

DIRECTION DES RELATIONS EXTÉRIEURES ET DE LA COMMUNICATION

First fully autonomous flight for AVE drone

The Dassault Aviation AVE-D drone completed its first fully autonomous demonstration flight on June 30, 2008 near Toul, France. The flight, watched by representatives of France's Délégation Générale pour l'Armement (DGA) armaments procurement agency, comprised a completely automated sequence: roll from parking spot, runway alignment, takeoff, in-flight maneuvers, landing, braking and rolling back to the parking apron.

This AVE-D flight marks a significant first for Dassault Aviation, confirming the company's expertise in Uninhabited Air Vehicles, or drones. The demonstration flight is a key development milestone for a technology essential to the successful pursuit of the European nEUOn Unmanned Combat Air Vehicle Demonstrator program.

The AVE (Aéronefs de Validation Expérimentale) series is a family of scale model experimental unmanned aircraft developed by Dassault Aviation. These aircraft enable Dassault Aviation to carry out flight validation tests of technological advances in the field of Uninhabited Air Vehicles, or UAVs, including stealth and autonomous flight.

Achieving maximum stealth is a decisive factor for the success of observation or attack missions in a hostile combat environment. The first AVE aircraft—called AVE-D, for “discretion”—made its maiden flight in July 2000, becoming the first stealth drone to fly in Europe.

The next stage in the validation program consisted in eliminating the aircraft tail to enhance stealth. This aerodynamic configuration makes aircraft unstable, thus rendering control more difficult. This led to the AVE-C (C for “control”), that completed its first flight in June 2003.

Within the framework of a contract with DGA, the AVE family have made several flights since 2004.

Key dates:

- AVE-D 1st flight: July 18, 2000
- AVE-C 1st tail-less flight: June 12, 2003
- AVE-D autonomous flight demonstration for DGA: June 30, 2008

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