

RAAF KC-30 COMPLETES F-16 REFUELLING TRIALS

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A RAAF KC-30A tanker transport has completed inflight refuelling trials with a US Air Force F-16.

The seven flights from Edwards Air Force Base, between December 3 and 15, saw the KC-30A conduct 444 ‘contacts’ with the F-16, offloading over 25 tonnes of fuel, and are a key element in achieving conditional clearance for the tanker transport to refuel the F-16.

“Clearing the KC-30A to refuel the F-16 is a major milestone in enabling our aerial refuelling operators to refuel other boom-capable aircraft on combined operations and exercises,” 86 Wing KC-30A transition and receiver clearance manager Wing Commander Grant Kelly said.

“In early 2016, we will return to the United States to conduct further clearance test flights with the F-16 and other combat aircraft,” WGCDR Kelly said.

“There are a number of different F-16 variants in service with the USAF and other foreign air forces which will require additional refuelling clearances.”

The F-16 refuelling was planned and conducted by an integrated test team that included the RAAF’s Aircraft Research and Development Unit (ARDU).

“ARDU will continue to operate as part of the integrated test team to analyse the results from testing so that ultimately a safe and effective operational clearance can be delivered,” lead ARDU

flight test engineer for the F-16 refuelling trials, Flight Lieutenant Ben Liersch, said.

The F-16 is the world's most popular fighter, with around 2,500 in service, including over 950 with the US Air Force.

