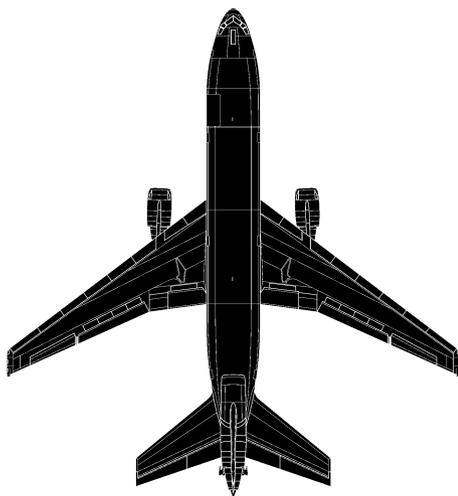


## KC-10 Extender



The KC-10 Extender is the major unsung hero of America's global airpower operations. Based on McDonnell Douglas's DC-10 freighter, the KC-10 was USAF's first widebody tanker/cargo aircraft and has flown in virtually every US combat operation since entering service in 1981. Each airplane sports a refueling boom and a hose-and-drogue system, allowing it to refuel not only USAF but also Navy, Marine Corps, and most allied systems in a single mission.

The three-engine KC-10 was born in 1977 after a competition among Lockheed's C-5 and L-1011, Boeing's 747, and the DC-10. The DC-10 was given (in addition to refueling systems) military avionics, an air refueling operator station, satellite communications, and its own air refueling receptacle. A large cargo door permits loading of most Air Force fighter unit support equipment—thus allowing the KC-10 to refuel deploying fighters and simultaneously carry their support into distant combat zones.

The KC-10 made its first combat deployment in the 1983 Grenada invasion. Since then, it has taken part in every US air operation—Eldorado Canyon (Libya), Just Cause (Panama), Desert Storm (the Persian Gulf), Northern-Southern Watch (Iraq), Deliberate Force (Bosnia), Allied Force (Serbia), Restore Hope (Somalia), Desert Fox (Iraq), Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan), Iraqi Freedom (Iraq), New Dawn (Libya)—not to mention tens of thousands of individual airlift and air refueling missions. In every case, the KC-10 was critical to success, though little glory has come its way.

—Robert S. Dudley with Walter J. Boyne

**This aircraft:** USAF KC-10 Extender—#60036—as it looked on Feb. 7, 2013, when assigned to the 305th Air Mobility Wing, JB McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J.



### In Brief

Designed, built by McDonnell Douglas (now Boeing) ★ first flight July 12, 1980 ★ number built 60 ★ crew of four (pilot, copilot, navigator, boom operator) ★ no armament ★ **Specific to KC-10A:** Three General Electric CF6-50C2 turbofan engines ★ weight (loaded) 590,000 lb ★ max load 75 persons and 170,000 lb of cargo ★ max speed 610 mph ★ cruise speed 564 mph ★ max range 4,370 mi ★ span 165 ft 4 in ★ length 181 ft 7 in ★ height 58 ft 1 in ★ service ceiling 42,000 ft.

### Famous Fliers

**Mackay Trophy (1986):** Crew of SAC 68th ARW—Marc Felman, Thomas Ferguson, Clarence Bridges Jr., Patrick Kennedy, Gerald Treadwell, Lester Boulter, Gerald Lewis, Samuel Flores, Scott Helms, Gary Smith. **Notables:** William Begert, Eugene Habiger, John Handy, Hal Hornburg, Raymond Johns Jr., Walter Kross, Arthur Lichte, Stephen Lorenz, Pamela Melroy, Charles Robertson Jr., Paul Selva. **Other notables:** "Gucci Girls" all-female crew—Lindsey Bauer, Jen Carter, Lindy Campbell, Sarah Lockley. **Test pilots:** Walt Smith, George Jansen.

### Interesting Facts

In Desert Storm, executed (with KC-135) 51,700 refuelings without missing a rendezvous ★ one of the best safety records in USAF ★ assigned 1981-92 to Strategic Air Command ★ carries twice as much fuel as KC-135 ★ six separate fuel tanks for refueling purposes ★ equipped with lighting for night operations ★ can refuel KC-10s and limited number of specially equipped KC-135s ★ transfers 1,100 gal/min via boom and 470 gal/min via probe-drogue ★ once wore distinctive light gray, white, blue paint scheme ★ in 1985, made a nonstop unrefueled flight of 8,982 miles from Saudi Arabia to California.



USAF photo by SSGT. Bill Thompson

A KC-10 Extender refuels an SR-71 Blackbird in-flight during testing.