



RAF jets fly with 3D printed parts



UK fighter jets have flown for the first time with parts made using 3D printing technology.

BAE Systems said the metal components were successfully used on board Tornado aircraft which flew from the defence firm's airfield at Warton, Lancashire late last month.

The company said its engineers are using 3D technology to design and produce parts which could cut the Royal Air Force's maintenance and service bill by over £1.2 million over the next four years.

BAE Systems is working at RAF Marham, Norfolk to engineer ready-made parts for four squadrons of Tornado GR4 aircraft, including protective covers for cockpit radios and guards for power take-off shafts. Some of the parts cost less than £100.

Mike Murray, head of airframe integration at BAE Systems, said: "You are suddenly not fixed in terms of where you have to manufacture these things. You can manufacture the products at whatever base you want, providing you can get a machine there, which means you can also start to support other platforms such as ships and aircraft carriers.

"And if it's feasible to get machines out on the front line, it also gives improved capability where we wouldn't traditionally have any manufacturing support."