Ressort: News

Airbus A330MRTT completes first 100% SAF test flight on both engines

Airbus A 330 MRTT

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GDN - RAF Voyager's 100% Sustainable Aviation Fuel flight is world first for an in-service military transporter
Robust Test Plan has allowed world's first flight without a single drop of fossil fuel on board

Brize Norton, 18 November 2022 – The Royal Air Force, Airbus and other industry partners have carried out the world's first 100% Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) flight using an in-service military aircraft. It is also the first 100% SAF flight of any aircraft type carried out in UK airspace.

An RAF Voyager – the military variant of the Airbus A330 commercial jetliner - took to the skies above RAF Brize Norton in Oxfordshire, England, on Wednesday powered completely by 100% Sustainable Aviation Fuel on both engines, paving the way for a range of possibilities for the future of flying military aircraft.

The flight was a joint endeavour between the RAF, aircraft manufacturer Airbus, the UK Ministry of Defence's Defence Equipment and Support agency, British aircraft leasing company AirTanker and engine manufacturer Rolls-Royce, with the fuel supplied by Air bp.

Michael Schoellhorn, CEO of Airbus Defence and Space, said: "True to our purpose of 'pioneering aerospace', we have gladly supported the Royal Air Force on this landmark sustainable-fuel test flight. I commend our UK customer for this achievement which helps pave the way for a sustainable reduction of carbon emissions of our military aircraft fleets.

Airbus engineers have made a significant contribution to this RAF mission by providing on-the-ground expertise in recent weeks and securing the necessary MoD military flight permits."

Sustainable Aviation Fuel – which is made from waste-based sustainable feedstocks, in this case used cooking oil – reduces lifecycle carbon emissions by up to 80% compared to the conventional fuel it replaces, lessens the RAF's reliance on global supply chains and improves operational resilience by reducing the necessity for fuel resupplying.

As different approaches will suit different platforms and environments, a range of alternative fuel options are being looked at to ensure the UK is at the forefront of this developing technology.

The 90-minute return flight from RAF Brize Norton, flown by a combined Airbus, RAF and Rolls-Royce flight-test crew, replicated an air-to-air refuelling sortie and was witnessed by senior RAF and industry representatives. The RAF said it demonstrated the potential for its future operational capability, ensuring the ability to contribute to UK defence wherever and whenever it was required.

Experimental test pilot and Captain of the flight, Jesus Ruiz, said: "From the crew perspective, the SAF operation was 'transparent', meaning that no differences were observed operationally. The Test Plan was exhaustive and robust and has allowed us to compare SAF with JET1 culminating in a flight without a single drop of fossil fuel. Teamwork was a key contributor, harmonsing experience from Airbus, Rolls-Royce and the RAF. We feel very proud to be a small part of this huge step for sustainable aviation."

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