

Lockheed Martin Begins Italian C-130J Deliveries To Pisa

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On 16 August, the first C-130J for the Italian Air Force departed the Lockheed Martin facility in Marietta. The aircraft was ferried to its new base in Pisa, where it will be operated by the Aeronautica Militare Italiana's (AMI - the Italian Air Force) 46th Air Brigade. This is the first of 22 C-130Js on order for the AMI. The second aircraft will be ferried this Thursday, with four further aircraft being delivered to Pisa this year.

(Photo: <http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20000822/ATTU012>)

A joint AMI/Lockheed Martin crew ferried the first aircraft to Pisa via the Azores. The Italian C-130Js have already been type certified, and crews will begin operational flying as soon as the aircraft arrive in Pisa. The aircraft will initially be used to conduct logistic supply, maximum payload, and tactical missions. Clearance for paratroop, airdrop, assault landings on unprepared fields, and maximum alternate weights missions is anticipated by the end of this year.

During 1999, the AMI evaluated their long-term tactical airlift needs, and determined that the best solution was a mix of aircraft including C-130Js, C-130J-30s, and C-27Js. Last year Italy announced its intent to acquire 12 C-27s, a twin-engined tactical airlifter developed by Lockheed Martin Alenia Tactical Transport Systems (LMATTS).

The Italian configuration is among the most sophisticated yet developed for the aircraft. It has a highly advanced suite of communications and defensive systems equipment. This includes U/VHF combined multi-band radios and a laser warning receiver system. In addition, it is the first C-130J "receiver-tanker" built. This means it has the ability to both refuel other aircraft as well as being refueled itself in-flight. This is a true 'force multiplier' for the AMI as it gives them great operational flexibility in tactical transport missions

In addition to the 22 C-130Js, Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Company has signed a contract with the Italian government for the construction of a National Training Center (NTC) at Pisa Air Base, in support of the C-130J aircraft program. The AMI NTC will be used primarily to conduct C-130J aircrew and maintenance training, but will also provide growth potential as well as classroom facilities for other aircraft programs.

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