

The New Generation of Pilots Takes Off: First Flights on the T-345A in Galatina

Published on 14/10/2025

Galatina (LE), October 13, 2025 – At the “Fortunato Cesari” airport in Galatina, home of the 61st Wing of the Italian Air Force, the first operational flights with the **new T-345A training aircraft** have officially begun, marking a fundamental milestone in the evolution of training for future military pilots. The first cadets to take off on the new generation trainer belong to the Italian Air Force and the **Dutch Air Force**, confirming the international character of the Salento flight school.

From Theory to Real Flight

The flight activity commenced after an intense period of **ground school**, including theoretical lessons and numerous simulator sessions. Thanks to these, the cadets have become familiar with the systems of the new aircraft and developed the necessary skills for transitioning to real flight.

The **T-345A**, designed and built in Italy by **Leonardo**, represents a concentration of technology and innovation. Equipped with advanced avionics, digital controls, and high operational efficiency, the new jet trainer allows for improved training quality standards, reducing costs and increasing mission sustainability.

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Together with Leonardo's **Ground Based Training System (GBTS)**, the T-345A forms a fully integrated training system, capable of simulating realistic and complex scenarios while reducing

the necessary flight hours. The integration with the T-346A – already used for the advanced training phase – will allow for a smoother and more coherent training path for pilots destined for aerotactical lines such as **Eurofighter** and **F-35**.

Italian Leadership in Training

“The start of real activities on the T-345 represents a historic step for our Unit,” said **Colonel Gianfranco Liccardo**, Commander of the 61st Wing. “The new aircraft allows us to meet the future training needs of the Armed Forces and partner countries, strengthening the role of excellence that the Galatina school plays in preparing military pilots.”

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During a recent visit, **Air Squadron General Francesco Vestito**, Commander of the Italian Air Force Schools and the 3rd Air Region, met with the cadets, reminding them that “dedication, professionalism, and a sense of duty remain the fundamental values for successfully pursuing the path to a military pilot's license.”

The **61st Wing** confirms itself as an internationally recognized excellence in flight training. The School manages three of the four phases of the military pilots' training program:

- **Phase II (Primary Pilot Training)**, common to all cadets;
- **Phase III (Specialized Pilot Training)**, reserved for those selected for combat lines;
- **Phase IV (Lead In-to Fighter Training - LIFT)**, preparatory for employment on the latest generation fighters, managed by the **212th Flight Group/IFTS** at the **Decimomannu (CA)** base.

With the T-345A, the Italian Air Force and the national industry consolidate a synergy that projects Italy to the top of global flight training, capable of combining **technological innovation, sustainability, and international cooperation**.

News link: <https://www.aeronautica.difesa.it/news/primi-voli-sul-nuovo-t-345a-per-gli-allievi-piloti-in-formazione-al-61-stormo/>