

GDM 04/2010R

1 February 2010

Airbus Military A330 MRTT refuels AWACS

The Airbus Military A330 Multi Role Tanker Transport (MRTT) has passed another key milestone with the refuelling of a Boeing E-3F AWACS airborne early warning aircraft – the first time the A330 MRTT has refuelled another large aircraft.

Demonstrating the stability of this class of aircraft during air-to-air refuelling is an essential exercise to be completed not only to satisfy the certification authorities, but subsequently the operators. The E-3F is considered to be a particularly significant type because of its aerodynamic characteristics due to the large radome mounted on the back of the aircraft. The A330 MRTT passed this trial with flying colours.

The aircraft, operating from Getafe, Madrid performed a series of dry and wet contacts during two sorties with a French Air Force E-3F.

In the first flight, four contacts were performed during a 3hr 55min mission and 12.1 tonnes of fuel was transferred.

In the second flight a total of 17.5 tonnes of fuel was transferred. The flying was conducted at around 20,000ft and 250kt, and the centreline-mounted refuelling boom was used for all the transfers.

The A330 MRTT has now conducted a total of more than 200 wet and dry contacts during the development programme and transferred nearly 100 tonnes of fuel.

Antonio Caramazana, Vice President and Head of Airbus Military Derivatives, said: "This is a significant milestone in the programme. The E-3 AWACS is a challenge because of its aerodynamics characteristics due to the large radome. The AWACS crew reported that the handling of the aircraft was very smooth during the refueling operation. We are delighted with the performance of our A330 MRTT and with our advanced refuelling boom."

A330 MRTT

The Airbus Military A330 MRTT is the most advanced and most cost-effective Multi Role Tanker Transport existing today. The large 111,000kg/245,000lb basic fuel capacity of the successful A330-200 airliner from which it is derived enables the A330 MRTT to excel in Air-to-Air Refuelling missions without any additional fuel tanks. The A330 MRTT is offered with a choice of proven air refueling systems including an advanced aerial refueling boom system and/or hose and drogue wing, pods and/or fuselage refueling unit.

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Thanks to its true widebody fuselage, the A330 MRTT can also be used as a pure transport aircraft able to carry up to 380 passengers or a payload of up to 45 tonnes/99,000lb. It can also easily be converted to accommodate up to 130 stretchers for Medical Evacuation (MEDEVAC). In summary the A330 MRTT is the most efficient aircraft of its kind as reflected by the fact that it won the last five competitions (Australia, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, as well as the US Air Force, although the latter selection was subsequently suspended.)

Airbus Military

Airbus Military is the only military and civic transport aircraft manufacturer to develop, produce, sell and support a comprehensive family of airlifters ranging from three to 45 tonnes of payload. Within Airbus, Airbus Military is responsible for the A400M programme, as well as for military tanker transport derivatives based on Airbus civil aircraft, with the integration of the state of the art flight-refuelling boom (ARBS) which is unique of its kind. With the C-295, CN-235 and C-212, Airbus Military is the global leader in the market segments for light and medium-sized military transport aircraft. Altogether Airbus Military has sold more than 1,000 aircraft with over 650 flying with more than 100 operators worldwide.

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