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Subject: SERIOUS INCIDENT INVOLVING AIRCRAFT ON AUSTRALIAN KC-30A
MULTI-ROLE TANKER TRANSPORT PROGRAM

Comment
Action Area HASD

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HOT ISSUE BRIEF

ISSUE: SERIOUS INCIDENT INVOLVING AIRCRAFT ON AUSTRALIAN KC-30A MULTI-ROLE TANKER TRANSPORT PROGRAM

SENSITIVITY: Airbus Military have advised of a serious incident involving the prototype Australian KC-30A Multi-Role Tanker Transport (MRTT) aircraft resulting in the detachment and loss of the refuelling boom from the aircraft. This incident will attract significant media attention.

KEY ISSUES:

- A serious in-flight incident involving the prototype Australian KC-30A Multi-Role Tanker Transport (MRTT) aircraft and a Portuguese Air Force F-16 fighter aircraft has occurred during an Airbus Military MRTT training flight, causing detachment and loss of the refuelling boom from the MRTT.
- The MRTT has suffered some damage but has returned safely to its home airfield at Getafe, Spain.
- The status of the F-16 and its pilot and any persons or property under the incident location is yet to be confirmed.
- No Commonwealth personnel were on board the MRTT at the time of the incident.

- Airbus Military and the relevant European airworthiness authorities will have lead responsibility for investigating the incident.
- Defence experts will participate in the investigation process.

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BACKGROUND: AUSTRALIAN KC-30A MULTI-ROLE TANKER TRANSPORT INCIDENT

The flight was a planned flight involving the prototype Australian KC-30A Multi-Role Tanker Transport (MRTT) aircraft and four Portuguese Air Force F-16s and performed over the sea in front of the Portuguese Atlantic Coast.

After performing 13 successful contacts, the 14th contact resulted in the refuelling boom nozzle breaking off and detaching, striking the receiver F-16 aircraft. Soon after, the boom left fin was broken and lost, resulting in an uncontrolled boom movement that broke the mast section of the boom.

The boom is understood to have fallen from the aircraft into the sea. However, the exact incident time and location and the status of any persons or property that may have been located on the ground or sea under it is yet to be confirmed.

The MRTT recovered safely to Getafe airfield in Spain at around 2230 hours local time, but has suffered some damage in the tail cone and horizontal stabiliser areas, which is currently being assessed.

The F-16 is also understood to have recovered safely to its home airfield but the status of the aircraft and its pilot is yet to be positively confirmed.

As the MRTT aircraft is not yet owned by the Commonwealth, investigation of the incident will fall within the jurisdiction of Airbus Military and the relevant European airworthiness agencies.

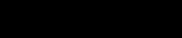
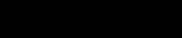
All Commonwealth personnel involved in the program have been restricted from participating in any flying or ground activities involving MRTT aircraft until further notice.

The Commonwealth has been offered the opportunity to participate in the investigation process and Chief of Air Force has already initiated action to nominate and despatch an appropriately experienced officer to Spain.

TALKING POINTS: AUSTRALIAN KC-30A MULTI-ROLE TANKER TRANSPORT INCIDENT

- A serious in-flight incident has occurred during an Airbus Military training flight involving the prototype Australian KC-30A Multi-Role Tanker Transport Aircraft and a Portuguese Air Force F-16 fighter aircraft.
- The incident has resulted in detachment and loss of the refuelling boom from the MRTT. Although the boom is understood to have fallen into the sea off the Portuguese coast, this is yet to be positively confirmed.
- The MRTT has suffered some damage but returned safely to its home airfield.
- The F-16 aircraft is also understood to have returned safely to its home airfield, but the status of the aircraft and its pilot is yet to be positively confirmed.
- No Commonwealth personnel were on board the MRTT at the time of the incident.
- Airbus Military and the relevant European airworthiness authorities will have lead responsibility for investigating the incident.

- Defence experts have been invited to participate in the investigation process and actions are already in train for this to occur.

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