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EADS Advances Royal Australian Air Force's KC-30B Multi-Role Tanker Transport to Next Test Phase

ARLINGTON, Va. – May 7, 2007 – EADS has successfully completed ground vibration testing of the Royal Australian Air Force's first KC-30B Multi-role Tanker Transport (MRTT), advancing the world's most capable military aerial refueling tanker/transport program closer to the flight test phase.

Designed to validate the KC-30B MRTT's airframe structural response, these ground-based tests were conducted with the centerline fly-by-wire Aerial Refueling Boom System (ARBS) and two underwing hose-and-drogue pods installed. Since the aircraft's underwing pods can be installed or removed depending on operational requirements, ground vibration testing was also performed without the pods.

Completion of the EADS ground-based evaluations – which were monitored by international airworthiness authorities – clears the way for the start of flight tests with the no. 1 KC-30B MRTT, including in-flight refueling contacts with a variety of receiver aircraft.

Highlights

- KC-30B forms the baseline for Northrop Grumman's KC-30 offering in the U.S. Air Force's KC-X competition
- Australian program milestone further reduces risk in the integration of the refueling system and directly benefits the KC-30
- Australia and the United Arab Emirates have selected an aerial refueling configuration similar to that proposed by Northrop Grumman in the KC-X competition

“The successful completion of ground vibration testing marks another significant milestone in the KC-30 MRTT program, taking this superb aircraft one step closer to its service entry with the Royal Australian Air Force,” said John H. Young, Jr., CEO of EADS North America Tankers – a business unit of EADS North America. “The advances

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of this program directly benefit the Northrop Grumman KC-30 Tanker being offered in the U.S. Air Force KC-135 replacement competition.”

Five KC-30B MRTTs have been ordered by the Royal Australian Air Force and will be flown by the service's 33 Squadron. In addition to Australia, the KC-30/A330 MRTT has been chosen for the United Kingdom's Future Strategic Tanker Aircraft (FSTA) requirement, and by the United Arab Emirates for the aerial refueling needs of the country's air force and air defense.

Australia and the United Arab Emirates have selected an aerial refueling configuration similar to that proposed by Northrop Grumman for the U.S. Air Force KC-30 Tanker, including a centerline boom and removable underwing pods. EADS North America is a principal contractor to Northrop Grumman on the KC-30 Tanker industrial team.

At the heart of the KC-30's refueling system is EADS' all-electric, fly-by-wire centerline boom, which provides highly accurate, reliable in-flight refueling. Using a 3D-vision surveillance system, the boom operator remotely controls ARBS operations from the cockpit during air-to-air refueling. With a maximum nominal fuel flow rate of 1,200 U.S. gallons per minute, the advanced boom features an automatic load alleviation system that provides a larger refueling envelope and enhanced controllability.

Complementing the KC-30 MRTT's advanced refueling boom are two Cobham 905 underwing pods, which carry 96.6-ft. long hoses, and are designed to offload fuel at a rate of up to 420 gallons per minute.

The combination of a centerline-mounted boom and underwing hose & drogue pods will enable Australia's KC-30 MRTTs to service the country's own fighters, strategic airlifters and AWACS assets, while also offering full aerial refueling compatibility with other NATO/allied military aircraft.

In addition, the Royal Australian Air Force aircraft will carry an electronic warfare suite that protects against surface-to-air missile threats, along with a Link 16 network system that provides real-time airborne connectivity.

The KC-30/A330 MRTT is based on the best-selling A330 twin-engine airliner. A combined total of more than 1,080 A330s and its four-engine counterpart, the A340, have been ordered by over 80 operators and customers worldwide. To meet the continuing strong market demand, the current A330/A340 production rate of seven aircraft per month is due to increase to eight monthly by the beginning of 2008, further accelerating to nine per month by the middle of 2009.

About the KC-30: Northrop Grumman's KC-30 Tanker carries 45,000 more pounds of fuel than a KC-135, providing a significant boost to the U.S. Air

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Force's global reach. The KC-30 is also designed to refuel Navy and coalition aircraft, and to serve as a multi-role transport aircraft to move passengers, cargo and medical evacuation patients. The KC-30 incorporates defense systems, precision fly-by-wire technology, and the ability to integrate a communications suite and a global support network.

The KC-30 will be assembled in Mobile, Ala., and create more than 25,000 U.S. jobs. It will be built by a world-class industrial team led by Northrop Grumman, and including EADS North America, General Electric Aviation and Sargent Fletcher.

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