

A Boeing KC-767 Tanker for the Italian Air Force last month connected the aircraft's refueling boom to the F-15E1 Advanced Technology Demonstrator, the first Strike Eagle built, and transferred about 5,500 pounds of fuel. This marked the KC-767 Tanker program's second successful fuel transfer flight; the first was completed the previous day.

U.S. AIR FORCE PHOTO BY JET FABARA



# It's officially a tanker!

## KC-767 reaches key milestone as aircraft successfully transfers fuel while in flight

By DOUG WEBB

After the KC-767 Tanker's historic back-to-back aerial refueling missions in early March, one Wichita, Kan.-based Boeing employee summed it up best when he said, "The KC-767 has officially become a tanker."

During the first successful fuel transfer with a B-52 on March 5, the tanker's crew demonstrated its refueling boom's stability by making 73 contacts with the receiver aircraft. In that four-hour flight, the tanker offloaded nearly 10,000 pounds of fuel.

The next day, in a mission over Missouri, the KC-767 Tanker rendezvoused with the F-15E1 Advanced Technology Demonstrator. The tanker again made multiple contacts with the receiver and transferred about 5,500 pounds of fuel.

"These are clearly landmark milestones," said Joe Shaheen, director, Boeing International Tanker programs. "This is the culmination of a lot of hard work and

dedication by the entire tanker team."

From the KC-767 Tanker flight crew's point of view, these aerial refueling missions further validated the aircraft's systems.

"The boom performed extremely well," said Rickey Kahler, KC-767 Tanker chief test boom operator on these missions. "The fly-by-wire system has optimized the flight controls, making it both precise and absolutely first-rate."

Steve Stowe, chief pilot for the Boeing KC-767 Tanker, also had high praise for the tanker's performance.

"These tests proved that the Boeing tanker tradition lives on in the KC-767," Stowe said. "It's going to be a great tanker platform, and it handled very well throughout the aerial refueling tests. The receiver pilots told me after the testing that the KC-767 was a 'solid' platform. I think our whole team is proud to be a part of the first day in the lifetime of another great Boeing tanker."

Just two weeks prior to its first successful aerial refueling mission, Boeing offered the advanced KC-767 Tanker for the U.S. Air Force's KC-X competition. Boeing seeks to replace the U.S. Air Force's 45-year-old medium-size KC-135 Stratotanker with the more capable advanced KC-767.

"By refueling a B-52 and an F-15E in the same week, our KC-767 team demonstrated the phenomenal performance of this fifth-generation boom while dramati-

cally reducing risk for future tanker customers like the U.S. Air Force," said Ron Marcotte, vice president and general manager of Boeing Global Mobility Systems.

Many tanker employees have watched the program mature from design to modification and into flight test.

"I've been with the program for six years and have seen it progress through design, modification and flight test. It was very exciting to see everyone's hard work pay off with a successful aerial-refueling mission," said Pat Novak, a KC-767 Tanker structural design engineer in Wichita. "I've always been awed by the design genius of the KC-135 and KC-10. Of course, it's our goal to not only match their excellence but exceed that standard. I think we have done that."

"This is the ultimate test that demonstrates to the world we have the next-generation tanker flying and ready," said Lavonne Bartel, a KC-767 Tanker staff analyst in Wichita.

"Everyone here in St. Louis who works on the tanker program was very excited about the first successful aerial refueling mission: It's now proven technology," said Ken Johnson Jr., a KC-767 Tanker financial controls analyst in St. Louis. "Each milestone of this type further proves our technology and systems and will reduce risk for our customers." ■

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