

Transformation of the rare **Fokker 60U**



Just before the end of the last century the Royal Dutch air force had a requirement for transport to transport their P&W F100 engines as used by its F16 Falcon aircraft. As well this aircraft should have the capability of carrying paratroopers and be used for medivac missions. The Dutch aircraft manufacturer Fokker, then at its heydays, had a stretched version of its highly successful Fokker 50 turboprop aircraft on the drawing board, appropriately named Fokker 60. By adding some modifications like extra (cargo-)doors they successfully converted this into a Fokker 60 Utility.

Some years later the Dutch Navy sold their surplus fleet of Lockheed Orions to Germany. One of their missions was a coast guard and -inspection role in the Caribbean theatre of the Dutch Antilles. As now other aircraft were needed for this the Dutch government decided to return two Fokker 60 Utility aircraft to Fokker in order to have them converted to maritime patrol aircraft (MPA). For this specific role an underbelly radar was attached, launch tubes were added in order to drop smoke and sonar buoys and the interior was completed for the task by adding radar operator-, TACO- (tactical coordinator) and observer stations. To facilitate the observers enlarged windows were added on both sides. These aircraft fitted the job well and were successfully operated by the Dutch Air Force in co-operation with the Dutch Navy, Coast guard and other parties. The last year (2006/2007) marked a very uncommon operation as the aircraft were commanded by the civilian pilots of Southern Cross.

DUTCH SURPLUS

Due to a change in policy the operation ended and thus the two Fokker 60 MPA became surplus

and were put up for sale. In 2010 the aircraft started their second life with the Navy of Peru. This story gives you an insight of the process of handing over an aircraft from one operator to another. As you can imagine this a hugely complex and time consuming operation that besides the selling and buying party involves several industry partners. First it was Fokker Services as they stored the aircraft and made them available and technically ready for inspection flights to show interested parties the aircraft and its capabilities. After a purchase agreement had been reached a 12 years inspection was carried out in which the aircraft is literally broken down in pieces, and after inspection and overhaul was put together again. In



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addition to these inspections and a fresh coat of paint systems were either removed or added to bring the aircraft up to the desired status. In a later stage the Peruvians even will add Exocet or Harpoon missile launchers to the aircraft.

PREPARING

After a ground test program the next step was test flying the aircraft. For this the knowledge, expe-

rience and test pilots of Southern Cross was sub-contracted. Part of the test flight schedule where engine shutdown and relights in flight as well as stall tests. All was according the books, so after completion of a seemingly endless pile of paperwork the aircraft where ready-to-be-sold. Almost the same process of testing is done a second time, now on behalf of the buying party, to convince him he's buying according given specs.



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In the same period of time a group of Peruvian pilots was trained by CAE in ground school and simulator for their Fokker 60 type-rating. Another group consisting of technicians was trained by Fokker Services to gain experience in maintaining the aircraft.

Finally all pieces fell together as a pile of contracts had been signed, another pile of money had changed ownership, clearances and permits had been granted and all crews were ready to leave Holland for the journey to its new destination. However, the eruption of the Icelandic volcano proved the first hurdle to take.

DEPARTURE

A useful alternate routing closer to the equator with a fuel stop at Bermuda seemed useless due to the strength of the forecasted westerly (head)

winds. After one week standby the definite go-ahead was given early morning June 2nd 2010. Round noon both aircraft departed Woensdrecht piloted by a mixed Peruvian/Dutch crew. After a final low pass salute the first fuel stop was Keflavik, Iceland. Clear blue skies, no sign as volcanic ash and a wonderful view of the island. After a brief stop take-off again for the next stretch that brought us in the middle of the night on the weather minimums to Halifax, Canadian east coast. Again a brief stop and on the way for the third (and longest, almost 10 hours) leg bringing us to HATO airport, Curacao. For the aircraft and crew it felt like a home coming as we were greeted by lots of former colleagues. After refueling on the way to the bar of the Hilton hotel for the regular crew beer. As usual, after a far too extensive crew beer over to Hooks'hut for a delici-

ous lobster and tuna meal on the beach. A more appropriate farewell ceremony to the island hasn't been imaginable.

HATO (AGAIN)

Next day the last sortie was planned, nine hours flying time bringing us to Lima around noon LT. Thus an early departure was called for. Trouble hit us however when, despite having received all required clearances, permission was not granted by Venezuela to enter their airspace. We were equipped with satellite phones so every important minister in Venezuela and Peru had been called and got involved. However, in the mean time fuel was running and we came to a stage where we wouldn't have enough left to reach Lima. The decision was made to return to Hato in order to sort things on the ground. After topping up and

filing a new routing via the north to avoid Venezuelan airspace we were airborne again heading for Peru. Unfortunately our prepared formation arrival had to be cancelled as due to the delay it had turned dark already.

CEREMONY

The Navy had prepared an extensive arrival ceremony for their new equipment. We had been thinking that all would have been finished by the time we arrived, but nothing like that. A music band was playing, hundreds of guests were waving and lots of drinks and food were prepared for all. The guests had waited all nine hours of delay we had to welcome us. Thanks to the drinks and food (especially the first...) they had mastered well. After showing the new equipment to all we headed for the officers 'mess where the familiar

speeches, words of welcome and exchange of presents took place.

After the last bottles were emptied we went to look for our hotel. We even skipped the last beer (very, very uncommon), the 35 hours of flying in two days had taken their toll.

The Dutch part of the crew would return home next day, except three that would stay to support the Navy for some time. The crew to stay consisted of Cor Eerhart on behalf of Fokker services to provide technical support, Johan van Poppel (normally loadmaster C-130 Hercules) on behalf of the Royal Dutch Air Force to support the loadmasters, radar operators et cetera and Willem Hemink on

behalf of Sky Unlimited to train the pilots and demonstrate the maritime operation as such.

NEW ASSIGNMENT

The role of the Fokker 60's is a partly replacement of the Fokker F27's. But thanks to the nature of equipment and aircraft systems there had to be done a lot of training on the job. Starting with take-offs and landing on the aircraft, meaning countless touch-and go's, day- and night-time. Furthermore maritime low flying (50 feet!) to search for- and identify suspicious vessels (oil pollution, illegal fishery and -trade, human trafficking). Besides these common maritime tasks



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counter drugs operation is a substantial part of the tasks, not surprising considering the geographical location of Peru.

The Construction of search patterns was trained, together with the drop of life rafts, smoke- and sonar buoys. Whenever a vessel happens to encounter a man overboard or itself will sink, the most probable position can be calculated with the



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onboard computers. This position is influenced by sea currents and wind, which all can be measured using sonar- and smoke buoys. Once they have been found life rafts can be dropped and a ship and/or helicopter will be directed to assist them further. One of the main tasks in Peru will be counterdrug operations, not surprisingly seen the geographical location of the country. To be able to perform these diverse tasks the crew normally will consist of eight to ten members, two

or three pilots, a radar-operator, a loadmaster, a tactical coordinator and the rest observers. Some weeks later all crews were proficient and ready to solo, meaning my duty had been finished.

HISTORY

Peru has a rich and long lasting trade history with the Dutch. The purchase of these aircraft from Holland has been preceded by ships, tanks and other equipment. Their first choice however had

been the S3 Viking aircraft, a small twin jet engined aircraft purpose designed by Lockheed in the USA, which they even test flew. After lengthy negotiations they finally turned to the Dutch Air Force to purchase their second choice. A quick deal was made, and the Peruvians praised the quick and correctness of dealing, supported by several civil industry partners. Dutch aviation industry has presented itself well and shown its flexibility and customer focus.

All this combined with the good handling of the 2 Fokker 60 MPA aircraft have made Peru decide to buy two additional Fokker 60 utility aircraft, bringing fleet size to four. These two aircraft will be converted to MPA's as well. By the time you are reading this the whole process is running again. ❖

Text and Willem Hemink

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