

**First Airbus arrives in UK for conversion to RAF Voyager (05/09/2011)**

**Cobham Aviation Services has received the first of 12 Airbus Military A330-200 aircraft at its Bournemouth facility for conversion into 'Voyager', the Future Strategic Tanker Aircraft for the Royal Air Force.**



*Air Marshal Kevin Leeson addresses attendees at the opening ceremony for Cobham's new A330 Conversion Centre at Bournemouth International Airport*

*[Picture: © Cobham 2011]*

In recognition of this programme milestone, Cobham Aviation Services hosted an opening ceremony on Friday for its newly-refurbished A330 Conversion Centre at Bournemouth International Airport.

**The first two Voyager aircraft underwent conversion at Airbus Military's facility in Getafe, Spain.**

The remaining 12 future Voyager aircraft, a variant of the A330 Multi Role Tanker Transport, will be converted at the Bournemouth facility.

In all, the RAF will operate a fleet of 14 Voyagers by the second half of this decade to replace its existing fleets of TriStar and VC10 aerial refuelling aircraft.

Representatives from the UK Ministry of Defence, Airbus Military, Air Tanker and other key companies attended, including Air Marshal Kevin Leeson, Chief of Materiel (Air), who said:



*Airbus A330 Multi Role Tanker Transport (MRTT) with refuelling hoses deployed (stock image)*

*[Picture: © Airbus Military 2010]*

*(continued)*

"The conversions carried out at this tremendous new Cobham facility will turn Airbus A330s into the most capable military tanker transport aircraft of its type in the world, the third of which we are celebrating the arrival of."

"Voyager will provide enhanced levels of availability, reliability and comfort for its passengers. Its 4,000-mile [6,400km] range, carrying 285 passengers and freight, will allow the UK to respond to world events with great speed.

"The air-to-air refuelling systems will provide access to an impressive 111-tonne fuel capacity and enable Voyager to refuel a large variety of platforms, from Typhoon jets to A400M transports."

The Voyager conversion effort will create and maintain in excess of 100 direct jobs at Cobham into 2016, to be further increased through indirect jobs.



*One of two RAF Voyagers to have undergone conversion at Airbus Military's facility in Getafe, Spain. The remaining 12 aircraft will be converted at Cobham Aviation Services' new facility in Bournemouth  
[Picture: © Airbus Military 2010]*

The activity also provides an excellent opportunity to train graduates and apprentices and help prepare them for a career in aerospace engineering.

Des Taylor, General Manager of Cobham Aviation Services, said:

"Cobham looks forward to playing a key role in the Air Tanker supply chain by providing and embodying its state-of-the-art air refuelling systems into the very capable A330 platform."

"Under this five-year contract, Cobham has created more than 100 new, high-tech jobs in the Bournemouth area, including graduates and apprentices, to ensure that the RAF receives a 21st century in-flight refuelling capability."

## **SOME BACKGROUND ON THE VICKY 10:**

The initial flight of the first RAF VC10 C.1 / Type 1106 was on 26 November 1965, with the type going into full service with Transport Command in early 1967. All fourteen VC10 C.1 machines were delivered by the end of 1967. When RAF Transport Command became RAF Support Command, all of the VC10 C.1s were given personal names, selected from the most famous winners of the prestigious Victoria Cross medal for gallantry.

The VC10 C.1 was based on the standard VC10 fuselage, fitted with the cargo door and expanded wing of the VC10 Type 1102 / 1103, plus the tailfin fuel tank and uprated Conway RCo.43 engines of the Super VC10. The VC10 C.1 could be fitted with up to 150 passenger seats facing backwards -- a configuration that offered greater safety in a crash -- or with 78 stretchers and seating for attendants. The floor was strengthened, and featured a roller system plus a moveable bulkhead to separate the forward cargo area from the rear passenger area. Maximum cargo capacity was 26,760 kilograms (59,000 pounds).

On 1 March 1978, the British Ministry of Defence issued a contract to British Aerospace -- the ultimate successor to Vickers -- for the conversion of five standard VC10 Type 1101 machines into "VC10 K.2 / Type 1112" tankers, and conversion of four Super VC10s into "VC10 K.3 / Type 1164" tankers. In support of this effort, a total of nine Super VC10 airframes was obtained from Gulf Air (originally BA) and East Africa Airlines stocks. The primary motivation was to support air patrols by new RAF Panavia Tornado F.2 interceptors. The tanker conversions involved:

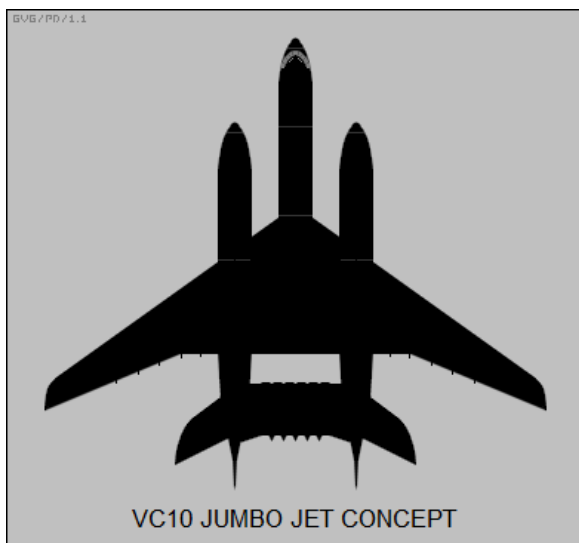
- Fit of a Flight Refuelling Mark 28 hose-drum unit (HDU) under each wing.
- A Flight Refuelling Mark 17B HDU on the rear centreline.
- Operator controls, a closed-circuit TV system, and night lighting kit for the refuelling system.
- Fit of an in-flight refuelling probe.
- Fit of five 3,182 litre (840 US gallons) fuel drums in the fuselage, linked to the rest of the fuel system.
- Fit of military kit like that of the VC10 C.1, such as the Artouste APU.

*(continued)*

The airframe and other systems were generally refurbished, with structural reinforcements added where necessary. The K.2s were refitted with the updated Conway engines.

The update was very thorough, producing in the end what were equivalent to new-build aircraft. Initial flight of the first VC10 K.2 tanker was on 22 June 1982, with the machine painted in a gray & green disruptive camouflage scheme. This paint scheme would not actually be used in service, with VC10 tankers actually wearing overall light brown / hemp colours. The last VC10 K.3 tanker was delivered in 1987.

The modification program had taken longer and cost more than expected - one of the corollaries of Murphy's Law - but the tankers were what the RAF required, and they were available just in time. The 1982 Falklands War had heavily tasked the existing tanker fleet, and the "new" VC10 tankers entered service in 1984, just as the last of the old tankers were being retired



*A FUTURE CONCEPT FOR A JUMBO  
VC10, WITH 2 FUSEALAGES*

*THAT NEVER GOT FURTHER THAN  
THE DRAWING BOARD!*

*(continued)*

**TANKERS CAN'T GET BETTER THAN THIS –**  
**THE NEVER TO BE FORGOTTEN VC10 TANKER**



VC10 K.3 TANKER (UK MOD)