

Abstract

“Program Management Developments Across RAAF KC-30A / USAF Boom Receiver Air-To-Air Refuelling (AAR) Clearance Programs”

Air-to-Air Refuelling (AAR) of the RAAF F-35A was seen as an essential component of the ADF air combat capability and, accordingly, the F-35A needed to achieve AAR receiver clearance (RCVR CLR) with the RAAF KC-30A Multi-Role Tanker Transport (MRTT) aircraft. Importantly, a RCVR CLR with the KC-30A was required prior to the planned ferry of RAAF F-35A aircraft from the US to Australia in 2018, and also in support of in-country Operational Test and Evaluation programs and Service Release. The Joint Project Office (JPO) had secured a slot in the USAF's F-35A Flight Test Schedule, from October to December 2015, to undertake the KC-30A / F-35A receiver testing in support of the formal receiver clearance process that was managed under a combined USAF / RAAF framework. Air Warfare Centre and 86 Wing were subsequently tasked in late 2015 to support a US DoD led effort – the Coalition Aerial Refuelling Initiative (CARI) Program – that has continued through to today and has included a variety of USAF boom receiver aircraft: F-16C/D, C-17A, B-1B, A-10C, B-52H and F-22.

The extensive and complex structure of organisational dependencies and responsibilities within the F-35A and follow-on CARI clearance programs have presented challenging program management risks for the RAAF AR test community and this presentation discusses the key development issues and the establishment of a strong working relationship at the respective Integrated Test Team levels.