



Rafale

THE RAFALE PROGRAMME

by Jacques DESMAZURES
DASSAULT AVIATION
Joint Flight Test Division Director

JULY 1992

Taking into consideration the imminent needs of the years two thousand, headquarters in FRANCE began to contemplate the necessity of replacing their aging fighter aircraft fleets in the French Air and the Naval Air Forces.

As regards the Air Force, the aircraft concerned were :

- the MIRAGE III E and the JAGUAR (TACTICAL STRIKE-AIR/SURFACE)
- the MIRAGE F1 C (AIR DEFENCE)

and, at a longer term, the MIRAGE 2000 DA.

In the Naval Air Forces, the aircraft to be phased out were :

- the CRUSADER (FLEET DEFENCE)
- the ETENDARD IV P (RECCE)
- the SUPER-ETENDARD (TACTICAL STRIKE-AIR/SURFACE)

Moreover, numerous foreign Air Forces, deploying aircraft manufactured during the 1980/1990 decade : MIRAGE F1, MIRAGE 2000, F16, F18, will be obliged to envisage the replacement of their air fleets right from the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Taking into account the cost of acquisition, maintenance and implementation of military equipment of this type, and in compliance with the technical and operational requirements set forth by the future users, it was mandatory to conceive a multirole aircraft of medium size, matching the financial capabilities of the future users and characterizing by a large growth potential.