# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 11, 2009

The Honorable William J. Lynn
Deputy Secretary
The Department of Defense
1100 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1100

Dear Deputy Secretary Lynn:

Recently, we were informed that the Department of Defense is considering postponing again the acquisition of a new Air Force aerial refueling tanker. As the co-Chairmen of the Senate Tanker Caucus, we believe that any additional postponement of the tanker re-capitalization program will have a serious and unnecessary adverse effect on our service members' ability to carry out the National Military Strategy. Accordingly, we recommend that the Department recommence the aerial refueling tanker competition on an expedited basis.

As you know, the Senate Tanker Caucus is a bipartisan organization whose purpose is to assist the Department in efficiently procuring whichever aircraft best meets the requirements of our National Military Strategy and provides the best value to the taxpayer. The Caucus has not, and will not, take a position supporting any particular bidder in the competition for procurement of a replacement tanker. However, the failure of recent efforts to procure a new tanker has been disconcerting to members of the Caucus.

The ability of our nation to continue to project aerial power worldwide depends on our tanker fleet. The backbone of this fleet is the KC-135, which is rapidly approaching its 50th year in service. As I am sure you agree, continuing to rely upon these aircraft for decades to come poses an unacceptable risk not only to our nation's unique global reach capability, but to our most valuable asset, our men and women in uniform.

Therefore, we respectfully recommend that the Department resume the competition to select a new aerial refueling tanker as soon as possible. We also request that our respective staffs be briefed, in a timely manner, on the Department's plans.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Kent Conrad
United States Senator

Orrin G. Hatch
United States Senator