

TRANSCRIPT – KC30A Acceptance Event, RAAF Base Amberley 1 June 2011

Speakers:

AVM Colin Thorne – Head of Aerospace Systems Division, Defence Material Organisation
ACDRE Gary Martin – Commander Airlift Group

AIRCDRE Gary Martin

Mr Javier Matallanos, Head of Program Airbus Military, AVM Colin Thorne, HASD in DMO, the members of 33 Squadron and CO, the air to air refuelling and project team, members of the transition team, ladies and gentlemen and everyone else that is here to celebrate this fine day.

I am very pleased to be here today on behalf of the Chief of Air Force to mark the occasion of the initial acceptance of the first Multi Role Tanker Transport aircraft the KC30A.

I would like to take this opportunity to add my acknowledgement of the efforts that have been put to getting into this position, this critical milestone, by all of those involved in the project; from the contractors all the way through to our Defence members. The KC30A aircraft is the most advanced air to air refuelling aircraft in the world and is a key component to the future of our Air Force. It is capable of transferring fuel at about 12 hundred gallons per minute via the boom and 420 gallons per minute via the hose and drogue.

The KC30A will certainly combine with the Super Hornet, the Joint Strike Fighter, Wedgetail and other assets to form a formidable air combat capability on behalf of the Government of Australia.

Not only will this capability enhance our air combat operations but the KC30A with it's 270 passenger seats and a cargo capacity of approximately 45 thousand kilograms will also provide essential air logistical support to Australia.

I look forward to seeing the remaining aircraft being progressively accepted over this next period of 18 months to two years.

In that period we are going to be making further improvements to the aircraft, the most of all will be that significant improvement of the aerial refuelling boom system so that we can refuel our larger aircraft, the C-17s and the future air combat aircraft, the F-35.

To this end I am also pleased with the cooperation and productive relationships that have developed between 86 WING, 33 SQN, the DMO and our industry partners.

A number of key staff and organisations have been responsible for the management of the project and notably the Project Director Ewan Ward, the resident project team located in Spain, the Heavy Air Lift sisters project office here at Amberley, CO of 33 SQN Wing Commander Guy Wilson, our previous and current KC30 transition team leaders, ACDRE Noel Derwort and Matt Hegarty and of course our industry partners who we would have to be with.

The continued cooperation between all of the elements of the KC30A team including our logistics, engineering and operations, will be absolutely essential for the completion and the

development of the full operational capability and the sustainment of this magnificent aircraft through its whole life.

The Air Force today is very pleased to be part of the operation. I know that the SQN has certainly worked extremely hard coming up to this wonderful period.

We are all very much looking forward to seeing 33 SQN running out there as the operational unit looking after this aircraft and taking capability forward after the Air Lift Group.

Thank you very much.

AVM Colin Thorne

I would perhaps like to apologise on behalf of Air Marshal Binskin who was until very late last night intending to be here but was called away on other things so, his apologies.

I'd just like to very briefly build on what Air Lift Commander raised. I'd like to thank Javier Matallanos from the company for his involvement, and his drive in pushing forward to this point. Importantly I'd like to thank my team under Ewan Ward and his team located in Madrid, Canberra and here in Brisbane. You've probably noticed that the project teams of both the Commonwealth and the Company were the last to slide into the seats this morning. The ink is still being dried on the deal.

I'd like to thank Luis Guerra, the Project Manager from Airbus Military, who has driven this program from the outset and has been instrumental in delivery today. Mr Scott Harris from Qantas Defence, together with his people out at the conversion centre out at Eagle Farm and also here at RAAF Amberley. GPCAPT Matt Hegarty and his RAAF transition team, and also to his predecessor, AIRCDRE Noel Derwort, who almost made it to the day but is here today to celebrate anyway because he was fairly instrumental on the Air Force side in bringing this to fruition.

I'll admit that it has been a very difficult labour. After a long gestation, we have been in labour for the past 12 months but you've only got to look at the size of the baby to realise why it has been such a difficult one. It's a beautiful baby and this sort of day is a day where we admire the baby and all the words that were said in the delivery suite between Mum and Dad are forgotten.

We are now going to work constructively over the next 12 to 18 months to improve the capability and to deliver the final three jets.

It's probably worth recapping on what a program it's been because these things don't happen overnight, and there has been a lot of negative press about it being late ...but this is a first of type aircraft. It is very complex, as you all know here. We are a relative newcomer to Air to Air refuelling having accepted our first 707 refueller back in 1990 we are only 21 years into the game.

This is the culmination of about 10 years of work on the Commonwealth side – we first signed the contract on the 20 December 2004, some six and a half years ago; so it's been a long gestation.

The first aircraft was delivered from Toulouse to Getafe in Spain about five years ago, the first probe and drogue flight testing commenced about three years ago in February 2008. The first boom dry contacts were conducted about two years ago in January 2009. In October 2009 we did the first contacts with Portuguese F-16 and we did the first fuel transfer with Spanish Hornets back in November 2009. In January 2010, we did the first wet transfer or fuel contact with the French AWACS, and in October of last year the Spanish military certification agency granted a certification.

So as you can see, this is a very complex program conducted over a long period of time, some six and a half years on contract to reach this point. So I think it's very timely that we sit back and commemorate the day.

You can see developing a first of type aircraft like this does involve a very rigorous, structured, careful program that takes time. If any of you doubt the resolve and commitment of the two teams – I think you should have been in a Brisbane hotel room at 4am this morning when the two teams pulled up stumps, and indeed the ink is still drying on the last minute discussions that were had today.

I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate the two teams; the Commonwealth, and the Company and the subcontractor teams. I should have added that this aircraft was actually produced here in Brisbane and I'd like to congratulate everybody.

To many of you who are users and maintainers of the aircraft, I commend a terrific product to you over the next 30 or 40 years of operation.

Thank you very much