

Italian Air Force C-27js completes five-month deployment to Afghanistan

The two Alenia Aeronautica C-27J tactical airlifters deployed to Afghanistan in September 2008 by the Italian Air Force have returned to their base at Pisa AFB following the successful completion of their first major out-of-area deployment. The C-27Js operated within Task Group Albatros, the ITAF component of the Joint Air Task Force (JATF) of the Regional Command West of the NATO International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. The two aircraft replaced the C-130J previously operated from Herat to provide airlift support in the area of operation.

«This was the operational debut for the C-27J», said Major Luca Coppola, an instructor pilot, «and the return to full operational capability for the 98th Group, whose personnel have spent the past three years training on the new aircraft which replaced the G.222.» Despite the very difficult terrain and weather conditions of the vast Afghan territory, the C-27J performed well and enabled its crews to meet the RC-W airlift requirements while also gathering valuable operating experience with the aircraft.

«Our duty was to link and support the various coalition components throughout Afghanistan,» Major Coppola added, «by airlifting personnel, vehicles and equipment, as well as performing medical evacuation duties for both the contingent and the Afghan population». In their five months in Afghanistan the Albatros Task Force C-27Js provided some 200 hours of operational flying, carrying out some 50 sorties and transporting about 1,500 passengers and over 30,000 lbs of freight. The aircraft linked international airports, including Kabul, to remote regions having only rough dirt strips, on which very few airlifters can take-off and land like the Alenia Aeronautica C-27J.

Colonel Francesco Vestito, the JATF commanding officer, was particularly satisfied with the capabilities of the C.27J, underscoring that the «operational use of the C-27J offers a tactical ability of specific value to the commanders supporting the Provincial Reconstruction Teams which, on account of their very purpose, are often located in the most remote areas disseminated around the country and frequently inaccessible by surface transport.»

Alenia Aeronautica has sold so far 117 C-27Js, including 78 for the US Joint Cargo Aircraft program and 12 – ten of which already delivered – for the Italian Air Force.

Alenia Aeronautica, società del Gruppo Finmeccanica, è la maggiore industria aeronautica italiana, attiva nella progettazione, sviluppo e produzione di velivoli civili e militari, di velivoli non pilotati e di aerosturture. Attraverso le società controllate Alenia Aermacchi e Alenia Aeronavali, è inoltre attiva, rispettivamente, nel campo degli aerei da addestramento e nel settore della trasformazione, manutenzione e revisione di aerei civili e militari. Tramite la joint venture ATR, Alenia Aeronautica è leader mondiale nel settore dei velivoli regionali a turboelica. Nel 2006 la società ha registrato ricavi pari a 1.908 milioni di euro, ordini per 2.634 milioni di euro e un portafoglio ordini di 7.538 milioni di euro. Alenia Aeronautica impiega 12.135 dipendenti.