

Lockheed Martin C-130J 'Super Hercules' Aircraft Achieve Outstanding Success In Demonstration With The Royal Air Force

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The Lockheed Martin C-130J has again proved its outstanding tactical capabilities during trials in conjunction with the Royal Air Force. A joint RAF/Lockheed Martin team recently completed a Tactical Workload Demonstration program for the C-130J airlifter. The demonstration -- a rigorous flight test program that consisted of more than 120 flight hours over 41 missions -- validated the capabilities of the C-130J under simulated operational conditions.

"Over recent months we, QinetiQ (formerly part of the U.K. Defence Evaluation & Research Agency) and the resident project team achieved excellent results with two-ship formations and are at last seeing the true tactical potential of the Royal Air Force C-130J equipped with the new Block 5.3 avionics software," said Royal Air Force test pilot Sqn. Ldr. Rob Humphries. "Over the next 12 months, the Project Team, RAF pilots and QinetiQ technical experts will assess this tactical potential. Once proved, the effective military capability will be released to the front line."

In addition to the flying portion of the demonstration program, another 15 missions, totaling more than 40 hours, were flown in the simulator. During the testing, sorties were flown as single-ship and multiple-ship formations. The aircrews were able to routinely execute multiple tactical mission events while maintaining target time control typically within 10 seconds. Mission profiles included simulated emergencies, tactical threat maneuvering, time-on-target changes, drop zone changes and airport diversions.

The demonstration looked at many capabilities of the C-130J system, most notably the performance of the coordinated air positioning system/station keeping equipment (CAPS/SKE) formation system. The ability of the radar to aid in aircraft navigation during simulated airdrops under instrument conditions impressed the test crews.

One reason behind the success of the Tactical Workload Demonstration program was the new Block 5.3 software now being installed in the worldwide fleet of C-130Js. The software incorporates substantial upgrades and new capabilities that bring the aircraft's avionics system to full functionality. Block 5.3, known as the aircraft's "go to war package," is now the baseline for all production C-130J aircraft. The RAF, the launch customer for the C-130J, has 25 of the new aircraft, comprising 10 "short" models and 15 of the "stretched" C-130J-30s.

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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