

Lockheed Martin C-130J Airlifter Critical Software Development Completed

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The Lockheed Martin C-130J airlifter is now being equipped with a new software configuration that brings the aircraft's avionics system to full functionality. Known as Block 5.3, the new software contains substantial upgrades and new capabilities and is now the baseline for all production C-130J aircraft.

The company has completed all necessary testing to prove the airworthiness of the new software and hardware. The first modified aircraft is now at the Air Force Flight Test Center at Edwards AFB, Calif., to undergo USAF qualification testing prior to Block 5.3 being installed in all previously delivered C-130Js.

"Bringing the world's most advanced airlifter to this standard has at times been difficult," said C-130J program vice president Ross Reynolds. "But we have overcome those issues and now have the aircraft at a software capability level that will make the remainder of testing go smoother and entry into operational service much easier."

Block 5.3, among many other enhancements, gives crews the ability to fly integrated precision radar approaches and also provides greatly enhanced navigation capabilities as well as fully automatic formation flying. It allows both new C-130Js and older C-130s to fly in formation using the Coordinated Aircraft Positioning System. Now a mixed fleet of C-130 transports can stay in formation while the autopilot and auto-throttle systems are engaged. Block 5.3 also corrects many of the operational issues that have been raised by the U.S. Air Force during development and operational testing.

The new software will be installed in the deployed world-wide fleet of C-130J and the longer fuselage length C-130J-30 aircraft over a period of about a year, beginning this summer.

Current customers for the C-130J and C-130J-30 include the U.S. Air National Guard and 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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