

Marine Corps to Increase KC-130J Force in Pacific to Enhance Mobility of Marine Littoral Regiment



U.S. Marines with Marine All-Weather Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA(AW)) 533 prepare to board a KC-130J Super Hercules before a flight at Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort, South Carolina, March 7. *U.S. MARINE CORPS / Cpl. Lauren Salmon*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Marine Corps plans to activate another KC-130J Super Hercules tanker/transport squadron as part of its aim to provide increased mobility of Marine Corps forces in the Pacific area of responsibility in support of Force Design 2030.

According to the 2022 Marine Corps Aviation Plan released this week, the Corps plans to activate Marine Aerial Refueler

Transport Squadron 153 (VMGR-153) in fiscal 2023. The squadron will be based at Marine Corps Air Station Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii, where two MV-22B Osprey squadrons also are based.

The additional squadron in Hawaii will enable Marine Forces Pacific to better support aerial refueling, logistics, close air support and multi-sensor imagery reconnaissance in support of expeditionary advance base operations in the Pacific region, particularly for the recently activated 3rd Marine Littoral Regiment, also based in Hawaii.

VMGR-153 will grow to 17 KC-130J aircraft by fiscal 2026. The East Coast squadron, VMGR-252, based at MCAS Cherry Point, North Carolina, will level out this year at 17 aircraft, and the West Coast squadron, VMGR-352 at MCAS Miramar, California, also will reach a force level of 17 aircraft by the end of fiscal 2022. The squadron based at MCAS Iwakuni, Japan, VMGR-152, will reach a level of 17 aircraft in fiscal 2023.

The reserve squadron based at Naval Air Station Fort Worth, Texas, VMGR-234, is scheduled to reach a level of 17 aircraft in fiscal 2027. The reserve squadron based at Stewart Air National Guard Base, VMGR-452, has only five KC-130Js and is planned to remain at that level.

The Marine Corps' program of record for KC-130Js is 86 aircraft.

VMGR-252 and VMGR-352 rotate detachments to support the North Africa and East Africa Responses Forces.

The Marine Corps also plans to sustain the Harvest Hercules Airborne Weapons Kit (Harvest HAWK) program. Ten KC-130J aircraft – five with VMGR-252, four with VMGR-353 and one with test squadron VX-20 – have been modified post-production with the Harvest HAWK to provide the MAGTF a multi-sensor imagery reconnaissance and close air support capability with the MX-20 electro-optical/infra-red imaging system and both wing and door mounted employment of AGM-114P Hellfire and AGM-176

Griffin missiles. A total of six kits are on hand for the 10 fleet aircraft.