



# Mission accomplished

The delivery of Japan's fourth KC-767 tanker strengthens Boeing's relationship with an important customer **by Felix Sanchez**

**W**hen the KC-767 aerial-refueling tanker landed in Gifu, Japan, in late December, after a ferry flight of more than 6,100 miles (9,820 kilometers) from Wichita, Kan., it marked more than just a milestone for Boeing's International Tanker Program.

The delivery of Japan's fourth and last tanker was a testament to how Boeing teams in St. Louis, Wichita and Japan worked together to satisfy a key international customer.

"Constant customer communication allowed us to incrementally complete the delivery requirements for these tankers and, most important, address issues as they came up," said Randy Eno of the International Tanker Program and part of the Wichita-based delivery team for the Japan tankers.

And some of those issues proved challenging. Boeing signed the contract for four tankers in 2003, with the first scheduled for delivery in the spring of 2007. But that first KC-767 was not delivered until February 2008—some 12 months late. However, the remaining three tankers were delivered on time to the Japan Ministry of Defense. Boeing delivered the second tanker to Japan in March 2008 and the third tanker a year later.

"Throughout the program we have constantly applied lessons learned from each aircraft to improve upon the next delivery," said George Hildebrand, Boeing's Japan KC-767 program manager. The last delivery, known as J4, was the smoothest of the four, he added. "Our ability to deliver J4 on schedule reflected the total team approach between program, engineering and operations within the tanker program, our Boeing team in Japan and with Itochu," Hildebrand said.

Itochu is Boeing's Japan partner in the tanker program. Boeing delivered each tanker to Itochu, which performed the final in-country processing before handing the tankers over to the Japan Air Self-Defense Force.

"Our tanker team put in long hours to create this innovative aircraft and made good use of what we call our 'all in' approach, where teams leverage company resources, no matter where they are geographically within the organization, to meet or exceed customer expectations," said Chris Chadwick, president of Boeing Military Aircraft.

Chadwick lauded the collaboration of Boeing's tanker employees in meeting the customer's requirements. "The



**PHOTOS:** A KC-767 aerial-refueling tanker fuels an F-15 in flight. **BUZZ SHADY/BOEING (Insets, from left)** International Tanker Program's team members Tim Walburn (left) and Don Quiring review the KC-767 cargo handling system. **BEVERLY NOWAK/BOEING** Thuoc Etezazi (foreground) and Joe Seiler of the International Tanker Program route refueling camera fiberoptics on a tanker. **BEVERLY NOWAK/BOEING** International Tanker Program's Don Quiring (left) is shown with a customer performing a walk-through of the Japan 1 tanker before its ferry flight. **GINA DREHER/BOEING**



Boeing Company has a long and close relationship with the people of Japan. Our tanker team ... built on and strengthened that relationship by working hand in hand with our customer to produce and support a state-of-the-art tanker that will meet the needs of the Japan Ministry of Defense and the [Japan Air Self-Defense Force] for many years to come."

The four tankers are undergoing Operational Evaluation by the Japan Air Self-Defense Force, a process that should be completed later this year. The fleet achieved Initial Operational Capability in March 2009. The KC-767s are assigned to the 1st Airlift Wing with the Japan Air Self-Defense Force at Komaki Air Base.

"Providing Japan with the fourth and final KC-767 tanker on schedule means a great deal to our company and our relationship with this important customer," said Dennis Muilenburg, president and chief executive officer of Boeing Defense, Space & Security. "Because of these tankers, Japan now has the capability to perform vital self-defense, refueling and airlift missions. Also, when necessary, it possesses the capability to perform critical humanitarian and disaster-relief missions across the Pacific region and beyond."

The KC-767 is a military derivative of the 767-200ER (Extended Range) commercial twin-aisle airplane built in Everett, Wash. It is configured with the advanced Boeing air-refueling boom and the associated Remote Aerial Refueling Operator II system. Japan selected the convertible freighter configuration so it can also carry cargo or passengers, but its primary role is aerial tanker. With a convertible freighter interior, the Japan tanker can be quickly converted from all-passenger to all-cargo configurations.

Nicole Piasecki, former president of Boeing Japan who in January was named vice president of Business Development for Commercial Airplanes, said the tankers will play a significant role in Japan's ongoing strategic self-defense policy. "They are yet another example of the kind of partnership and harmonious teamwork developed between Japan, Itochu, Kawasaki Heavy Industries and The Boeing Company, which we hope to foster and grow in the future," she said. ■

*felix.sanchez@boeing.com*