

Airbus, Singapore achieve world-first on A330 MRTT auto-refuelling full certification

Singapore, 4 February 2026 — Airbus and Singapore have achieved full certification of the Automatic Air-to-Air Refuelling (A3R) capability on the Airbus A330 Multi Role Tanker Transport (MRTT). The Certification was granted by the Spanish National Institute for Aerospace Technology (INTA) following an extensive qualification and flight-test campaign conducted in close collaboration with the Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF) and the Defence Science and Technology Agency (DSTA).

This represents a key milestone in the continued development of the A330 MRTT platform and marks a world-first in aviation, with the campaign confirming the A3R system's maturity, safety, and reliability across a wide range of mission profiles. With this certification, the RSAF becomes the first air force globally to introduce A3R on its fleet of A330 MRTTs, operated by 112 Squadron, setting a new benchmark for automated refuelling.

Mike Schoellhorn, Chief Executive Officer at Airbus Defence and Space said: "The certification of A3R with Singapore is a significant achievement and a clear demonstration of what long-term partnership can deliver. Singapore has consistently led the adoption and co-development of next-generation aerospace technologies, and Airbus is proud to support the RSAF and DSTA in fielding a capability that will shape the future of air-to-air refuelling."

Ng Chad-son, Chief Executive, Defence Science and Technology Agency, said: "Achieving full certification of A3R is a significant achievement as Singapore's A330 MRTTs can now perform automatic refuelling both in daytime and at night. DSTA worked very closely with the RSAF and Airbus to advance innovation, enhance safety and reduce crew workload. This attainment showcases effective technology integration and sets a new benchmark on automatic aerial refuelling globally."

Major-General Kelvin Fan, Chief of Air Force at Republic of Singapore Air Force said: "The RSAF is pleased to have partnered with DSTA and Airbus in pioneering the world's first A3R

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capability. This development will enhance the RSAF's aerial refuelling operations, contributing to greater operational effectiveness. It also reflects the RSAF's commitment to working with industry partners to innovate and remain at the leading edge of technology."

The joint effort between Airbus, RSAF and DSTA began in 2020 to validate and accelerate entry into service of the A3R system. The certification programme encompassed day and night missions, expanded flight envelopes, and multiple receiver aircraft types, ensuring full mission readiness. The flight trials took place both in Spain and Singapore, with the RSAF providing the A330 MRTTs, as well as F16s and F15s, as receivers to support the testing and validations.

Developed by Airbus as part of its SMART MRTT vision, the A3R system employs advanced automation and computer vision technologies to automatically detect, track, and engage receiver aircraft, without the need for manual input. By reducing operator workload and enhancing precision, A3R improves mission safety, and delivers greater operational flexibility for air forces operating the A330 MRTT.

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RSAF A330 MRTT refuels a RSAF F15 via A3R during night © Airbus SAS 2022

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