

Lockheed Martin C-130J Airlifter Passes Major Milestone

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The U.S. Air Force recently issued an expanded operational release for the Lockheed Martin C-130J that dramatically increased the airlifter's approved capabilities.

Under this release, which was granted after the second phase of operational test and evaluation (referred to as Phase 1B testing) was completed, the C-130J is now permitted to carry passengers and cargo in operations throughout the continental U.S., Alaska, and Canada. It also clears the aircraft for operation in a range of icing conditions. The previous operational release was limited to conversion training without cargo or passengers, and operations between a specific set of bases, subject to restricted icing limitations.

This initial USAF operational testing, being carried out at Keesler AFB, Miss., is part of a multi-phased program that will validate the C-130J's full military operational capability for U.S. forces. This latest expansion of the operating environment keeps the C-130J on track with the USAF's phased plan to release new capability as it is approved during testing and as the operational crews gain experience with the aircraft.

There are currently 16 C-130Js operating in the U.S. at Keesler and at Warfield ANGB in Baltimore, Md. Three international customers are also operating C-130Js and the longer C-130J-30s.

"This latest release demonstrates the continued strengthening of the C- 130J program," says Ross Reynolds, Lockheed Martin vice president for the C- 130J program. "With 111 aircraft ordered and 69 delivered, the C-130J presence around the world is growing."

Current customers include the active duty U.S. Air Force, Air National Guard, Air Force Reserve Command, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Marine Corps, U.K. Royal Air Force, Royal Australian Air Force, Italian Air Force, and the Royal Danish Air Force.

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