

AF carefully evaluating KC-X proposals

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5/7/2007 - **WASHINGTON** -- The Air Force source selection evaluation team is hard at work pouring over industry proposals for the KC-X program; the replacement for the Air Force's aging KC-135 strategic refueling aircraft. The evaluation team, comprised of a broad spectrum of acquisition and operational professionals, is currently sequestered at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, supporting a multi-month effort to carefully dissect and evaluate each proposal submitted in April 2007.

"I have an Air Force-wide, hand-picked team of more than 150 experts reviewing every aspect of these proposals," said Mr. Terry Kasten, Director, 653rd Aeronautical Systems Squadron (AESS), WPAFB. "When the dust settles, we'll have spent many tens of thousands of man-hours scrubbing the content of these proposals, conducting a legal review and preparing summary information for both an independent advisory council assessment and ultimately a source selection authority decision. The depth and breadth of this team is very impressive: our 13 evaluation team leaders have nearly 200 years of combined acquisition experience."

Stressing the importance of this program to the Air Force, Mr. Kasten relayed that he has a full-time, dedicated legal staff to ensure every "i" is dotted and every "t" is crossed.

"I also have a direct line to Senior Air Force legal and contracting advisors to answer questions, capture lessons from other programs, including the recent experience with the CSAR-X source selection, and ensure we do everything by the book," Mr. Kasten said.

The source selection process is rigorous, requiring months of preparation and several more months of evaluation in a tightly controlled environment. Prior to official source selection start, the KC-X program had continuous dialogue with industry. This dialogue continues through the evaluation process. "We have transitioned to a very formal and structured process governing dialog with our industry partners in this stage of the process," said Mr. Joe Leising, Contracts Chief for the 653rd AESS, "but that doesn't mean that we cut off all contact. We have a structured feedback channel with industry and they receive periodic proposal specific updates of our evaluation progress."

Ever mindful of the possibility of a protest given the size of the KC-X program, "The program office is being extra cautious in ensuring that each step of the source selection process is thoroughly documented," Mr. Leising said.

"This acquisition program has been extremely thoroughly vetted within the Air Force and the Department of Defense," said Lt. Gen. Jack Hudson, Air Force Program Executive Officer for Aircraft, WPAFB. "We have the full support of Air Force and DoD senior leadership. Our leadership is very aware of our efforts and they have ensured we proceed in a deliberate and transparent manner, every step of the way, so that at the end of the day we have a program in which we all have high confidence that we can execute successfully."

The selection will be announced and contract award made after receiving authority to proceed from the Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition Logistics and Technology through the Defense Acquisition Board scheduled later this year.

Federal Acquisition Regulations limit information exchanges or discussions with potential offerors solely to the Procuring Contracting Officer (PCO) inside the formal source selection process. These regulations also prohibit the Air Force from disclosing the number or identity of offerors, or discussing source selection progress.

Contacts concerning the KC-X program by participating offerors are no longer permitted outside the formal source selection process. For media inquiries, contact Aeronautical Systems Center Public Affairs at 937-255-1726. All other inquiries should be directed to the PCO, Ms. Sandra Palmatier at 937-656-9599.