

KC-46 DEMONSTRATES PROBE-AND-DROGUE REFUELLING OF F/A-18

News / Manufacturer



Boeing and the US Air Force have completed the first KC-46A Pegasus refuelling of a combat jet using the next-generation tanker's wing-mounted hose-and-drogue system.

The milestone was achieved on 10 February when the KC-46 transferred fuel to a US Navy F/A-18 at 20,000ft, says Boeing.

On January 24, Pegasus completed its first ever aerial refuelling by topping up an F-16 during a 5h 45min sortie over Seattle, Washington. Tanker testers had been preparing to refuel a Boeing C-17 transport shortly after that F-16 demonstration, but those plans were pushed back due to asset availability, a company spokesman says.

The F/A-18 refuelling milestone is one of many coming up for the KC-46 programme as it completes a low-rate production readiness review by the US government. This step ticks off the requirement to demonstrate refuelling of a light, fast jet.

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Boeing

The next step could be to demonstrate aerial refuelling of the KC-46 by another air force KC-10, or perhaps refuelling of a C-17 or AV-8B Harrier II.

KC-46 entered development in 2011 with a contract for four test assets including two baseline 767-2Cs and two fully capable aerial tankers. The air force wants 179 new tankers and will order the remaining 175 across 13 planned production lots. Two low-rate initial production contracts for seven and 12 aircraft are expected by mid-year.

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