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## KC-10s Quietly Fuel U.S. Mideast Operations

Eric Tegler | Aviation Week & Space Technology

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If the U.S. Air Force's frontline tactical fighters are its show ponies, and workhorses such as the A-10 Thunderbolt II also generate a fair amount of attention on Capitol Hill, what happens to programs like the KC-10? The aerial refueling tanker has proponents, but its cheering section in Washington is hardly comparable to the Warthog's. And so the 25th anniversary of the KC-10's 25 years of continuous operation for the 380th Air Expeditionary Wing (AEW) from an ...

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lordchris

on May 10, 2016

KC-777ERF.....Get on it Boeing.

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rc115shepherd@h...

on May 11, 2016

"...The KC-10 can carry a maximum fuel load of 356,000 lb..." , "...The new KC-46s carry about 200,000 lb. of fuel..."

What is wrong with this picture? How was the Air Force allowed to get away with what is in effect; the reintroduction of propeller driven planes? The refueling capacity of strategic tanker airlift defines global reach. And the KC-46 clearly cuts the global reach of airlift essentially in

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half, as compared to the KC-10.

In the number of aircraft that can be moved by a single refueling sortie; in the number of tons of cargo airlift that can be moved per sortie; in the point-to-point length (range) of non-stop missions, and cargo ton-mile haulage per sortie, all of these global reach parameters are being reduced by more than half, through the introduction of the KC-46.

Global reach is being reduced to theater reach, requiring theater basing air refueling to global sustain operations; and that is the scenario that aerial refueling was precisely invented to eliminate.

With KC-46 air operations, defending Korea or Japan cannot be supported (by air) from Midway Island, to the same effect, as with the KC-10. You must move significantly closer to the Japan/Korean airspace; or you must use many more tankers and sorties to achieve the same effect; in cargo ton-miles/hour or day; or mission sorties of all types; as well as weight of ordnance delivered as cargos/day, and as weapons delivered on target. This same reduction in capability can be described in all the other global theaters.

North America is both a blessing and a challenge in seeking to implement strategies of interminable global interference and intervention. Great Britain in her imperialist period, resolved this logistic dilemma with a global naval fleet, assigned to global bases; supported from colonial military outposts; which met the need for timely, prompt, in-theater action responding to a nearly continuous series of threats to her global dominion. In the modern world this is not only politically infeasible with regard to the US, it is economically unsustainable. As the forces and infrastructure required are simply beyond the material means of any single state. But the development of airpower changes this calculus.

Aircraft given sufficient range (by aerial refueling), can effect this global dominion. The air-route distances between the strategic points within the western and eastern hemispheres, demands aerial refueling; and the optimum refueling airlift; is that which the largest capacity that can be sustained. How was the Air Force able to get away with this swindle?

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Talyn

on May 11, 2016

What's flawed with your assessment is that you don't mention the KC-145 in the same light by putting that 50+ year old platform into perspective.

The KC-46 is replacing well-worn out KC-145s, not KC-10s. There is no reduction in air refueling/airlift capability with the introduction of the KC-46 since it offers better performance than the KC-145. But the retirement of the KC-10 will result in a reduction in capability.

Both KC-145s and forthcoming KC-46s have/can ferry military aircraft across the Pacific to Guam which is the main base in the Pacific. This is not WW2 with fighters and bombers operating out of Midway Island.

Midway Island is not a military base anymore but a US Department of the Interior wildlife sanctuary, and a national memorial. The last military personnel left in 1997. But it can/has been used as an emergency diversion point runway for transpacific flights.

The USAF is not slowly retiring the KC-10 because it's procuring the KC-46, its being retired due to budget issues. But the proposed follow-up to the KC-46/-X program may acquire a larger tanker through the KC-Y program, again if budget allows. Or, more KC-46s could be acquired.

The "swindle", as you call it, is budget driven vs. the KC-46 or the KC-10 itself since this article clearly states the KC-10 is operating very well.

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Mel

on May 11, 2016

The Air Force needed to buy at least enough A330 tankers to replace the KC10, but we all know how that went!!

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fly\_dc10

on May 11, 2016

It's unfortunate that over the past 10 years, we here in SoCal have seen the decline of aircraft manufacturing at the Douglas Aircraft (Boeing) facilities in Long Beach (LGB) where all the variants of the DC-10's were assembled. It seems to me that that the decision to go with the B767 variant was driven partly by the lack of manufacturing capabilities at the original plant at LGB. It has also been painful to watch the demise of the C-17 program at LGB as well. We in SoCal were hoping at least for a piece of the B787, B777X programs but so far there has not been any movement in that direction and the former Douglas buildings continue to be demolished to make room for other commercial developments...

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ef4@swbell.net

on May 11, 2016

unless I missed something, I think the gentlemen above was referring to the KC-135, not the KC-145.  
WATERWAGONS Rule !!!

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gherardo@yahoo.com

on May 11, 2016

They say... retire the A-10, retire the KC-10... looks like the USAF doesn't like successful paid for planes and want to scrap them.  
I'd retire the proponents.

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p.cauchi@infoae...

on May 11, 2016

Why not reengine and modernize the KC-10 like the KC-135 in the 1980's.  
Otherwise, it is time to launch a tanker version of the Boeing 777-200.  
It would be a good way to sustain the 777 line at Spokane for a few years.

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1933john

on May 12, 2016

Everyone likes the smell and status of a new .....

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