

U.S. Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Robert Fisher inspects a Boeing-built KC-10 at McGuire Air Force Base, N.J. During a recent mission over southwest Asia, Fisher passed the rare mark of 10,000 flight hours.

U.S. AIR FORCE



Rare ■
air

A U.S. Air Force flight engineer recently topped 10,000 flight hours—mostly in the KC-10 Extender, which is supported by Boeing

By Forrest Gossett

On a late spring mission over southwest Asia, U.S. Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Robert Fisher, a 27-year veteran flight engineer, joined a very small group of those who have logged 10,000 flight hours—comparable to circling Earth more than 300 times.

Following a mission in April, Fisher—a member of the 380th Air Expeditionary Wing’s 908th Expeditionary Air Refueling Squadron based at McGuire Air Force Base, N.J.—stepped out of a KC-10 Extender to the cheers of Air Force colleagues congratulating him on exactly 10,003 flight hours. That service includes 6,500 hours in the KC-10—which Boeing heritage company McDonnell Douglas built and for which Boeing provides contractor logistics support at Boeing San Antonio and support via field representatives.

As a flight engineer and systems specialist, Fisher works the various hydraulics, electronics and other systems during KC-10 missions. The KC-10 celebrated its 25th year in service in 2007. For the past 10 years, Boeing has conducted contractor logistics support for the KC-10 in San Antonio. Support services include depot maintenance, modification, aircrew training and inventory management. The team has provided depot-level maintenance for the fleet more than 700 times under the current Contractor Logistics Support contract. The quality of this support “takes the workload off the pilots so they can fly the airplane,” Fisher said.

How rare is 10,000 flight hours? Try a Google search. You’ll get many hits on air platforms that have achieved 10,000 hours or programs that hit the 10,000-hour mark. But people posting 10,000 flight hours? According to Lt. Col. Tim White, 908th

Expeditionary Air Refueling Squadron commander, most flyers achieve 3,000 to 5,000 hours in a career.

“For Sgt. Fisher to eclipse 10,000 hours is a reflection of great dedication to the mission and the art of flying,” he said. “He is one of the greatest assets in the KC-10 community, and his work ethic speaks for itself.”

During his first four years in the Air Force, Fisher was a maintainer. In late 1985, he cross-trained as a flight engineer, and he’s never looked back. Now, at over 10,000 hours of flying, he’s at a point in his career when many airmen cease flying for administrative and support roles. But Fisher wants to keep flying. He said the KC-10 is a great platform, and he appreciates all the work that goes into maintaining the aircraft to keep it battle ready.

“I do not come in direct contact with the maintainers and contractors, like Boeing, in my role as an aircrew member, but we appreciate the work that is done to keep us flying,” he said.

He has supported many key campaigns for national security in his career including Bosnia, Somalia, and, for the last seven years, the global war on terrorism in various theaters.

“I just love the job. I love the people I work with and respect the heck out of them,” he said. “I’d like to say that I’ve given the Air Force all these wonderful things, but to be honest, the Air Force has given Bob Fisher way more than Bob Fisher has given the Air Force.” ■

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KC-10 support: *Mission-ready 24-7*

There are many numbers in the story of the KC-10 Extender. The U.S. Air Force ordered the first KC-10 Extender in 1977 and the last in 1990. The current Air Force KC-10 fleet includes 59 airplanes. Each of these refueling tankers has a capacity of 326,450 pounds (148,075 kilograms) of fuel, or almost 48,000 gallons (about 182,000 liters).

For Boeing's Global Services & Support team that maintains the aircraft, the focus is on only two numbers: 24 and 7. "We deliver KC-10 readiness 24 hours a day, seven days a week to locations around the world. And we do that sustaining a 100 percent on-time delivery rate," said Mike Wright, KC-10 program director. "It's not an easy job, but we know it's important to get these aircraft back to the warfighter."

The KC/KDC-10 Contractor Logistics Support program was designed to ensure readiness of the Air Force fleet of KC-10 Extender aircraft and the Royal Netherlands Air Force fleet

of KDC-10 aircraft. The program was awarded in 1988, and Boeing has been the prime contractor since that time.

Boeing's KC-10 support services include depot maintenance, modification, aircrew training and inventory management. The team has provided depot-level maintenance for the fleet more than 700 times under the current CLS contract. Boeing also provides contractor-operated main base supply support for McGuire Air Force Base, N.J., and Travis Air Force Base, Calif. This includes issuing parts to the users and depot facilities and maintaining all ground support equipment.

In July, the program celebrated a milestone with its Royal Netherlands Air Force customer following the first flight of a KDC-10 modified with Boeing's Cockpit Upgrade Program. Boeing also maintains KC-10 supply locations in Germany, Japan and the Netherlands.

—Deborah Van Nierop



In this 2003 photo, a KC-10 Extender from McGuire Air Force Base, N.J., flies a mission over southwest Asia to support Operation Enduring Freedom. Boeing provides extensive support to keep KC-10 aircraft mission-ready.

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