Milestone KC-130J Super Hercules Delivery Includes Capability Upgrade



The 60th USMC KC-130J aircraft takes off from Lockheed Martin production facilities in Marietta, Georgia, on March 31 on its way to VMGR-252 in Cherry Point, NC. *U.S. NAVY*

PATUXENT RIVER, Md. – The U.S. Marine Corps received its 60th KC-130J aircraft in March; the aircraft includes improved navigational performance, a modernized cockpit, and other key upgrades, the Naval Air Systems Command said in an April 29 release.

The Tactical Airlift Program Office (PMA-207) accepted delivery of the aircraft outfitted with the Block 8.1 updated cockpit and AN/AAQ-24 DoN Large Aircraft Infrared Countermeasure (DoN LAIRCM). These upgrades address obsolescence issues and improve survivability.

Produced by Lockheed Martin, the KC-130J aircraft have undergone numerous adaptations since entering Marine Corps service in September 2000.

The Block 8.1 cockpit upgrade includes a new flight management system that complies with Communications, Navigation, Surveillance and Air Traffic Management mandates. It also boasts enhanced GPS capabilities, improved communications systems, and improvements to the KC-130J's friend-or-foe identification technology.

The addition of DoN LAIRCM, a laser-based self-protection system designed to defend against surface-to-air infrared missile threats, increases survivability of the aircraft and aircrew in the event of an airborne attack.

“Both these systems increase the aircraft’s combat effectiveness to perform the KC-130J core mission essential tasking,” said Navy Capt. Steve Nassau, PMA-207 program manager. “The KC-130J is a global workhorse, and the Block 8.1 upgrade clears the path for the aircraft to have world-wide access, while the DoN LAIRCM allows the aircraft to operate under expanded threat environments.”

The aircraft will become part of Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron (VMGR) 252 at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, North Carolina.

“Our team has worked hard to make sure the Marine Corps is ready to utilize and support this aircraft,” said Joanna Sockoloskie, PMA-207 KC-130J integrated product team lead. “We have been involved from the start and it is our mission to ensure our Marines have the latest and finest equipment available.”

The Marine Corps will receive the remaining 26 aircraft over the next five years reaching their program of record 86 KC-130Js.