Lockheed Martin Completes KC-130J Marine Corps Tanker Deliveries For 2001

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Lockheed Martin has delivered the seventh and final KC-130J for 2001 to the U. S. Marine Corps. The aircraft are stationed at MCAS Cherry Point, N.C., and NAS Patuxent River, Md.

"Not only does this delivery represent a tremendous milestone for the Marine Corps tanker program, but the last aircraft delivered was a 'zero- discrepancy' aircraft," said Ross Reynolds, Lockheed Martin's C-130J program vice president. "Customers have rigorous acceptance procedures, and delivery of a zero-discrepancy aircraft is an achievement for any manufacturer. Once again, we are demonstrating how solid the C-130J program is."

The USMC now has eight KC-130Js in inventory with three more on order. The overall requirement is for 79 aircraft representing a one-for-one replacement of the entire active duty and reserve fleet of older KC-130F/R/T models. There are four more KC-130Js included in the Pentagon's 2002 Defense Budget. Naval Postgraduate School analysis has determined a USMC requirement for up to 107 total KC-130Js, based upon predicted operations tempo and the introduction of 360 MV-22 tiltrotor aircraft into service.

The current KC-130 fleet in active Marine Corps service consists of 37 F- and 14 R-models, spread over three fleet squadrons and one training squadron. The balance of the 79 tankers comprise two reserve squadrons.

The average KC-130F has been in service more than 39 years and has been flown for more than 23,000 flight hours. KC-130F/R mission readiness is decreasing each year, while tanker requirements are projected to increase by as much as 33% over the next 10 years. The 21st Century will bring an increasingly complex operating environment to the Marine Air-Ground Task Force and the Marine Corps believes the KC-130F/Rs will not be able to provide the necessary support in this environment.

Using only wing and external tanks, the KC-130J has a 57,500 pound (8,455 U.S. gallon) fuel offload capability while performing a 500-nautical mile radius mission, compared with 38,000 pounds (5,588 U.S. gallon) for the current fleet of KC-130Fs. Using the standard probe-and-drogue configuration, the KC-130J is capable of refueling both helicopters and jet aircraft. Internal provisions for its own refueling probe provide the KC-130J with even greater flexibility if required.

The KC-130J operates with the Flight Refueling Ltd. (FRL) Mark32B-901E aerial refueling system. Featuring two electrically driven hose drum units and new pumps, it is micro-processor controlled (1553B data bus or the Arinc 429 system), thereby generating improved fuel flow rates. The FRL system allows fuel delivery rates to be adjusted at the hose end to better suit various receivers. Ram air turbine-driven fuel boost pumps in each pod improve fuel offload, particularly without the fuselage tank that is required for the current KC-130 fleet.

Because the refueling system functions without the fuselage tank, the KC- 130J's cargo compartment can be used to haul payload, making the aircraft even more versatile. The refueling system is set up to accept a fuselage tank if desired, adding another 24,392 pounds (3,600 U.S. gallons) of fuel to a mission.

The vastly superior performance, sophisticated avionics suite, precision navigation system and night vision compatibility of the KC-130J make it an excellent platform for special operations missions in support of forward deployed Marine Expeditionary Units.

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