

Alenia Aermacchi G.222: history and features

On the 22nd of November 1962 the official presentation of the G.222 project took place, where “G” stands for the surname of the chief-designer Gabrielli, “two” indicates the adopted two-engine formula and “22” is the number of order of the NATO specification “NBR 22”.

It was the birth of an aircraft that has made the history of the Italian aerospace industry: the G222, twin-engine turbine tactical transport aircraft, today still to be considered pride of the “made in Italy”, and above all “father” of one of Alenia Aermacchi’s most successful programmes, the C-27J Spartan.

No longer in production from the ‘90s, the G.222 is still operational within many air forces among which: Nigerian Air Force, US Department of State (as C-27A), Italian Air Force (in the SIGINT, SIGnals INTelligence, VS version) and Afghan Air Force, also thanks to the efficiency of the logistic support provided by Alenia Aermacchi.

Capable of carrying out many missions, among which troops and cargo transport, medical evacuation and cargo and paratroopers drops, the G.222 is still today a valid alternative to the bigger-size transport aircraft, thanks to its performances, to the ability of taking-off and landing from short runways and to its extreme operational versatility. Capable of taking-off with a maximum weight of 26,500 Kg in less than 500 meters, but also of flying at a 260 ktas speed and at a cruise altitude of 30,000 feet, the G.222 still today shows its excellent performances; and this is due to its having been specifically designed as tactical transport aircraft for operational scenarios to replace the obsolete transport machines in service with the air forces in the 70s and to be integrated with the bigger and widespread C-130 Hercules aircraft.

During all these years the G.222 has proved to be a reliable, strong aircraft, capable of carrying out missions also in the most complex scenarios (Somalia, Lebanon, East Timor) and to achieve a good success in the international markets: 106 G.222s have been delivered to air forces around the world: Italy, United Arab Emirates, Argentina, Libya, Nigeria, Venezuela, Thailand, Somalia, United States and Afghanistan, that have received former Italian Air Force aircraft).

The first Italian Air Force’s squadron to receive the aircraft was the 98th Group, of the then called 46th Transport Air Wing, in 1978. In Italy the G.222’s activity has constantly been focused during the years not only on the support to ItAF operations, but also on the humanitarian, civil protection and out-of-area peace missions.

The G.222s have been retired by ItAF in September 2005. Only two aircraft have been kept in service, one of which, the G.222VS, Special Version, for the SIGINT missions.

Today the G.222 has the opportunity to be used again in all its operational capabilities, thanks to Alenia Aermacchi’s ability to offer the former ItAF aircraft to the international market, with systems and avionics upgrade.

The first customer for these aircraft, now Alenia Aermacchi property, has been the Nigerian Air Force that has ordered one ex-ItAF unit in addition to the 5 ordered originally, which Alenia Aermacchi is still upgrading in Nigeria to bring them back to the operational status. The second customer is U.S. Air Force that has acquired 20 aircraft for the re-constituted Afghan National Army Air Corps (ANAAC).

Afghanistan G.222 Programme

Alenia Aermacchi through its subsidiary Alenia Aermacchi North America, in September 2008 signed a contract with the U.S. Air Force (USAF) for 20 refurbished G.222 tactical transport aircraft to equip the re-constituted Afghan Air Force (Afghanistan National Army Air Corps - ANAAC).

The agreement envisages 20 aircraft, ex Italian Air Force, to be refurbished with updated avionics and general improvements to comply with a specific USAF requirement. Two aircraft, in the VIP configuration, are used for the transport of the Afghan national authorities.

The first delivery to the U.S. Air Force has taken place at the end of September 2009, at Capodichino Airport (Naples, Italy), where Alenia Aermacchi's reconditioning and modernisation line is located. Delivery of the fleet was complete at the end of 2012 despite only 16 aircraft has been transferred to Afghanistan so far.

Alenia Aermacchi North America as prime contractor is responsible for the programme management; Alenia Aermacchi refurbish the aircraft with new equipments and; logistical support in Afghanistan is carried out by Dynacorp, an U.S. company.