

X-RAY BRAVO ALPHA

The First Flight

The crew, Captains Murray "Muz" Warfield, Roger "Ridgeback" Walter and Brett "Feebs" Phoebe, Flight Engineer Officers Harry "H" Hermans and Joe "Plukka" Plemenuk and Cabin Supervisor Karen "Green Hornet" Glass arrived in Southend on Monday, 20 November 2006 and over the next fortnight familiarized themselves with Southend Airport, the engineers, the Erlsmere hotel and most importantly, the aeroplane. The day finally arrived when all was complete in the engineering phase and with 2 taxi tests carried out a few days prior, it was time to fly.



The Diary report from Saturday, 2 September 2006 reads:

"At 0800 the engineering Team hit the hardstand, refreshed after a lay day, to prepare XBA for her first test flight. The weather had been threatening and there was some doubt in the early morning, with rain falling and low cloud but we had an aim and thought positively.

The crew arrived at 1030, resplendent in full uniform and wearing, not carrying, uniform caps - an example to their peers, and this was sleepy Southend, not Seattle. They continued the standard that has been applied to XBA from day dot.

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After the photos were taken, doors were closed and push back commenced as the usual loyal Lasham's supporters gathered, seeming to have grown in number by a factor of two since the taxi test.

Ridgeback was left seat, Feebs right, H at the panel, Muz in the observer's and Plukka roving. In the cabin, Peter Elliott and Denis Martin were technical observers with Ken Cannane completing the picture.

The time had come.

Push back completed, the engine starts all routine, under the watchful eyes of our great supporter, Tom Vaughan who had driven from Cambridgeshire to see us away.

The push back crew retreated to give hand signals on the right and XBA was ready to taxi to the runway end while about 20 over-enthusiastic photographers, most of them QFM Team members, were chased back from the flight strip by the ATC patrol saying they wouldn't let XBA depart until we'd cleared the area.

Eight other aircraft were put into the hold while XBA lined up.

Lights on, take-off clearance was received.

The signature black exhaust smoke appeared and the nose pitched up as the brakes were released.

