

Lockheed Martin C-130J-30 Begins Paratroop Testing With The Army's 82nd Airborne

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Lockheed Martin has begun a joint test program with the U.S. Air Force and the U.S. Army to validate the C-130J-30 for paratroop airdrop operations. The tests are being conducted by the Airborne and Special Operations Test Directorate at Fort Bragg N.C. They are being flown out of Pope Air Force Base N.C., home of the 43rd Airlift Wing.

This latest testing follows successful completion of airdrop testing with a fleet of three extended fuselage length, or "stretched," C-130J-30s at the Air Force Flight Test Center at Edwards AFB, Calif. These aircraft, which will be delivered to the Rhode Island Air National Guard later this year, are the first three C-130J-30s ordered by the Air Force.

During the next several weeks the aircraft will drop up to 92 paratroops at a time to demonstrate the ability of the C-130J-30 to safely deploy paratroops from both sides of the aircraft. In addition, rapid ground evacuation of the aircraft with up to 128 troops will be carried out. Deployment of paratroopers at high altitude from each side door and the ramp of the aircraft was demonstrated during the Edwards AFB phase of testing.

"This is an intense program with both the Army and the Air Force to validate the aircraft for the critical airdrop mission," said Ross Reynolds, Lockheed Martin's C-130J program vice president. "The C-130 has always been the Army's preferred jump platform, and we are looking forward to the Army seeing just how much more capable the new C-130J-30 is."

The C-130J-30 is central to the modernization that is underway with the U.S. Army. With the need for rapid, flexible deployment and sustainment, one of the key acquisition parameters for new systems is focused on the requirement for them to fit in a C-130J-30. No other aircraft offers the combined flexibility of strategic deployment of troops and armor, and as well as intratheater, austere environment tactical operations.

The C-130J-30's sophisticated navigation system allows the aircrew to achieve highly accurate drops in all weather conditions. The C-130J-30 brings a new level of operational airdrop capability to both the Air Force as operator and the Army as end user. Current analyses show a close formation of 33 C-130J-30s will be able to drop 2,800 troops in less than five minutes.

Once testing is complete, the aircraft will be flown back to Marietta to be prepared for delivery to the 143rd Airlift Wing, the Rhode Island ANG unit based at Providence, R.I., in December.

Although designated a tactical airlifter, the C-130J-30 has demonstrated strategic capabilities with unrefueled non-stop flights of more than 4,000 miles. The C-130J-30 is based on the standard C-130J model, but features a fuselage 180 inches (457.2 centimeters) longer than the standard C-130J model, providing the greater airlift capability required by many operators.

This version is the first stretched C-130J to be equipped with the computer-controlled Enhanced Cargo Handling System, which allows precise airdrop event sequencing and quick conversion from cargo floor tie-downs to rollers for palletized cargo.

When compared with the standard model, the J-30 can be used to carry 128 combat troops instead of 92, and 92 paratroops instead of 64. It can also carry eight standard 463L pallets rather than six, 97 medical litters instead of 74, and 24 container delivery system (CDS) bundles instead of 16.

Worldwide, 111 C-130Js and J-30s have been ordered. Current customers include the Air National Guard, Air Force Reserve Command, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Marine Corps, Royal Air Force, Royal Australian Air Force, Italian Air Force, and the Royal Danish Air Force.

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