Aussie Hers clock 20,000 operational hours

Air Force’s airborne workhorse, the C-130 Hercules, has just exceeded 20,000 flying hours supporting Australian and Coalition troops in the Middle East.

The significant milestone was reached during a mission to aero-medically evacuate Australian soldiers wounded in an Improvised Explosive Device strike late last week.

Pilot of the C-130J to break the mark, Flight Lieutenant Glen Foster said it was a major achievement for the detachment to reach 20,000 operational hours.

“It’s a credit not only to the aircrew, but to the maintainers who keep the Hersc in the air and the support provided by Defence Materiel Organisation’s Air Lift Systems Program Office,” Flight Lieutenant Foster said.

Air Force C-130 Hercules aircraft and crews have been deployed to the Middle East since February 2003.

The original deployment was C-130H model airframes were joined by the newer C-130J model on a rotational basis in September 2004.

The C-130J model, flown by RAAF Base Richmond’s 37 Squadron, took sole responsibility for the Middle East deployment in mid 2008.

C-130 Detachment Executive Officer Squadron Leader Sarah Stalker said the three aircraft in the Middle East average about 50 hours in the air each week and are supported by an intensive maintenance program.

“When we support a big rotation of troops into and out of Afghanistan we use two of our aircraft each day,” Squadron Leader Stalker said.

“Proactive maintenance by the ground crew has provided us with high aircraft availability and mission success rates.”

In the 20,000 operational flying hours, crews have flown more than 11,300 sorties and the aircraft have transported more than 140,000 personnel and nearly 31,000,000 kilograms of cargo.

The C-130 Detachment in the Middle East supports Australia’s commitment to Afghanistan under Operations SLIPPER and PALATE II and the remaining Australian forces in Iraq under Operations RIVERBANK and KRUGER.


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