

Navy accepts first C-130J-30 for next-generation TACAMO fleet



PORTFOLIO ACQUISITION EXECUTIVE AVIATION, Patuxent River, Md. – The U.S. Navy accepted delivery of a newly manufactured C-130J-30 Super Hercules aircraft from Lockheed Martin during a formal ceremony Oct. 15 at the company's production facility in Marietta, Georgia, marking the first step toward fielding the future E-130J "Phoenix II."

The aircraft will serve as the host platform for the Navy's next-generation Take Charge and Move Out (TACAMO) mission system, which provides survivable, reliable, and secure, communications between the president, the secretary of defense, and U.S. Strategic Command.

The arrival of the new airframe initiates a planned transition from the legacy E-6B Mercury, honoring decades of service while setting the foundation for the future fight. The program designation "Phoenix II" symbolizes rebirth, nodding to the

Navy's historic use of the EC-130Q platform to execute the TACAMO mission throughout the Cold War.

Modernizing this capability is vital to ensure the nation's Nuclear Command, Control, and Communications (NC3) architecture remain resilient and reliable. The updated platform delivers enhanced endurance, capacity, and operational reach necessary to support mission success in complex global environments.

The event spotlighted the close partnership between the Navy and the defense industrial base, beginning with Lockheed Martin's delivery of the C-130J-30 airframe. The newly delivered aircraft is the extended C-130J-30 variant, part of an initial procurement of three aircraft acquired by the Navy in September 2024.

During the ceremony, Lockheed Martin formally transferred the aircraft to the U.S. Navy, where company representatives presented a commemorative plaque and ceremonial key to Capt. Roger Davis, Airborne Strategic Command, Control, and Communications program manager (PMA-271).

"Today's delivery from the historic Marietta line represents far more than a new airframe; it marks the foundation of our future strategic deterrence posture," said Davis. "Through our close partnership with Lockheed Martin and our industry team, we are ensuring our nation maintains an unshakeable communications lifeline to our ballistic missile submarine fleet."

Following the delivery from Marietta, the aircraft will transition into mission systems integration led by prime contractor Northrop Grumman and Collins Aerospace will provide Very Low Frequency (VLF) systems.

The ceremony also recognized the Sailors of Strategic Communications Wing (SCW) 1, based at Tinker Air Force Base, Oklahoma, who will ultimately operate and maintain the

modernized TACAMO fleet. Ahead of the ceremony, select sailors participated in a fleet engagement day at the Marietta facility that included simulator flights, production line tours, and program briefings.

“Strategic deterrence is only as credible as our ability to communicate, and that mission rests in the hands of SCW-1’s world-class Sailors,” said Capt. David Gardner, the commodore of SCW-1. “The E-130J will provide our Sailors unmatched capability and next generation survivable and reliable communications, ensuring our team continues to be the unbreakable link between the President and strategic nuclear forces.”

Looking to the future fight, the E-130J will deliver resilient communications across contested, multi-domain battlespaces, ensuring national leadership remains connected to strategic forces during any crisis or conflict. Following post-delivery processing, the aircraft will enter the next phase of mission-system modification, ground testing, and developmental flight testing before operational fielding.

SCW-1 is operating 24/7 to provide survivable and endurable communications between U.S. nuclear forces and the National Command Authority via the Navy’s E-6B Mercury aircraft by receiving, verifying and retransmitting emergency action messages. In addition to the Navy’s Take Charge and Move Out (TACAMO) mission, SCW-1 is currently the operating platform for USSTRATCOM’s airborne command post known as “Looking Glass.”

Aligned under Portfolio Acquisition Executive Aviation at Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Maryland, the mission of PMA-271 is to deliver and support survivable, reliable and endurable airborne command, control and communications for the president, secretary of defense and U.S. Strategic Command.

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