



SAND SCRIPT

EXPEDITIONARY EDITION

Vol. 5, No. 31

380th Air Expeditionary Wing

August 4, 2006

KC-10 Maintenance
Keeping the mission
Flowing page 3



Airman 1st Class Nicholas Shoenhair, KC-10 Crew Chief, marshals a KC-10 to its parking spot in Southwest Asia.

(Photo by Staff Sgt. Jason Webb)

KC-10 Maintenance, keeping the mission flowing

By Captain Sheldon Knudsen
380 EAMXS/KC-10 Officer in Charge

The KC-10 maintainers work long hot days on the flightline with temperatures reaching nearly 135 degrees on the scorching concrete, and it's even hotter in the non-air conditioned KC-10s parked on the ramp. These conditions, along with the 12-hour day and night shifts, are endured by the men and women of the 380th Expeditionary Aircraft Maintenance Squadron.

The maintenance specialties are almost as varied as the men and women who maintain the aircraft.

The areas of maintenance that keep the KC-10s flying include communications and navigation, guidance and control, hydraulics, jet engines, fuels, electrical and environmental systems, aero repair and the crew chiefs who ensure the general operability of the aircraft.

"The work ethic and dedication of these young men and women is outstanding," said Master Sgt. William Dorety, 380 EAMXS Maintenance Production Supervisor, deployed from Travis AFB, Calif. "I've been deployed 19 times during the 20 and a half years I've been in the Air Force. I've never seen the same level of commitment as I've seen out of these young maintainers."

The crew chiefs are responsible for the overall maintenance of the KC-10. "We have to ensure quick turnaround of the aircraft that return from a refueling mission," said Airman 1st Class Andy Ward, 380 EAMXS Crew Chief, also deployed from Travis. "We usually have to have an aircraft mission-ready in four hours."

"No other job compares to changing tires, maintaining the brake systems, engine maintenance and changing the drogues, booms and light bulbs in the desert heat," said Staff Sgt. Jason J. Fitch, 380 EAMXS KC-10 Crew Chief. "I would describe my

team's typical day here as long, hot and sweaty."

At any given moment on the flightline, maintainers with different specialties are working on mechanical or electronic systems on the aircraft.

A KC-10 lands, then the pilots debrief the crew chiefs on the performance of the aircraft. The aircraft is refueled, engine oil is added, and the tires on the landing gear are

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A KC-10 Extender is towed to the main ramp by KC-10 crew chiefs in preparation for an engine run to verify correct operation.

(Photo by Staff Sgt. Jason Webb)

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checked. Any identified maintenance issue is resolved.

The maintainers work to ensure the aircraft is kept mission capable so they can fly twice within a 24-hour period. When possible, there is always one aircraft that's ready to go in case of a maintenance issue with a returning aircraft.

Sometimes a problem is identified and a KC-10 is required to be mission-ready within a couple of hours before take-off.

Hydraulic specialists may be extending the drogue (the air refueling hose capable of refueling Navy and NATO aircraft) for a fuel pressure check; another set of maintainers may calibrate the guidance and control system. Yet, another group of maintainers may perform a pre-flight check on a KC-10 that's due to depart on a refueling mission.

"The pre-flight inspection is very thorough," said Sergeant Dorety. "The aircraft is inspected for flight safety and assurance of operations. The quality of training of our maintainers enables them to do the job without question."

The various technical schools range from several weeks to several months with on-the-job training to follow.

"My job takes a lot of patience and perseverance in learning all the systems I'm required to work with," said Staff Sgt. Nichole Smith, 380 EAMXS Guidance and Control specialist, deployed from Travis.

"There are so many systems you have to deal with. It can be overwhelming for someone new to the job."

"It is a challenge to troubleshoot in-flight problems with the guidance and control system that cannot be duplicated on the ground," said Airman Lucio Mendoza, 380 EAMXS Guidance and Control Specialist deployed from McGuire AFB, N.J. "You have to keep working to resolve any problems to get the aircraft back in the air."

"There are maintainers who have worked on jets for 20 years and haven't seen everything," said Airman 1st Class Charles Mawson, 380 EAMXS Hydraulics Specialist deployed from Travis. "There is something different to fix everyday."



"The aerospace ground equipment (AGE) flight shares the challenge of maintaining their equipment along with the KC-10 maintainers' challenge of maintaining the aircraft," said Sergeant Dorety. "The air conditioning units and the maintenance stands (all maintained by AGE) are in constant use by 380 EAMXS maintainers."

"The Team of the Month award for July 2006 is well deserved by our maintainers," added Sgt. Dorety. "The maturity level, dedication and camaraderie of the 380 EAMXS maintainers are top notch. The support of the Services Squadron, our living quarters, and meals served by the dining facilities add to our success."



(Photos by Staff Sgt. Jason Webb)

The diverse maintainers of 380 EAMXS ensure the KC-10 mission keeps flowing. (Clockwise) Tech. Sgt. Francis Leslie and Airman Nicholas Shoenhair, crew chiefs, prepare to service the jet engines on the KC-10 with oil. Staff Sgt. Nichole Smith, guidance and control specialist ensures the computer system in the avionics bay of the KC-10 is working properly. Airman 1st Class Michael Pianella, hydraulics specialist, prepares drogue for maintenance.