The AP-3C Orion is an extremely versatile aircraft capable of land and maritime surveillance, anti-submarine and anti-ship warfare, naval fleet support, and search and rescue operations.

The Orion aircraft first entered military service in 1968 as the P-3B  model, with the P-3C variant first introduced in 1978. Following several modification projects the significantly upgraded AP-3C Orion (current) were introduced into service in 2002. The AP-3C is a significantly enhanced capability from the first P-3B model; now fitted with a variety of sensors, including digital multi-mode radar, electronic support measures, electro-optics detectors (infra-red and visual), magnetic anomaly detectors, friend or foe identification systems and acoustic detectors. Based at [RAAF Base Edinburgh](http://www.airforce.gov.au/RAAFBases/South-Australia/RAAF-Base-Edinburgh/?RAAF-1wiukb+Vk74vCBUZ9vgkzcv8+24vsrRa), in 2012 the AP-3C Orion ceased 10 years of operational service in the Middle East, completing 2,400 missions with more than 3,500 personnel deployed throughout the period.

The AP-3C Orion aircraft is currently deployed on [Operations RESOLUTE](http://www.defence.gov.au/Operations/BorderProtection/default.asp), [GATEWAY](http://www.defence.gov.au/Operations/SouthChinaSeaIndianOcean/), SOLANIA providing support to Border Protection and Fisheries patrols within the South East Asia and Pacific regions. On these missions the AP-3C Orion may work alone or in conjunction with other aircraft or ships. Wartime missions could include maritime strike using eithertorpedoes and/or Harpoon anti-shipping missiles. Due to the AP-3C's excellent surveillance abilities, the Orion is often called on to assist civil authorities in maritime search and rescue operations including survivorsearch and supply (air drop) missions. Notably, the AP-3C Orion was the primary Australian aircraft utilised in the search for missing Malaysian Airlines flight MH370.

The AP-3C Orion is in the process of a graduated draw down to retirement with the final aircraft planned withdrawal date in 2021. The AP-3C will be replaced by the [P-8A Poseidon](http://www.airforce.gov.au/Boeing-P8-A-Poseidon/?RAAF-Z4PUOpGXH/eLtWmc6qxYl9xYycb+rKng) and [MQ-4C Triton](http://www.airforce.gov.au/Technology/Aircraft/MQ-4C-Triton-Unmanned-Aircraft-System/?RAAF-BYjCaU6eHptQ3E2EiHw9jKOLJvauES8Y) who will perform the vital functions of long range maritime patrol.

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| **Manufacturer** | Lockheed Martin |
| **Role** | Maritime surveillance and anti-submarine warfare |
| **Crew** | * Pilot, co-pilot * Two flight engineers * Tactical commander * Navigator/communication officer * Sensor employment manager * Up to six airborne electronic analysts. |
| **Engine** | Four Allison T56-A-14 (4600 shaft horsepower each) |
| **Airframe** | Length: 35.6m, height: 10.44m |
| **Wingspan** | 30.8m |
| **Max Weight** | 61,200kg |
| **Speed** | 750km/h (405 knots) maximum, 650km/h cruise (350 kts) at 26,000 feet, 370km/h (200 kts) loiter |
| **Endurance** | 15 hours |
| **Ceiling** | 35,000 feet |
| **Capacity** | * Sonobuoys * Maritime Marker Devices * Air-Sea Rescue Kit * Survival Air Heliboxes * Self protection measures |
| **Weapons/ stores** | * Mk 46 lightweight anti-submarine torpedoes * AGM-84 Harpoon anti-ship missiles |