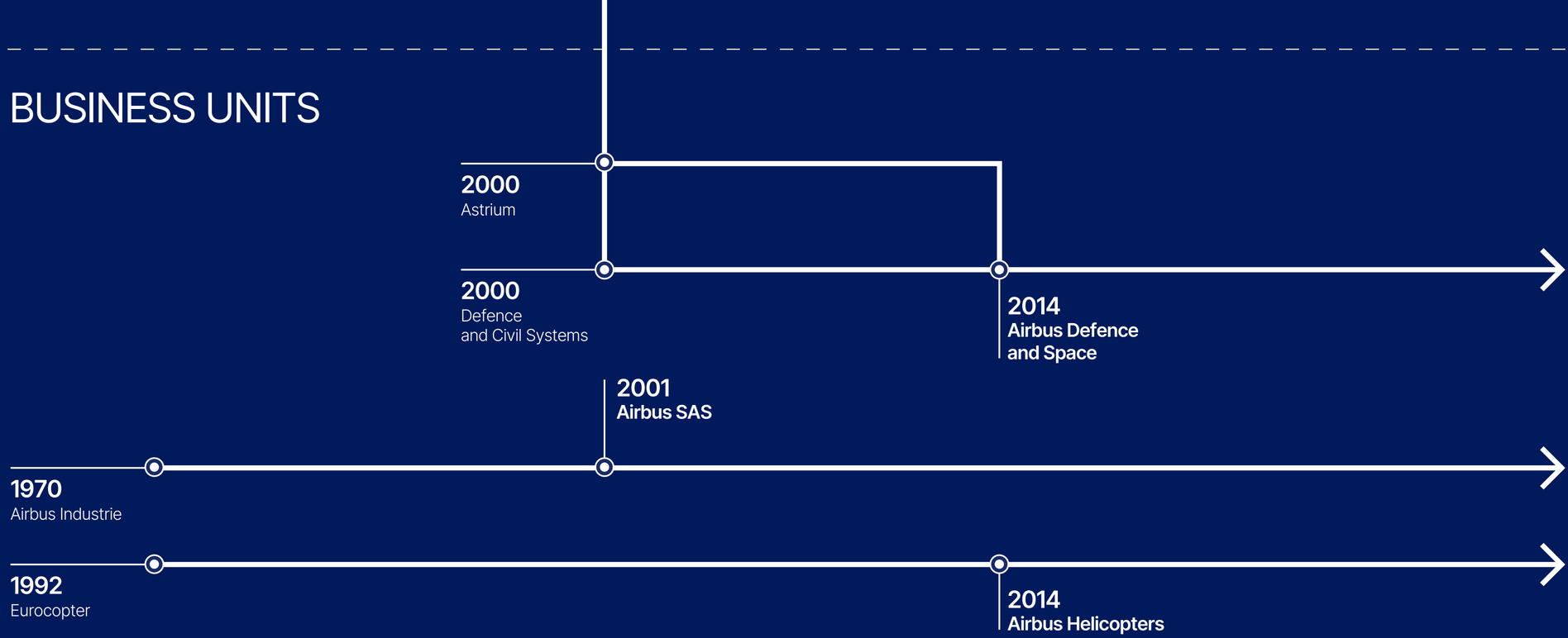
Centuries ago, it must have seemed like a distant dream that people could one day take to the skies. But the ingenuity and inventiveness of the world's brightest minds worked to overcome the force of gravity and achieve what was hitherto impossible: the miracle of flight.

Airbus, through its predecessor companies and pioneers, has been at the heart of the aerospace and defence industry since the beginning. This book is about Airbus and its place in history. Decade by decade you will see some of the milestone products developed by the companies that came before Airbus, each selected for playing a key role in shaping who we are as a company.

Today, Airbus takes enormous pride in the knowledge that our predecessors played a part in such groundbreaking, inspiring and exciting technologies, and looks to the future with a passion for creating the milestones of the future.

PARENT COMPANIES

BUSINESS UNITS

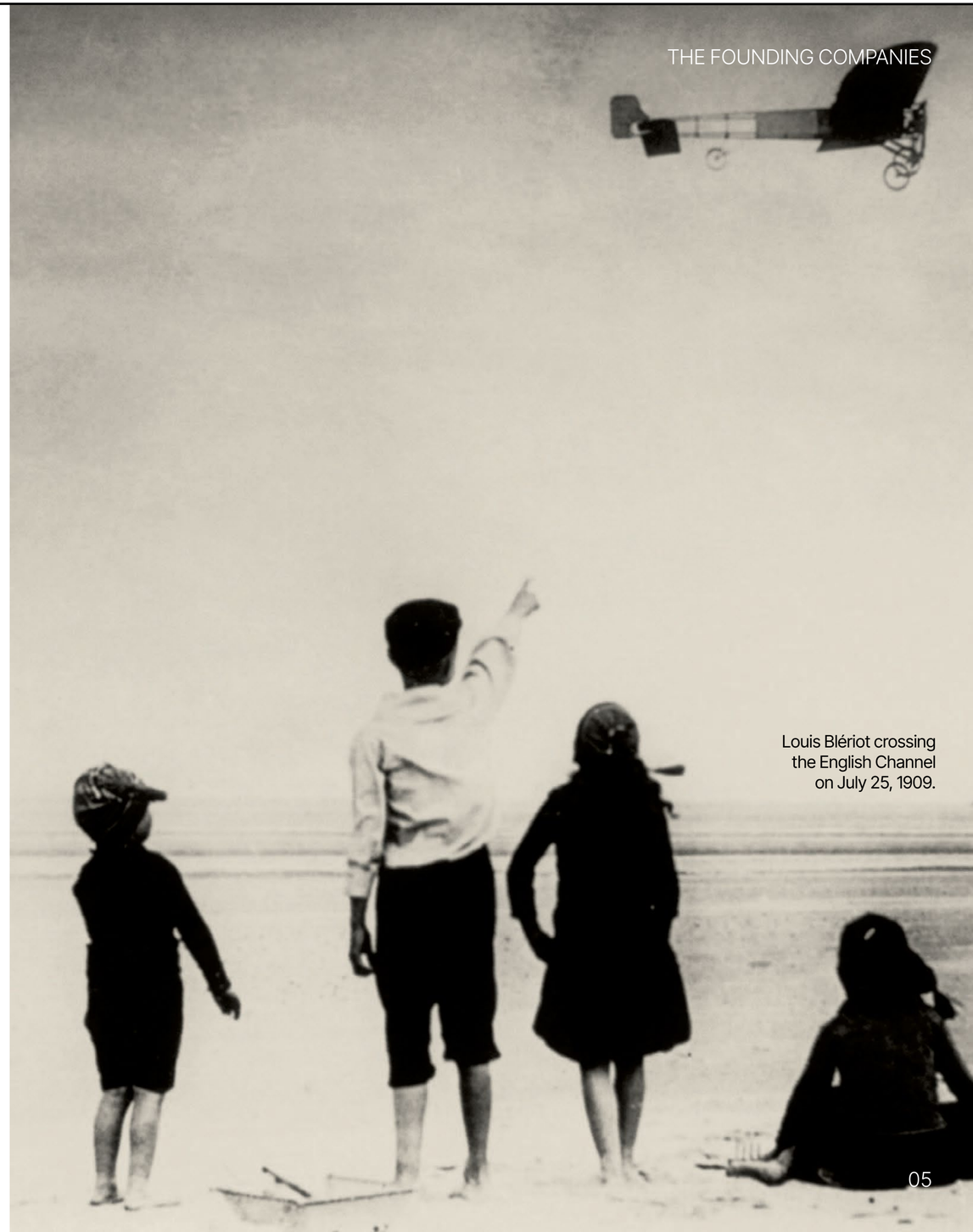


I - THE FOUNDING COMPANIES

From Blériot Aéronautique to Aerospatiale Matra:

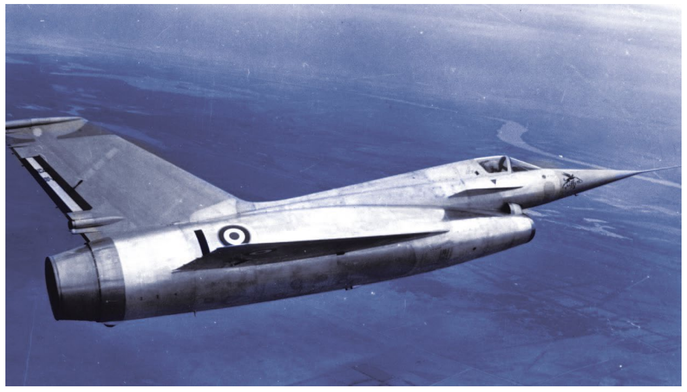
THE EMERGENCE OF A GIANT

The merger that created Aerospatiale Matra in 1999 marked the end of an era that began in the early 20th century when Blériot and Voisin founded the first aircraft factory in France in 1905. In 1909, Blériot's crossing of the English Channel in a Blériot XI was one of the first major feats of aviation and would be the first series production aircraft to be built on a large scale. Between 1907 and the years following the First World War, approximately 30 aviation pioneers set up companies which laid the foundations of the illustrious French aircraft industry. Even today, names such as Amiot, Bloch, Dewoitine, Farman, Hanriot, Lioré et Olivier, Morane-Saulnier, Potez and SPAD still have a ring to them. Having firmly established itself as one of the birthplaces of modern aviation, France's aeronautical industry would go on to be shaped by five major structural changes. The first was the restructuring of the French aeronautics industry into six large state-owned companies in 1936. After the Second World War, French industry would fully embrace the technological race for new aircraft designs with swept wings and jet engines as well as develop world class expertise in the emerging field of rotary wing flight. In 1955, Sud Aviation's SE.210 Caravelle would introduce many firsts such as rear-mounted engines. The six nationalised companies would be merged into Sud Aviation and Nord Aviation in 1957 and 1958 respectively. Reconciliation between France and Germany would be symbolised by the production under licence of French Fouga Magisters and the Nord Noratlas in Germany and by the joint development of the Transall C-160 transport aircraft. In March 1969, the first flight of the Sud Aviation-BAC Concorde, the world's first supersonic passenger aircraft, took place. This was another important cooperation programme, this time between France and the UK. The fusion of Sud and Nord Aviation in 1970 which also incorporated SEREB (Société pour l'Etude et la Réalisation d'Engins Balistiques) that led the integration of the Diamant launchers which paved the way for the successful family of Ariane launchers, resulted in the Société Nationale Industrielle Aérospatiale (SNIAS), which was later shortened to Aerospatiale.



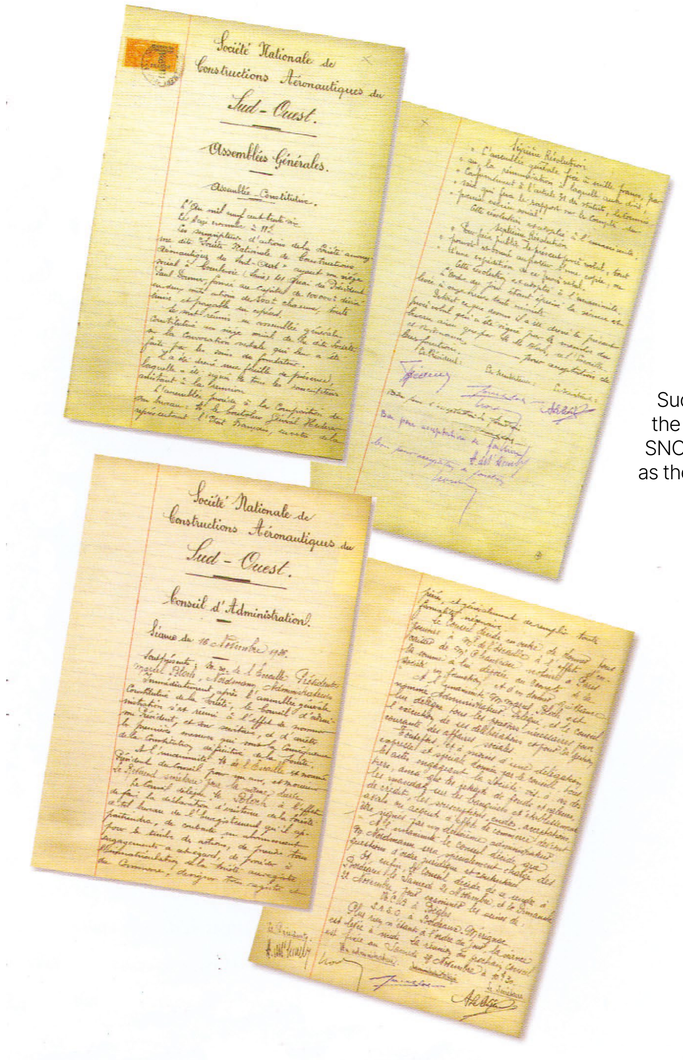
Louis Blériot crossing the English Channel on July 25, 1909.

The first medium-range passenger jet, the SE 210 Caravelle, in the maintenance hall at Toulouse.



The Nord 1500 Griffon was the world´s first supersonic aircraft equipped with a ramjet.

Alouette II over Paris.



Sud Aviation arose from the companies SNCASE, SNCAM, SNCASO and SNCAO, as these documents testify.

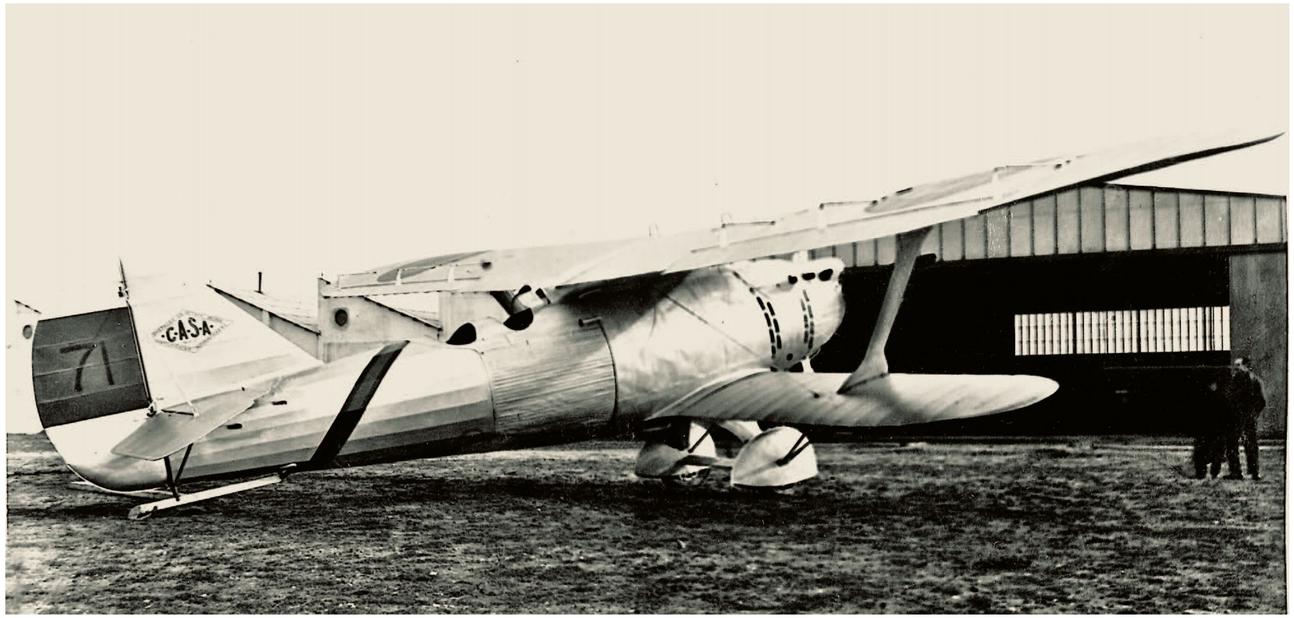
Besides commercial and military transport aircraft, Aerospatiale's helicopter division produced some of the most iconic rotorcraft of the 20th century, timeless designs such as the Alouette, Gazelle and Dauphin as well as the company's signature Fenestron tail rotor design, a recognisable feature of Airbus helicopters to this day. The spirit of multinational cooperation and collaboration acquired through the Transall and Concorde projects would be one of the success factors Aerospatiale brought to the Airbus A300 programme, thus paving the way for the present day integrated company where cooperation and teamwork are embedded in our values. The merger with Matra Hautes Technologies in 1999 was the final step in the process of consolidation of the French predecessor companies. At the time of the merger, Aerospatiale Matra became the second largest aerospace company in Europe. Today in France around 50,000 employees, in more than 30 sites, work within Airbus' commercial aircraft, helicopters and defence and space businesses.

Tradition and Experience :

THE HISTORY OF CASA

The foundation of the Spanish aerospace company CASA (Construcciones Aeronáuticas Sociedad Anónima) is closely linked to the Spanish aviation pioneer José Ortiz de Echagüe, better known by the name of Don José. CASA was founded on 3 March, 1923 with its headquarters, as today, in Madrid. Initial activities within the Spanish aeronautics industry had already begun during the First World War. The first CASA site commenced production of the French Breguet XIX under licence in Getafe near Madrid in April 1923. Another licence was acquired from Dornier for production of the Do-J Wal seaplane in 1926. CASA also built the Vickers Vildebeest under licence, a torpedo bomber equipped with a powerful Hispano-Suiza HS 600 engine. As of 1930, the company started developing its own products. Those initial years saw the development of the CASA Type I to Type III light aircraft, of which only the Type III was actually flown. Four further models were manufactured under licence from the 1930s onwards: the Russian Polikarpov I-15 and the German models Bücker Bü 131 (as the C. 1.131), Junkers Ju 52 (as the C. 352) and Heinkel He 111 (as the C. 2.111). After the Second World War, CASA resumed its own in-house developments. Three light transport aircraft, the C. 201 Alcotán, C. 202 Halcón and C. 207 Azor were created on their drawing boards. In the fifties, sixties and seventies CASA acquired extensive competence in the field of transport aircraft. Following the creation of the European Organisation for Space Research in 1964, CASA began working on satellites, contributing to the COS-B, HEOS A2 and INTASAT satellites. In 1972, CASA absorbed Hispano Aviación, which was established in Triana, Seville, in 1943. Hispano had built the HA-1112, a licensed production of the Messerschmitt Bf109 re-engined with the Rolls Royce Merlin engine. It would also build the first Spanish jet powered aircraft in 1950, a twin seater trainer, the HA200 and a supersonic fighter jet, the HA-300. Later, CASA joined Airbus Groupement d'intérêt économique (GIE) as responsible for the construction of the horizontal stabilizer for the A300 airliner.

Leaflet about the C. 207
"AZOR" from the late fifties.



The Breguet XIX was built by CASA under license from 1924 on.

One of the first aircraft to be developed by the company, the CASA III.

CASA developed the light- and medium-weight military transport aircraft C-212 and CN-235. In the 1980s, the C-212 became the company's best-selling export. It complemented many operational squadrons of air forces around the world. In 1995, CASA acquired AISA, formerly Talleres Loring, an aircraft manufacturer founded in 1923, specialized in the design and construction of training aircraft and helicopters, thus completing the consolidation of the Spanish aviation industry. By the time of the merger with Aerospatiale and DaimlerChrysler Aerospace in 2000, CASA was able to look back on more than 40 years of experience in the field of maintenance, support and modernisation services for the aircraft of both national and international customers; more than 8,000 aircraft and helicopters had already left the company's maintenance hangars. Many orders were also received for the maintenance and care of US Air Force aircraft stationed in Europe. As one of the company's three founding nations, Spain is home to major production facilities for commercial aircraft, helicopter, space and defence activities, not least the final assembly lines for all Airbus Defence and Space military aircraft. Airbus employs a workforce of around 14,000 across its 8 sites in Spain.

The Genesis of

DEUTSCHE AEROSPACE AG

The history of DaimlerChrysler Aerospace AG (DASA), which was founded in 1989 as Deutsche Aerospace AG, dates back to the immediate post war period, when restrictions on aircraft production were eventually lifted, allowing famous German aviation companies such as Messerschmitt, Dornier, Junkers and Heinkel to work on new aircraft, helicopter and space projects. In 1948 Ludwig Bölkow created the Bölkow company. Bölkow would pioneer helicopter designs, aircraft and satellites amongst which was Azur, Germany's first satellite launched in 1969. Vereinigte Flugtechnische Werke (VFW) was created in 1964 by merging, Focke-Wulf and Weser Flugzeugbau (Weserflug). VFW would develop and build the Transall C-160, in partnership with Hamburger Flugzeugbau and France's Nord Aviation. The company partnered with ERNO for rocket technology and developed the VFW 614 short-range passenger aircraft. In 1968, Bölkow merged with the Messerschmitt company, subsequently integrating Hamburger Fleugzeugbau in 1969. The company, which was renamed Messerschmitt Bölkow Blohm (MBB), would become the main vehicle for the consolidation of the German aerospace industry. During this period German industry worked on a number of innovative aircraft designs including VTOL concepts such as the Vak 191B, a project of VFW, the VJ101, built by a consortium between the German aircraft companies Bölkow, Heinkel and Messerschmitt, and the Dornier Do 31, a VTOL transport aircraft.

The German contribution to the European consortium set up for the Airbus A300 programme in 1969 would be represented by Deutsche Airbus, a partnership in which MBB had a 60% stake and Dornier and VFW 20% each respectively. In 1981, VFW was acquired by, and subsequently integrated into, MBB. In the summer of 1984, Daimler-Benz AG presented a strategy paper for extending its activities to the aerospace industry. A major consolidation in the German aerospace industry started in 1985 under the leadership of the Daimler-Benz Group, which took over MTU completely and acquired a majority holding in the Dornier Group. Then, On 19 May, 1989, Deutsche Aerospace AG (DASA) was founded as a subsidiary of Daimler-Benz by initially merging Dornier, MTU and the two defence divisions of AEG. The fourth subsidiary, MBB, was not integrated with DASA until the end of 1989. DASA demonstrated that it was no longer a purely national company when it acquired a majority holding in the Dutch aircraft manufacturer Fokker in April 1993. After the merger of Daimler-Benz with the US-based Chrysler Corporation in November 1998, the aerospace subsidiary DASA changed its official name to DaimlerChrysler Aerospace AG. MTU Aero Engines remained part of DaimlerChrysler until 2003. With commercial jetliner and space activities in the northern part of the country, military aircraft business in the south, and helicopter operations in the centre, all spread over 27 sites, Airbus in Germany today is optimally positioned for the future of aviation.

EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

On 10 July 2000, France's Aerospatiale, Germany's DaimlerChrysler Aerospace and Spain's CASA merged to form the European Aeronautics Defence and Space Company (EADS). This marked the consolidation of the industry's main actors at the pan-European level, creating an industry leader in the aviation, defence and space sectors. The company was renamed Airbus in 2014 and today consists of three main businesses Commercial Aircraft, Airbus Helicopters and Airbus Defence and Space. Airbus has a workforce of over 150,000 employees with over 150 nationalities worldwide with design, manufacturing and assembly activities in four continents.

Junkers G38, the largest landplane of its time.

II - OUR HISTORY IN THE UK

A PROUD 100-YEAR BRITISH HERITAGE

1945 - BRISTOL TYPE 170 FREIGHTER

The Bristol Freighter was both a freighter and airliner. It was widely used as an air ferry allowing passengers to take their cars from the UK to continental Europe

The roots of Airbus in the UK stretch back as far as 1910 with the founding of the Bristol Aeroplane Company on the site of Airbus' current Filton plant. The Bristol Aeroplane Company designed and built some of the most iconic early British aircraft. The company would also create the Bristol Engine Company for the design and manufacturing of aero engines which would become part of Rolls-Royce in the 1960s.

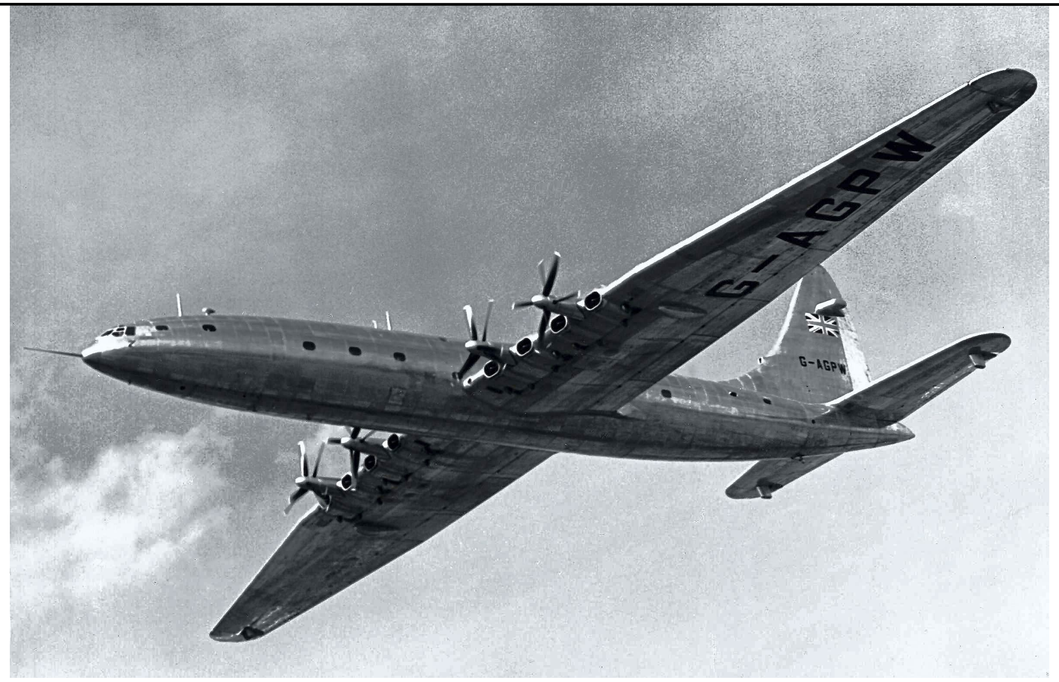
In the late 1930s, Bristol built aircraft such as the Beaufort, Beaufighter and Blenheim that would go on to see extensive service during the Second World War. In the aftermath of the war the focus was on developing commercial aviation, and to this end Bristol built a prototype, the Bristol 167 Brabazon, a passenger aircraft that was possibly the largest land-based aircraft ever built at the time of its maiden flight in 1949. Around this time the company also launched a helicopter division which would eventually be sold to Westland Aircraft.

The Bristol Type 188 pushed the boundaries for supersonic flight as a research aircraft - it would be the last aircraft to be purely Bristol designed and built. In 1960 consolidation of the aviation industry led to the Bristol Aeroplane Company merging with English Electric Aviation Ltd., Vickers-Armstrongs (Aircraft) and Hunting Aircraft to form the British Aircraft Corporation (BAC).

In the 1960s BAC would develop a number of commercial passenger aircraft, the most iconic of which is the Concorde jointly developed with France's Sud Aviation.

In 1970, Hawker Siddeley became a risk sharing partner in the Airbus consortium with a 20% stake, in return for which it would design and manufacture the wings of the Airbus A300 at its Broughton plant. Broughton was created in the second half of the 1930s as a shadow factory for aircraft production. The Vickers-Armstrongs Wellington bomber was produced in vast numbers at Broughton as well as the Avro Lancaster and the De Havilland Mosquito. After the war, in 1948, the Broughton factory was taken over by De Havilland which was absorbed by Hawker Siddeley in 1960. A further round of consolidation, in 1977, saw the nationalisation and merger of BAC, Hawker Siddeley Aviation, and Scottish Aviation. This new entity was named British Aerospace (BAe). In 1999 BAe acquired Marconi Electronic Systems, the defence, electronics and shipbuilding arm of the General Electric Company. The resulting company was renamed BAE Systems.

In 2001 Airbus was incorporated as Airbus SAS, a joint stock company. In return for a 20% share in the new company, BAE Systems transferred ownership of its Filton and Broughton Airbus plants to Airbus SAS. In 2006 BAE Systems sold its 20% stake to Airbus' parent company EADS. Today Airbus is the largest civil aerospace company in the UK, the biggest civil aerospace exporter, the largest space satellite company, the biggest supplier of large aircraft to the Royal Air Force and responsible for around 50% of the UK's civil helicopter fleet. Airbus and its employees are proud of their rich history and shared heritage with BAE Systems with whom it works closely on a number of heritage projects.



SEPTEMBER 4, 1949 - BRISTOL BRABAZON

The Bristol Type 167 Brabazon was a long-haul propeller- driven aircraft built in Filton and designed for transatlantic flights between the United Kingdom and the United States. Very large for the time, it was only designed for 100 passengers, each with a very large personal space.

AUGUST, 16 1952 - BRISTOL BRITANNIA MAIDEN FLIGT

The Bristol Type 175 was a British airliner, originally designed for long-haul flights serving the British Empire. It was particularly modern at the time of its first flight in 1952, one the first passenger transport aircraft equipped with turboprop engines. It was built in Filton and in the Short Brothers factory in Belfast.

JUNE 15, 1936 - MAIDEN FLIGHT OF THE VICKERS-ARMSTRONGS WELLINGTON

The Vickers Wellington was a British twin-engined medium bomber widely used during the first two years of World War II before being replaced by much larger four-engined bombers, such as the Avro Lancaster. 5786 Wellingtons were built in Broughton.

CHAPTERS

1900 - 1910

DREAMS COME TRUE

1909 - INTERNATIONAL AIR SHOW

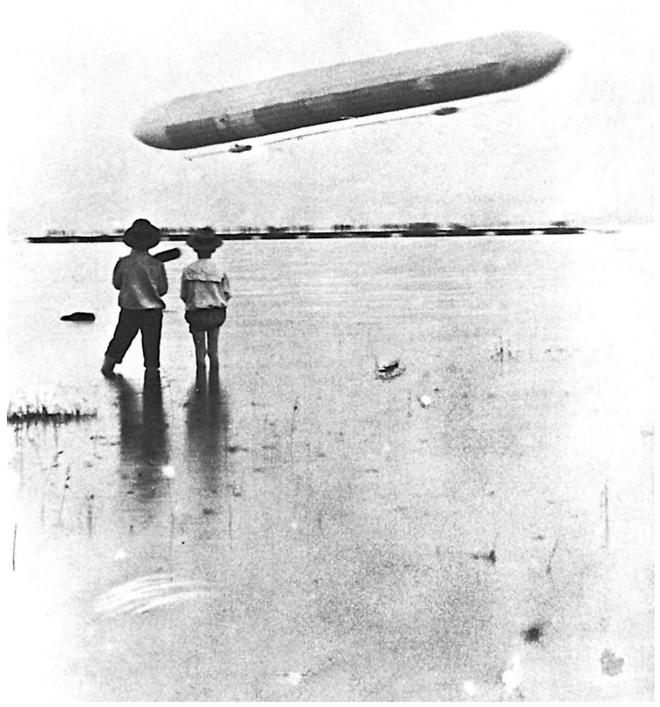
The era of international exhibitions began: posters for the first air show in Paris and the first ILA in Frankfurt.

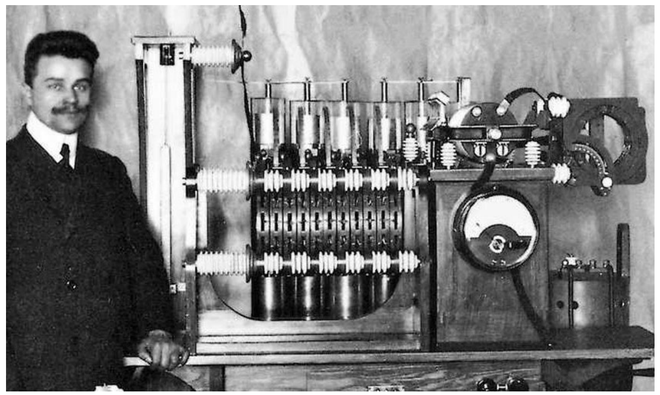
1906 - QUENCHED-SPARK TRANSMITTER FROM TELEFUNKEN

High-frequency technology in its infancy: a 10 kW quenched-spark transmitter built by Telefunken.

JULY 2, 1900 - FIRST FLIGHT OF THE ZEPPELIN

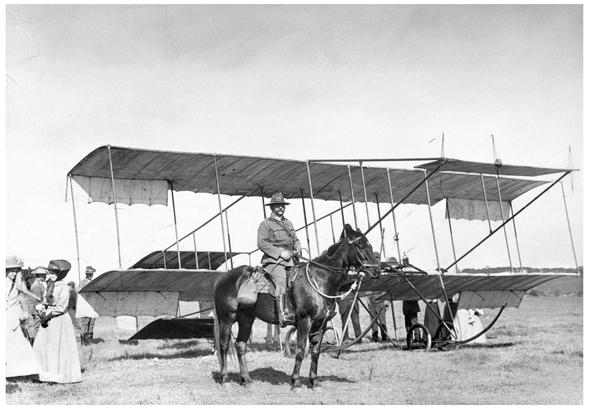
Equipped with Daimler engines, the first Zeppelin airship (the LZ-1) performed its maiden flight over Lake Constance.





JULY 30, 1910 - MAIDEN FLIGHT OF THE BRISTOL BOXKITE

The Boxkite was the first aircraft designed and made by the British and Colonial Aeroplane Company, which would become the Bristol Aeroplane Company. The design was based on the Farman III and would be the first aircraft type ordered for the British armed forces. 78 units were manufactured over the course of four years..



1906 - BLÉRIOT III

A different approach on the way to the successful Bleriot XI.

DREAMS COME TRUE: 1900 - 1910

JULY 7, 1909 - CROSSING THE ENGLISH CHANNEL

Louis Blériot was the first pilot to cross the English Channel in a heavier than air aircraft, the Blériot XI, on July 25, 1909.

1911 - 1920

WHEN FLYING WAS STILL AN ADVENTURE

1916 - ADVERTISEMENT
FOR ALBATROS AIRPLANES.

OCTOBER 11, 1911 - FOUNDATION
OF MORANE-SAULNIER

The illustrious Morane-Saulnier company was founded by Raymond Saulnier and the brothers Robert and Léon Morane. This shows one of the first Morane-Saulnier Type H aircraft outside a hangar in November 1911.

APRIL 4, 1917 - MAIDEN FLIGHT
OF THE SPAD S.XIII

8,500 of the SPAD S.XIII were built and delivered to eleven countries. This fighter was also flown by René Fonck, the French flying ace, during the First World War.

JUNE 17, 1926 - MAIDEN FLIGHT OF THE JUNKERS W33

The Junkers W 33 was also later used in forestry for pest control.

WHEN FLYING WAS STILL AN ADVENTURE: 1911 - 1920

1919 - AIR LINK BETWEEN PARIS AND LONDON

The Farman F.60 Goliath set out on the first international route in civil aviation (Paris – London) in 1919. The aircraft, which was originally designed as a heavy bomber, was later used exclusively as a passenger plane.

APRIL 1918 - COMMISSIONING OF THE FOKKER D VII

From April 1918 onwards, the Fokker D VII saw action at the front line, providing convincing evidence of its agility, fast climb rate and resistance to spin.

JUNE 25, 1919 - MAIDEN FLIGHT OF THE JUNKER F13

With a cabin configuration for six, the Junkers F13 is now considered the archetype of the modern commercial aircraft.

1921 - 1930

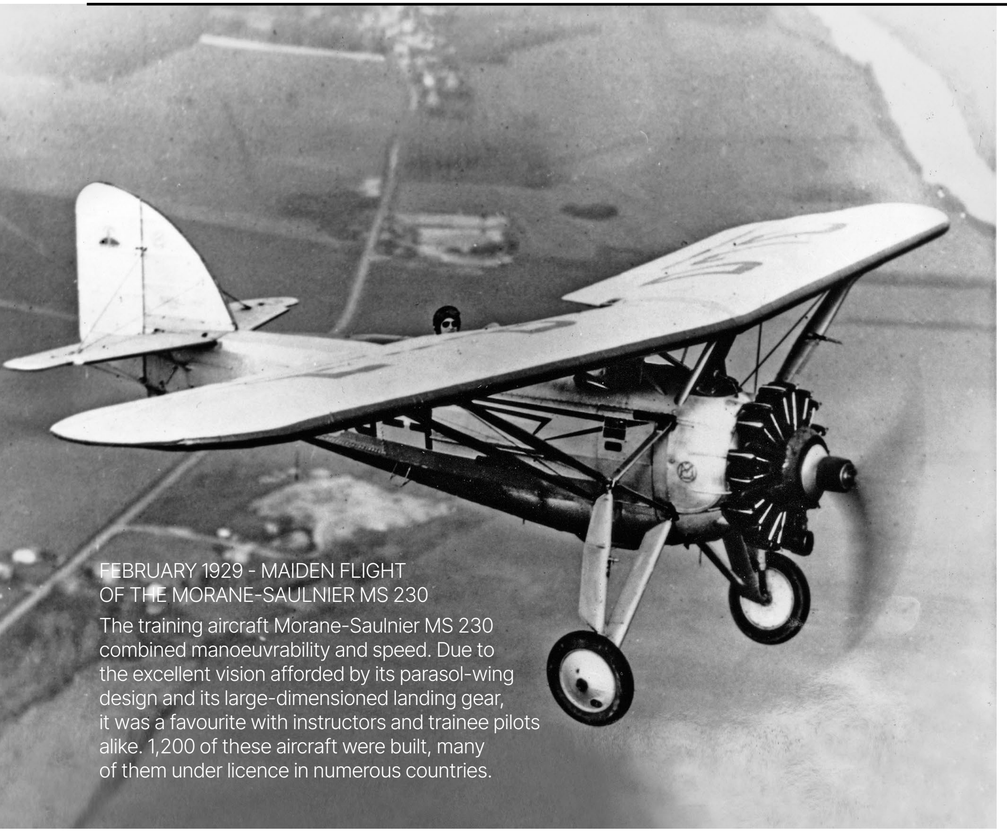
THE CHALLENGE OF LONG-DISTANCE FLIGHTS

JUNE 16, 1921 - MAIDEN FLIGHT
OF THE SPAD S.46 BERLINE

The SPAD S.46 Berline was a further development of the SPAD S.33. It was able to transport five passengers, four seated in wicker chairs in the closed cabin and one in the cockpit next to the pilot.

1925 - COMMISSIONING
OF THE POTEZ 25

The Potez 25 biplane came in two versions: for civil and military use. It was the most frequently manufactured French aircraft of its time with around 4,000 planes being built and also exported to 22 countries.



FEBRUARY 1929 - MAIDEN FLIGHT
OF THE MORANE-SAULNIER MS 230

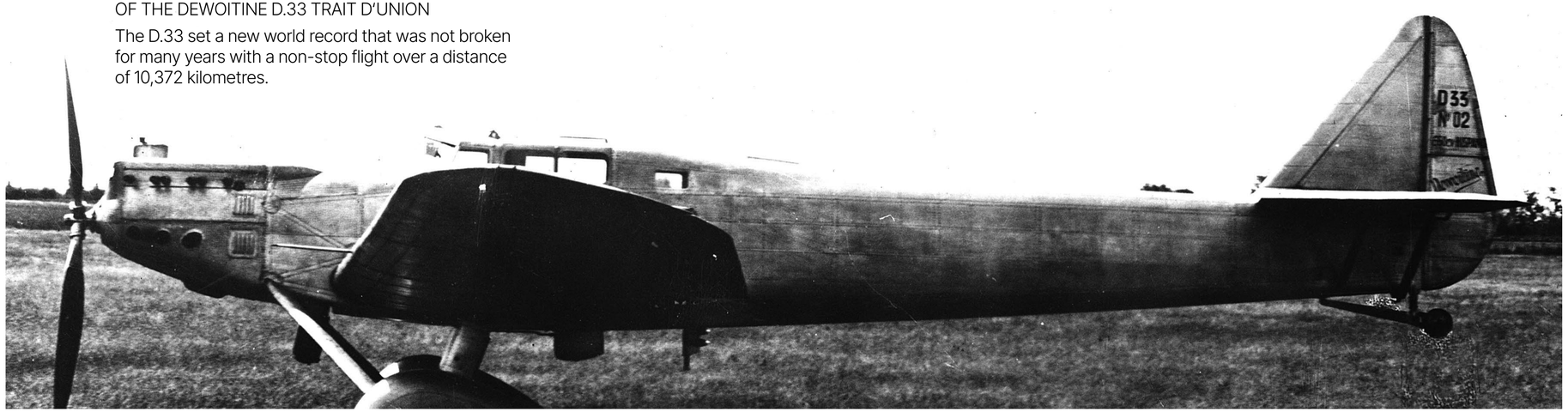
The training aircraft Morane-Saulnier MS 230 combined manoeuvrability and speed. Due to the excellent vision afforded by its parasol-wing design and its large-dimensioned landing gear, it was a favourite with instructors and trainee pilots alike. 1,200 of these aircraft were built, many of them under licence in numerous countries.

AUGUST 26, 1930 - DORNIER WAL IN NEW YORK

At 4.45 pm Wolfgang von Gronau landed a Dornier Wal on the Hudson River in New York, where he received an enthusiastic reception.

NOVEMBER 20, 1930 - MAIDEN FLIGHT
OF THE DEWOITINE D.33 TRAIT D'UNION

The D.33 set a new world record that was not broken for many years with a non-stop flight over a distance of 10,372 kilometres.

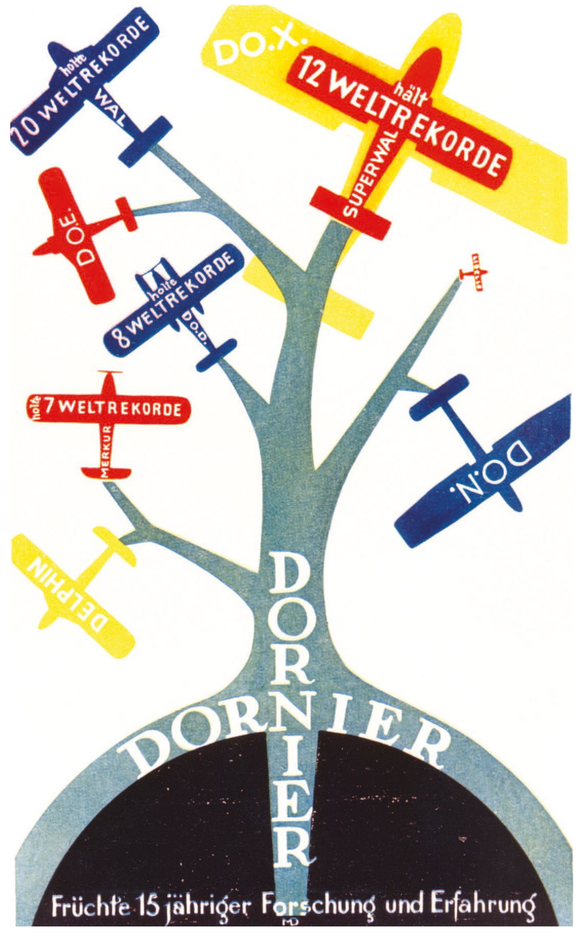


THE CHALLENGE OF LONG-DISTANCE FLIGHTS: 1921 - 1930

ADVERTISEMENT FOR JUNKERS AIRPLANES IN EGYPT

ADVERTISEMENT FOR DORNIER WAL

DORNIER ADVERTISEMENT DEPICTING RECORDS



1931 - 1940

HIGHER, FASTER, FURTHER

JUNE 13, 1934 - BF (Me) 108

The world famous Bf (Me) 108 Taifun became the prototype for modern travel and sports airplanes.

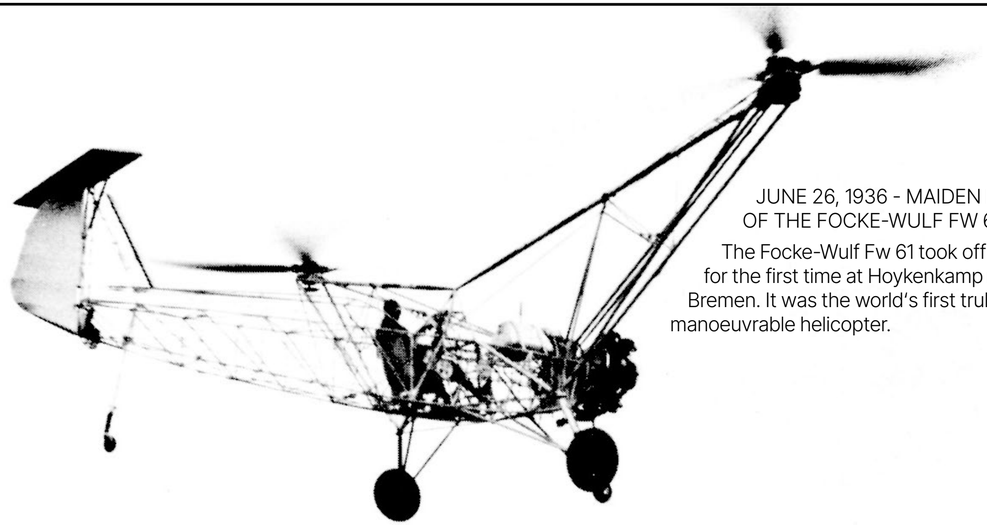
MARCH 1932 - MAIDEN FLIGHT OF THE JUNKERS Ju 52/3M

"Auntie Ju" soon gained a reputation as the world's safest commercial aircraft and was to become the German aircraft industry's most successful export.

1931 - MAIDEN FLIGHT OF THE CASA III

The twin-seater light aircraft CASA III made its first flight in Getafe near Madrid.

HIGHER, FASTER, FURTHER: 1931 - 1940

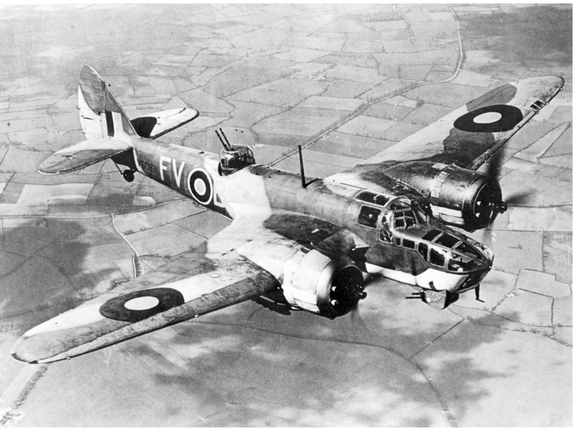


JUNE 26, 1936 - MAIDEN FLIGHT
OF THE FOCKE-WULF FW 61

The Focke-Wulf Fw 61 took off for the first time at Hoykenkamp near Bremen. It was the world's first truly manoeuvrable helicopter.

MAY 29, 1935 - MAIDEN FLIGHT OF THE MESSERSCHMITT BF (Me) 109

Around 35,000 Messerschmitt Bf 109 aircraft (later Me 109) were built, making it one of the most frequently manufactured planes in the world. The 109 was mainly delivered with engines from Daimler-Benz, but the Junkers-Motorenwerke also supplied some of their Jumo engines for this aircraft.



APRIL 12, 1935 - MAIDEN FLIGHT OF THE BRISTOL BLENHEIM

The Bristol Blenheim (Types 142, 149 and 160) was a twin engined light bomber designed by Frank Barnwell and built by the Bristol Aeroplane Company. In the early stages of the war it saw extensive action, until it was superseded by more modern and capable designs.

JULY 27, 1937 - MAIDEN FLIGHT
OF THE FOCKE-WULF FW 200

The Focke-Wulf Fw 200 Condor, which was developed in only 12 months and 11 days under the leadership of Kurt Tank, was considered to be a model for modern commercial aircraft.

HIGHER, FASTER, FURTHER: 1931 - 1940

AUGUST 29, 1935 - MAIDEN FLIGHT
OF THE DEWOITINE D.338

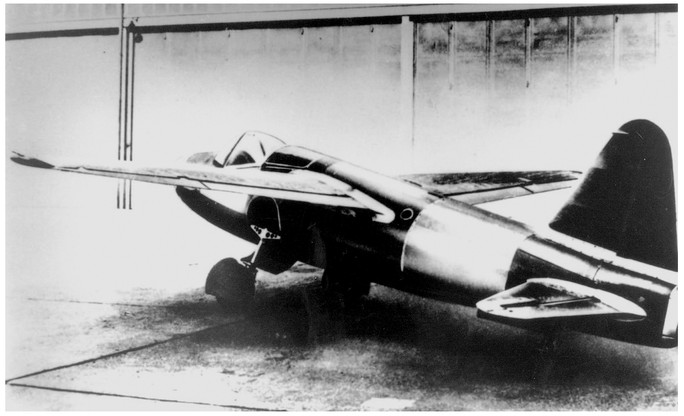
The Dewoitine D.338 was a triple-engine passenger plane similar to the Ju 52. It was used both in European transport and for long-haul flights to Indochina.

OCTOBER 2, 1938 - MAIDEN FLIGHT
OF THE DEWOITINE D.520

The Dewoitine D.520 fighter was the most produced French combat plane in the run up to the war.

AUGUST 27, 1939 - MAIDEN FLIGHT
OF THE HEINKEL He 178

The He 178, was the world's first aircraft to fly using jet propulsion.



SEPTEMBER 1939 - MAIDEN FLIGHT OF SNCASE SE 161 LANGUEDOC

Marcel Bloch was the designer of the Bloch 161, which became one of the most important French commercial aeroplanes after the war.

JULY 1940 - BRISTOL TYPE 156 BEAUFIGHTER

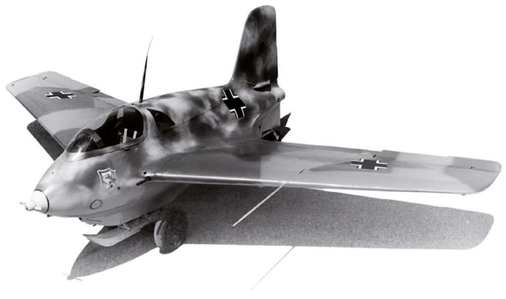
The Bristol Beaufighter was a British twin-engine fighter aircraft known for its versatility, it served in various roles, including night fighter, torpedo bomber, and ground-attack aircraft.

1941 - 1950

A TIME FOR CHANGE

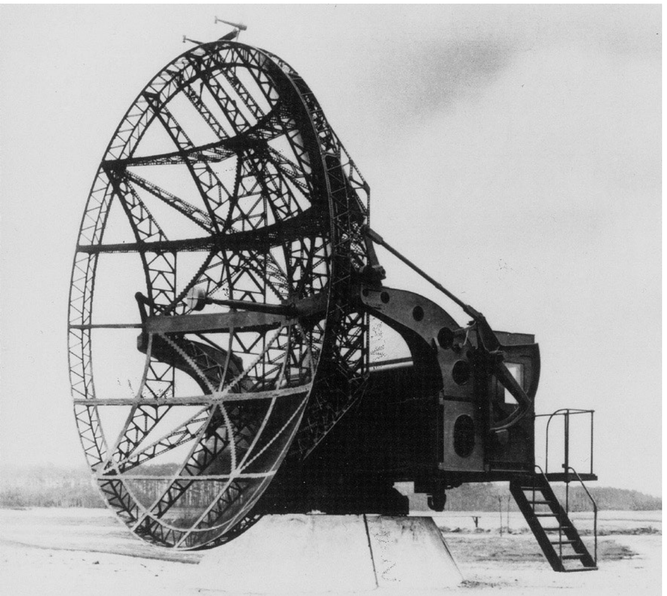
1941 - AVRO LANCASTER

The Avro Lancaster was a British Heavy bomber, 235 of which were built at the present day Airbus site in Broughton.



FEBRUARY 13, 1941 - MAIDEN FLIGHT OF THE MESSERSCHMITT Me 163 A

The Me 163 A was flown for the first time by Heini Dittmar in Augsburg. It was the first arcraft ever to exceed a speed of 1,000 kilometres per hour. The photograph shows the Me 163 B version.



SEPTEMBER 9, 1941 - "WÜRZBURG-RIESE" GIANT RADAR

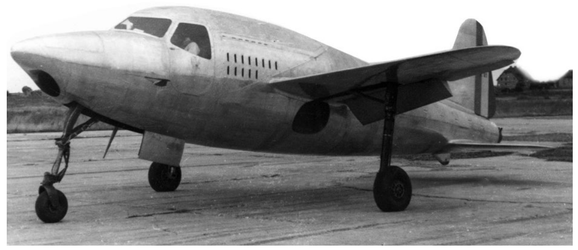
The "Würzburg-Riese" was the first giant radar to be set up in Germany.

SEPTEMBER 20, 1943 - MAIDEN FLIGHT OF THE DE HAVILLAND DH 100 VAMPIRE

The de Havilland Vampire was an early British jet fighter and trainer, entering service in 1945. It served in a number of air forces worldwide. 187 units were built in Marignane, France, under licence as the SE 530 Mistral.

JULY 18, 1942 - MAIDEN FLIGHT OF THE MESSERSCHMITT Me 262

The Me 262 with jet propulsion built by Messerschmitt was the world's first operational jet fighter.



NOVEMBER 11, 1946 - MAIDEN FLIGHT OF THE SO.6000 TRITON

The first French jet, the SO.6000 Triton, took off for its maiden flight.

MARCH 7, 1949 - MAIDEN FLIGHT OF THE SO 1100 ARIEL I

The first flight of the French SO 1100 Ariel I helicopter took place at Suresnes.

SEPTEMBER 10, 1949 - MAIDEN FLIGHT OF THE NORD 2500 NORATLAS

The Nord 2500 Noratlas, designed by Jean Calvy, this medium-weight, twin-engine transport aircraft with twin booms was built for the French Air Force and became truly legendary. Serial production ran to 419 units of the N 2501, of which 162 were built under licence in Germany. They were supplied to customers in 17 countries.

APRIL 1, 1949 - MAIDEN FLIGHT OF THE SE.2010 ARMAGNAC

With a take-off weight of 73 tonnes, the four-engined commercial aircraft SE.2010 Armagnac was the largest landplane to be built in France until then. It carried 84 passengers over a distance of 4,800 kilometres. The first studies for this aircraft date back to the year 1942.

1951 - 1960

THE JET ERA

THE JET ERA: 1951 - 1960

JULY 23, 1952 - MAIDEN FLIGHT OF THE FOUGA CM.170 MAGISTER

The twin-jet Fouga CM.170 Magister was used by the French Air Force as a trainer and was also flown for 16 years by the Patrouille de France aerobatics team. This aircraft was exported to 19 countries and built under licence in Germany, Finland and Israel.

MARCH 2, 1953 - MAIDEN FLIGHT OF THE SO.9000 TRIDENT

The SO.9000 Trident from SNCASO was an experimental fighter developed by Lucien Servanty with a hybrid jet and rocket propulsion system. It was the first European aircraft to reach Mach 2 and also broke the world records for altitude flight and rate of climb.

MAY 27, 1955 - MAIDEN FLIGHT OF THE SE.210 CARAVELLE

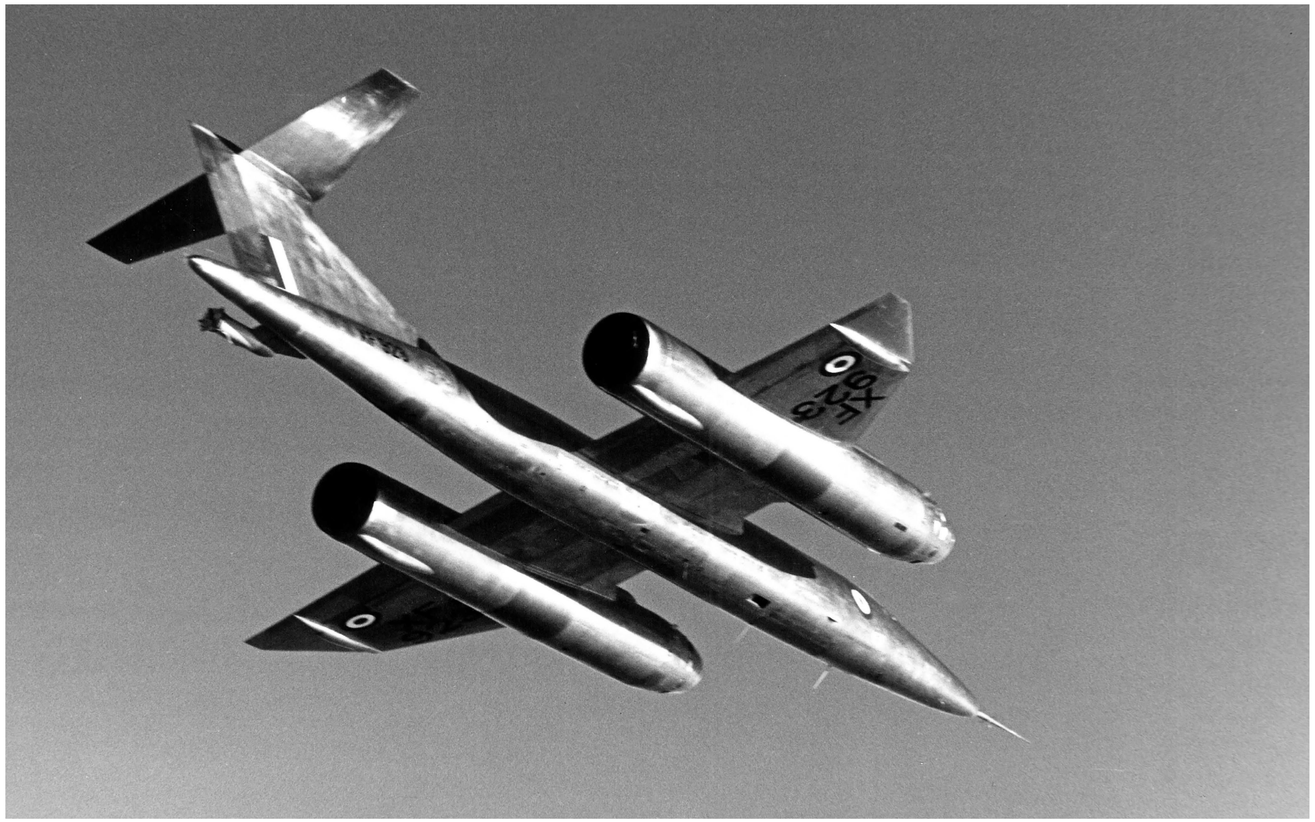
The SNCASE (later Sud Aviation) Caravelle was the first rear engined commercial airliner. An iconic design of the early jet age thanks to its sleek elegant lines, it also introduced many technical firsts such as hydraulically assisted servo controls and all weather landing capabilities. 282 units of the Caravelle were manufactured in 8 variants.

MARCH 12, 1955 - MAIDEN FLIGHT OF THE SE.3130 ALOUETTE II

The SE.3130 Alouette II was the world's first helicopter with turbine propulsion to be produced in series. The Lama version held the world altitude record of 12,442 metres for helicopters from June 21, 1972 to March 25, 2002. 1,724 units of this helicopter were built, some under licence in India.

SEPTEMBER 28, 1955_ MAIDEN FLIGHT OF THE C. 207 AZOR

This photo shows a C. 207 Azor transporter operated by the Spanish Air Force.



APRIL 14, 1962 - MAIDEN FLIGHT OF THE BRISTOL TYPE 188

The Bristol Type 188 was a supersonic research aircraft designed to explore high-speed, high-temperature flights and is remarkable for its extensive use of stainless steel. BAC would use the experience acquired with the Type 188 for the development of the Concorde.

OCTOBER 17, 1956 - MAIDEN FLIGHT OF THE DORNIER Do 27

By placing an order for 428 Do 27 planes, the new Bundeswehr ensured that Dornier could re-establish its aircraft production in Germany. A “potential pilot” shows interest in the Do 27.

JUNE 9, 1959 - SERIAL PRODUCTION OF THE MORANE-SAULNIER RALLYE

Serial production of the Morane-Saulnier Rallye started at the Tarbes plant, now the headquarters of DAHER Socata. 3,500 units of this light tourer were built there and sold to customers throughout the world. The aircraft continued to be built under licence by EADS PZL under the name of Koliber (Colibri) until 2004.

1961 - 1970

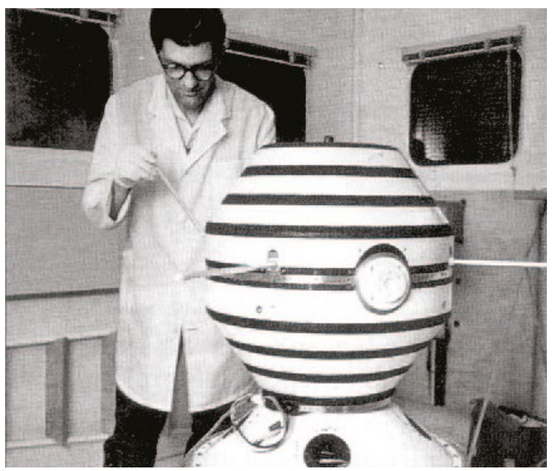
NEW FRONTIERS

DECEMBER 7, 1962 - MAIDEN FLIGHT
OF THE SE 3210 SUPER FRELON

The SE 3210 Super Frelon was the successor
to the Frelon, with 101 units being built. It saw service in eleven countries
and set a speed record of 350 kilometres per hour. The previous model, the SE 3200
Frelon, which first flew on June 10, 1959 and was also equipped with three engines,
was the world's first helicopter with a free-shaft turbine.

FEBRUARY 25, 1963 - MAIDEN FLIGHT OF THE TRANSALL C-160

The Franco-German Transall C-160 transport aircraft undertook
its maiden flight in Melun-Villaroche. The French company Nord Aviation
and the German companies Weserflugzeugbau and Hamburger Flugzeugbau participated
in this German-French bilateral programme for the C-160 Transall transporter.
In total, 213 aircraft of this type were built for the French, German, Indonesian,
South African and Turkish air forces.

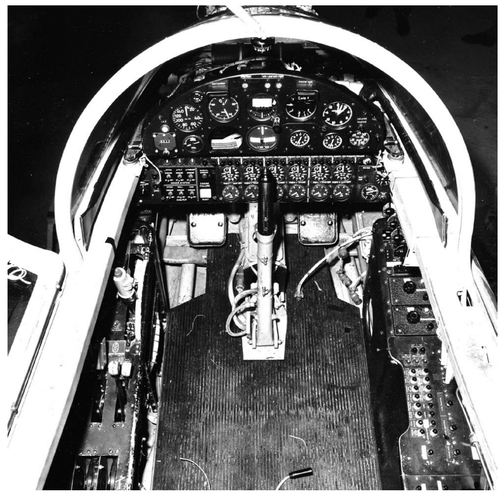


1962 - A1 ASTERIX

Matra was the main contractor for A1 Asterix,
the fi rst French experimental satellite.
On November 26, 1965, the satellite
successfully reached its orbit aboard
a French Diamant launcher.

JUNE 4, 1964 - PRESENTATION OF THE VJ 101 AT THE ILA

Entwicklungsring Süd (EWR), a joint venture founded by Bölkow, Heinkel and Messerschmitt, displayed its VJ 101 C vertical takeoff plane at the ILA exhibition in Hanover. The plane made its first hover flight on April 10, 1963.



1964 - COCKPIT OF THE VJ 101

FEBRUARY 10, 1967 - MAIDEN FLIGHT OF THE DORNIER Do 31

The vertical takeoff Do 31 lifted off rom the Dornier company airfield at Oberpfaffenhofen near Munich for the first time.

APRIL 12, 1967 - MAIDEN FLIGHT OF THE SA.340 GAZELLE

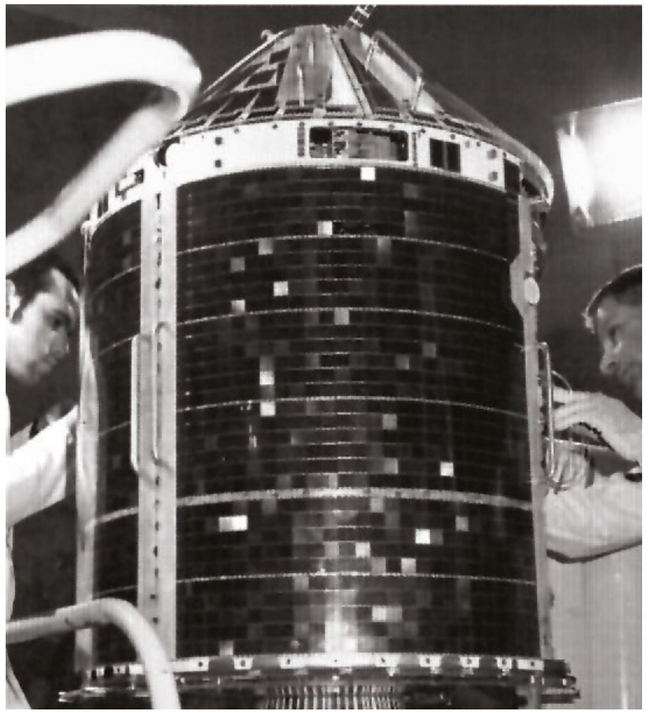
The SA.340 Gazelle light helicopter was – like the Puma and Lynx – the result of cooperation with Westland. It was the first helicopter equipped with an encased tail rotor, known as a fenestron. 1,255 units of this helicopter were built.

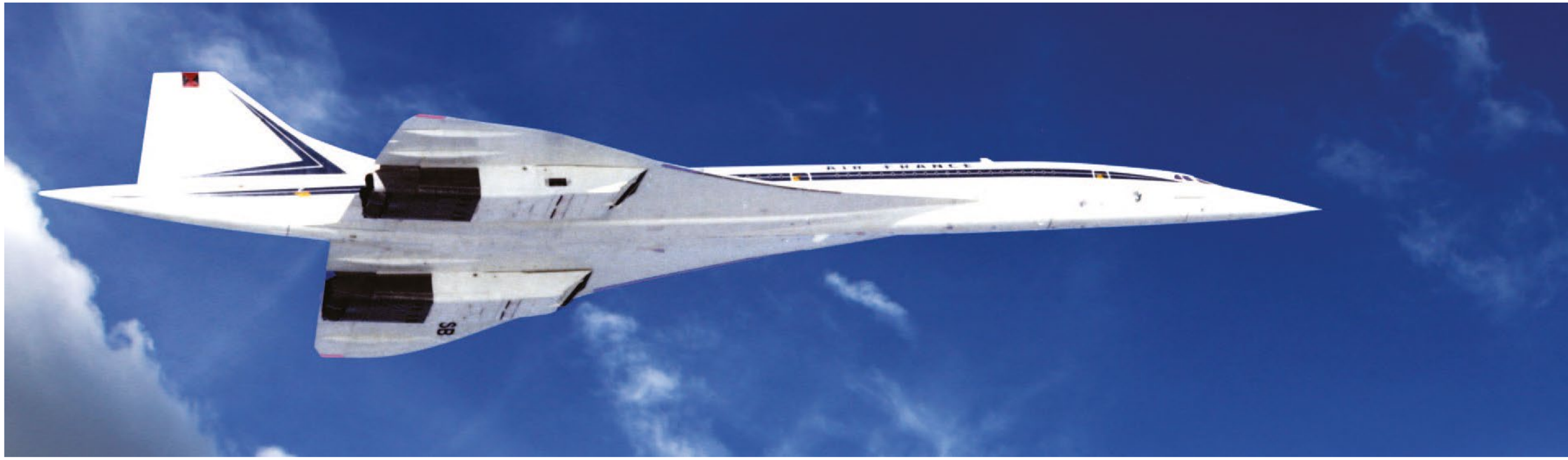
MAY 9, 1967 - MAIDEN FLIGHT
OF FOKKER F28

The short range twinjet Fokker F28 Fellowship was designed for 65 passengers.

NOVEMBER 8, 1969 - START RESEARCH
SATELLITE AZUR

The first German research satellite Azur was created under the leadership of Bölkow GmbH. in collaboration with AEG- Telefunken, Dornier and ERNO Raumfahrttechnik.





MARCH 2, 1969
MAIDEN FLIGHT OF THE CONCORDE

The Franco-British supersonic passenger airliner Concorde took off on its first test flight in Toulouse.

JULY 14, 1971 - MAIDEN FLIGHT OF THE VFW 614

The VFW 614 was developed by the aircraft manufacturer VFW in Bremen. The last of these aircraft was used by the German Aerospace Center (DLR) for aeronautical research uptil June 2012.

SEPTEMBER 10, 1971 - MAIDEN FLIGH HE VAK 191B

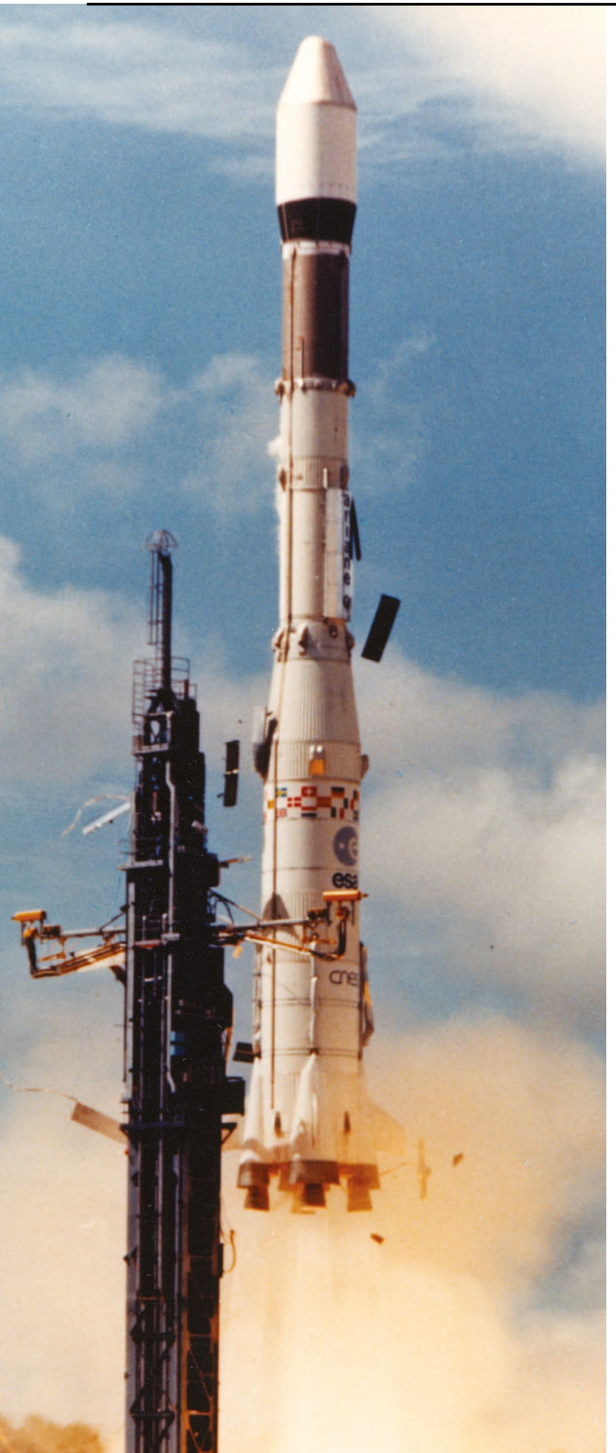
Following the VJ 101 C and the Do 31, the vertical take-off VAK 191B was the last of the three successful V/STOL experimental programmes carried out by the German aviation industry.

1971 - 1980

EUROPEAN COLLABORATION

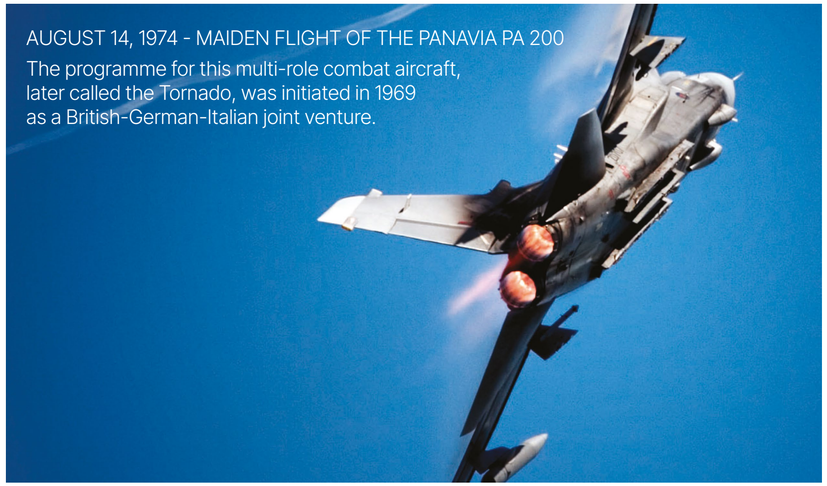
OCTOBER 28, 1972 - MAIDEN FLIGHT OF THE AIRBUS A300B

The Airbus A300B was the first of a long line of successful Airbus aircraft. Airbus Industrie was founded as a consortium by France's Aerospatiale, Germany's Deutsche Airbus, Spain's CASA and the UK's Hawker Siddeley which joined the programme as a risk sharing partner.



DECEMBER 24, 1979 - FIRST FLIGHT OF ARIANE

The first Ariane launcher successfully lifted off from the Kourou space launch site in French Guyana. From the beginning the AIRBUS predecessor companies Aerospatiale, Matra, ERNO, MBB and CASA played a major role in the development and construction of this European satellite launcher.



AUGUST 14, 1974 - MAIDEN FLIGHT OF THE PANAVIA PA 200

The programme for this multi-role combat aircraft, later called the Tornado, was initiated in 1969 as a British-German-Italian joint venture.

DECEMBER 18, 1974 - SYMPHONIE COMMUNICATIONS SATELLITE

The Franco-German communications satellite Symphonie was launched into space by a U.S. Delta rocket.

JUNE 27, 1977 - MAIDEN FLIGHT OF THE C-101

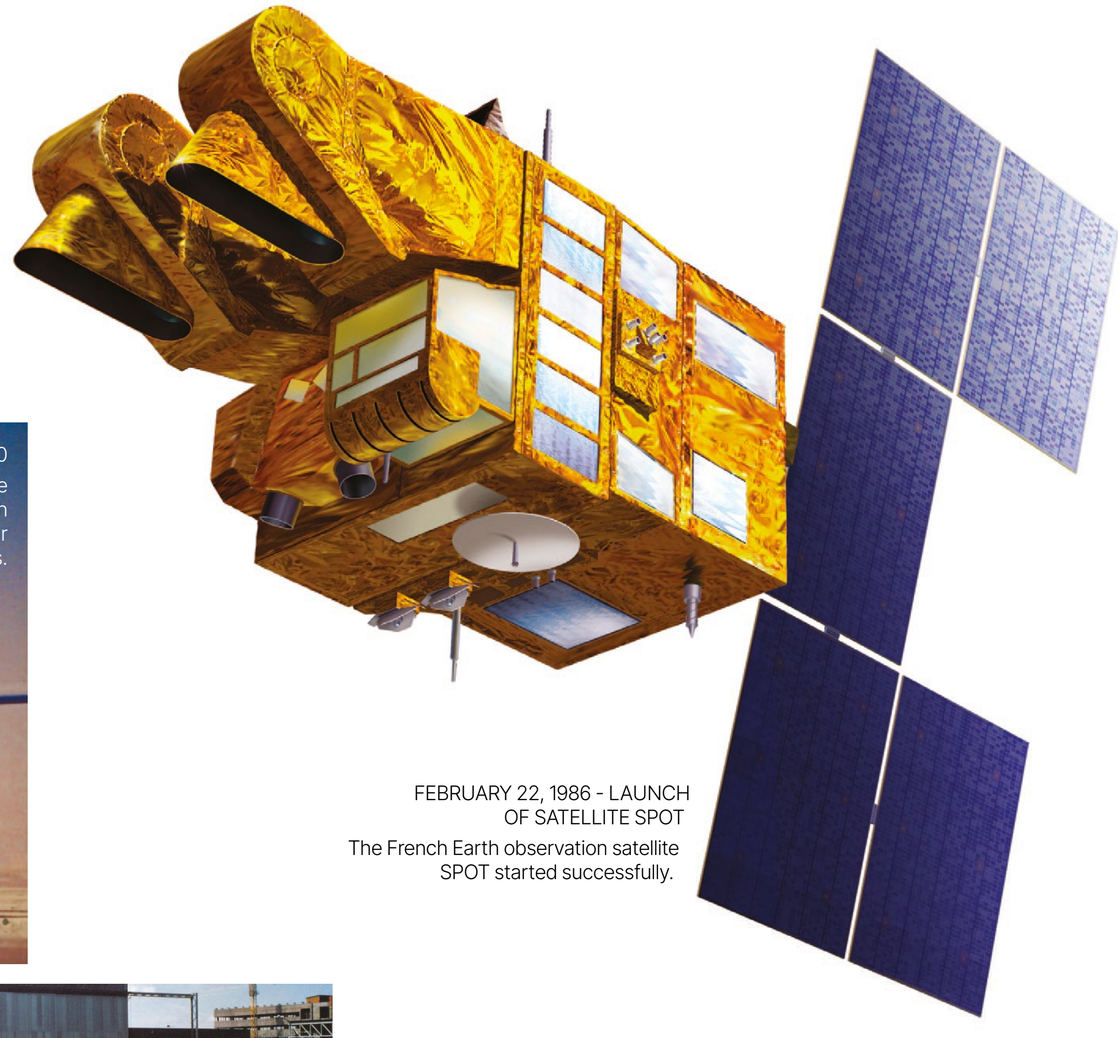
The single-jet trainer C-101, developed by CASA, on its first flight in Getafe. MBB participated as a subcontractor on this aircraft.

1981 - 1990

AEROSPACE GOES DIGITAL

APRIL 3, 1982 - MAIDEN FLIGHT OF THE AIRBUS A310

The Airbus A310 made its first flight in Toulouse, where the final assembly of the 218-seat medium-haul airliner with a range of 9,000 km also took place. Lufthansa and Swissair were the fi rst carriers to use the A310 on regular services.



FEBRUARY 22, 1986 - LAUNCH OF SATELLITE SPOT

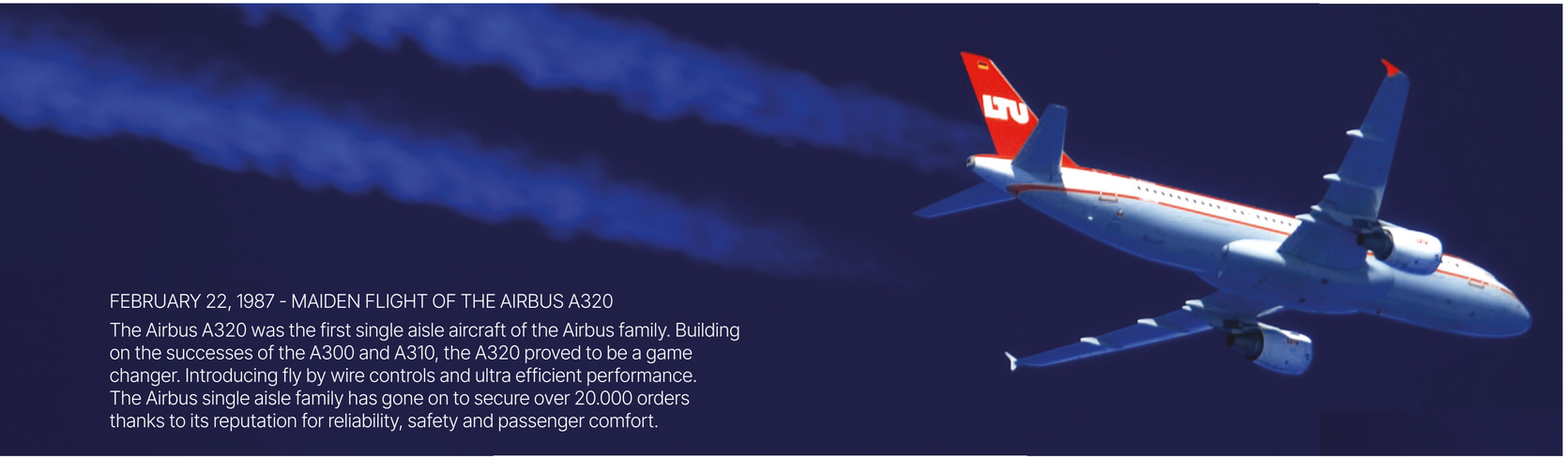
The French Earth observation satellite SPOT started successfully.

JULY 1981 - SOLAR POWER PLANT IN KUWAIT

A solar power plant supplied by MBB was put into operation in Kuwait.

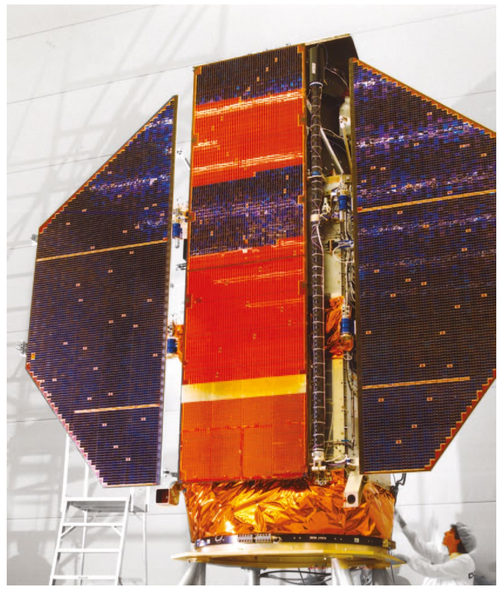
NOVEMBER 11, 1983 - MAIDEN FLIGHT OF THE CN-235

The CN-235, developed by CASA and jointly built with the Indonesian company Nurtanio, served as a civil regional transport aircraft, a military transporter and a sea-based reconnaissance aircraft.



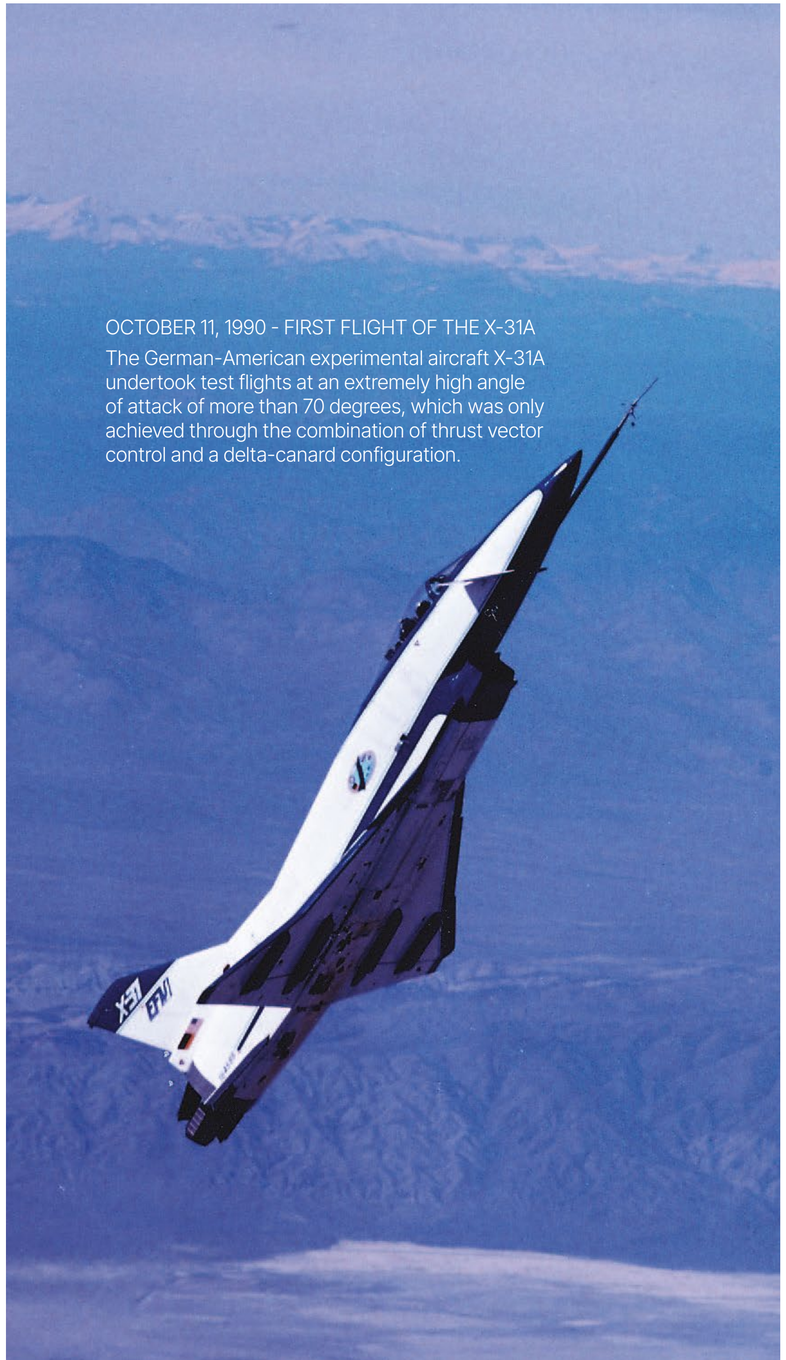
FEBRUARY 22, 1987 - MAIDEN FLIGHT OF THE AIRBUS A320

The Airbus A320 was the first single aisle aircraft of the Airbus family. Building on the successes of the A300 and A310, the A320 proved to be a game changer. Introducing fly by wire controls and ultra efficient performance. The Airbus single aisle family has gone on to secure over 20.000 orders thanks to its reputation for reliability, safety and passenger comfort.



JUNE 1, 1990 - LAUNCH OF ROSAT

With Dornier as systems leader, the satellite ROSAT was developed to explore X-ray sources in space. Here the satellite is shown in the cleanroom in Friedrichshafen.



OCTOBER 11, 1990 - FIRST FLIGHT OF THE X-31A

The German-American experimental aircraft X-31A undertook test flights at an extremely high angle of attack of more than 70 degrees, which was only achieved through the combination of thrust vector control and a delta-canard configuration.

MARCH 27, 1993 - FIRST FLIGHT
OF THE EUROFIGHTER

The maiden flight of the first prototype of the Eurofighter 2000 took place at Manching with Peter Weger at the controls.

1991 - 2000

THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY

NOVEMBER 2, 1992 - FIRST FLIGHT OF THE AIRBUS A330

The A330 expanded the Airbus offer by adding a long range family of aircraft

APRIL 27, 1991 - FIRST FLIGHT OF THE TIGER

The Tiger is a joint Franco-German development designed for a variety of combat and support tasks.

FEBRUARY 15, 1994 - MAIDEN FLIGHT
OF THE EURaOCOPTER EC135

The first flight of the EC135, the light helicopter from Eurocopter, took place at Donauwörth.

DECEMBER 18, 1995 - MAIDEN FLIGHT
OF THE NH90

The NH90 is a military transport helicopter developed by NH Industries, partnership between Airbus Helicopters, Leonardo S.p.A. and Fokker Aerostructures

SEPTEMBER 13, 1994 - FIRST FLIGHT
OF THE BELUGA A300-600ST

The A300-600ST Beluga was the successor to the Super Guppy transporter for the transport of Airbus components.

OCTOBER 30, 1997 - SECOND LAUNCH
OF THE ARIANE 5

Second time round, the Ariane 5 was successfully launched.

2001 - 2025

DESTINY IN THE STARS

OCTOBER 15, 2003 - GLOBAL HAWK IN GERMANY

The Global Hawk unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), equipped with sensors from EADS Defence Electronics, made its first landing in Germany.

APRIL 27, 2005 - FIRST FLIGHT OF THE A380

The maiden flight of the A380, the largest passenger aeroplane in the world, lasted three hours and 54 minutes.

DECEMBER 20, 2004 - AUSTRALIA WAS THE FIRST CUSTOMER FOR THE AIRBUS A330-200 MRTT

Australia became the first Airbus A330-200 MRTT (Multi Role Tanker Transport) customer.

MARCH 23, 2006 - ROLL-OUT OF THE C-235AT

The roll-out of the first C-235A aircraft for the U.S. Coast Guard's Integrated Deepwater System (IDS) programme took place at EADS CASA's San Pablo facility in Seville, Spain.

DECEMBER 11, 2009 - MAIDEN FLIGHT OF THE A400M

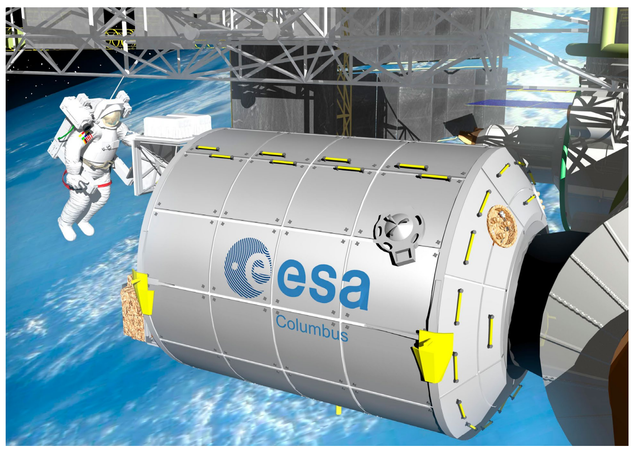
The new military transporter A400M took off from Seville for its maiden flight.

2004 - ROSETTA PROBE

The ESA's Rosetta mission was the first to deploy a lander on a comet's surface. The prime spacecraft contractor was Astrium Germany (today Airbus Defence and Space). Major subcontractors were Astrium UK (spacecraft platform), Astrium France (spacecraft avionics).

FEBRUARY 7, 2008 - COLUMBUS SETS SAIL FOR ISS ON THE SPACE SHUTTLE ATLANTIS

The Columbus science laboratory was launched aboard Space Shuttle Atlantis and docked at the International Space Station (ISS)..

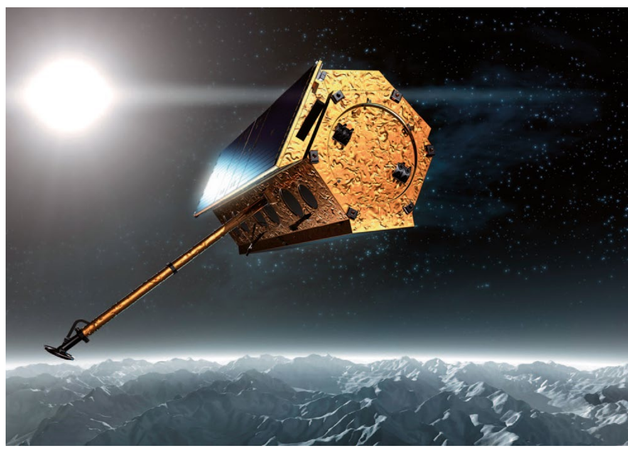


MARCH 9, 2008 - LAUNCH OF THE ATV

The "Jules Verne" ATV carried provisions to the International Space Station (ISS).

JUNE 15, 2007 - LAUNCH OF THE TERRASAR-X

The German Earth observation satellite TerraSAR-X delivers high-quality SAR data (Synthetic Aperture Radar).

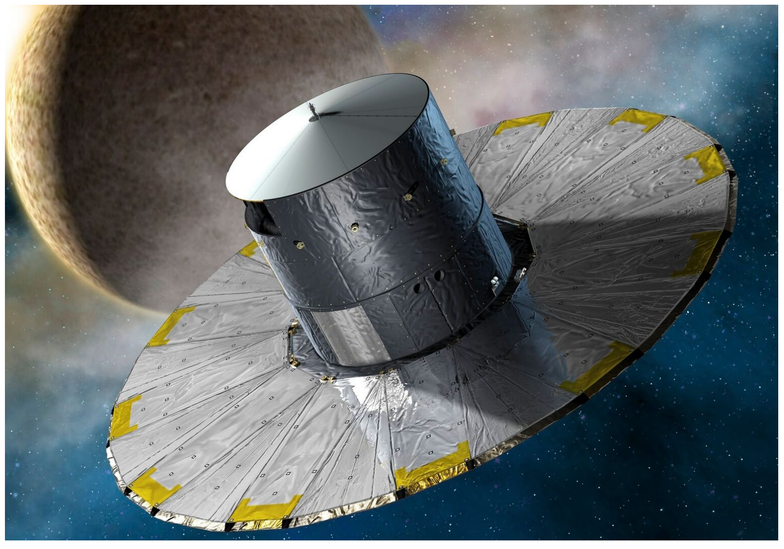


DESTINY IN THE STARS: 2001 - 2025

SEPTEMBER 27, 2010 - X3 TEST FLIGHT

Eurocopter started test flights of the X3 demonstrator for its innovative High-speed, long-range Hybrid Helicopter (H3) concept, which combines excellent vertical takeoff and landing capabilities with fast cruise speeds of more than 220 kts.

JUNE 14, 2013 - MAIDEN FLIGHT OF THE A350-900 XWB
from the Airbus Toulouse-Blagnac airport.



DECEMBER 19, 2013 - GAIA LAUNCH

Gaia – an Airbus-designed and-built space surveyor for ESA – is compiling a 3D space catalogue of more than 1,000 million stars, or approximately roughly 1% of the stars in the Milky Way.

SEPTEMBER 25, 2014 MAIDEN FLIGHT
OF THE A320NEO

The highly-efficient A320 is equipped with a new engine option along with standard Sharklets, delivering a 15% fuel burn reduction to carriers.

2014 EADS BECOMES AIRBUS GROUP

EADS was renamed Airbus Group (which later in 2017 was shortened to Airbus). Eurocopter became Airbus Helicopters. The rebranding marked a new era in the history of the company as it joins Airbus and Airbus Defence & Space within the new Airbus Group.

SEPTEMBER 14, 2015 - INAUGURATION
OF THE FINAL ASSEMBLY LINE IN MOBILE AL.

Airbus expanded its production capacity for A320neo and A220 types for the US market.

NOVEMBER 24, 2019 - MAIDEN FLIGHT
OF THE A350-1000

Successful maiden flight of the A350-1000 the latest Airbus long range family member.

JUNE 13, 2015 - MAIDEN FLIGHT OF THE H160
at Airbus Helicopter's facility in Marignane (France).

2016 - GALILEO GOES LIVE

Galileo, the global navigation satellite system (GNSS) went live in 2016. From the beginning of Galileo through 2018, Airbus was prime contractor for the satellite navigation system's ground control segment.

OCTOBER 5, 2018 - LAUNCH OF BEPI COLOMBO

Launched on an Ariane 5, the mission of Bepi Colombo is to research the solar system's smallest and least-explored terrestrial planet – Mercury.

JULY 19, 2019 - MAIDEN FLIGHT OF THE FIRST BELUGA XL

Airbus' next-generation super airlifter performed its maiden flight in Toulouse.

2018 - AIRBUS A220 BECOMES THE NEWEST MEMBER OF AIRBUS' SINGLE-AISLE AIRCRAFT FAMILY

A milestone partnership between Airbus and Canada's Bombardier took effect in July 2018 with Airbus acquiring a majority stake in the C Series Aircraft Limited Partnership.

OCTOBER 19, 2017 - MAIDEN FLIGHT OF THE A330neo

Powered by latest-generation Rolls-Royce Trent 7000 engines, the A330neo expands operators' market opportunities with a range capability increase of approximately 400 nautical miles while carrying additional payload.

DECEMBER 20, 2018 - THE AUTONOMOUS DEMONSTRATOR VSR700

Airbus Helicopters started autonomous flight trials of a VSR700 Optionally Piloted Vehicle (OPV) demonstrator.

JUNE 2022 - MAIDEN FLIGHT OF THE A321XLR

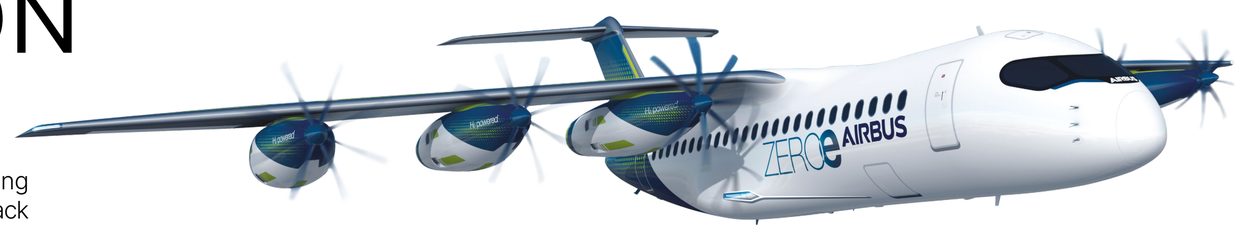
Airbus' latest family member, the extra-long-range single-aisle A321XLR completed its maiden flight in Hamburg. Airbus' extra-long-range single-aisle A321XLR has steadily built up a strong base of orders and commitments from customers around the world.

2025 - ARIANE 6 FIRST COMMERCIAL LAUNCH

The Ariane 6 launcher performed it's first commercial mission designated VA263, with an A62 variant, launched on March 6, 2025. It successfully launched into orbit the CSO-3 reconnaissance satellite which was built by Airbus Defence and Space.

INNOVATION

Reflections on the past



The spirit of innovation is one of the defining and uniting characteristics when one looks back at the past achievements of our predecessors and the future ambitions of the current Airbus generation. Airbus and its predecessor companies have always strived to further mankind's aspirations. To develop aircraft and products that will fly faster, further and more efficiently than ever before. Airbus looks back on its history with pride, knowing that its many innovations, and the men and women that created them, played a key role in shaping the aerospace and defence leader we are today. We take our inspiration from our forerunners, and with the same pioneering spirit we look to the future with enthusiasm, committed to leading our industry's transition towards sustainable aerospace.

The story continues...