

March 31, 2008

The Honorable Robert M. Gates
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Gates:

US Air Force refueling aircraft are critical to joint US power projection capabilities. The backbone of the current tanker fleet – the KC-135s – average 47 years of age and must be replaced as expeditiously as possible.

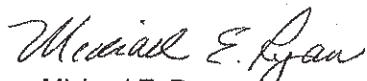
We, the undersigned, have devoted years of service and sacrifice to this great nation and the United States Air Force. Accordingly, we are very troubled by the vitriolic attack on the Air Force by those who disagree with the outcome of the KC-45 Tanker competition.

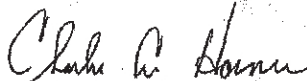
From an objective perspective, the Air Force is prevented from using US industrial base issues, US employment issues and US component content issues in making decisions about weapons systems. By law and by directive they must consider which system gives best value for our Warfighters. But despite those facts, the Air Force is being attacked by Boeing and their special interests clients by:


- Impugning the integrity of OUR Air Force in the conduct of the KC-45 source selection
- Claiming OUR Air Force abandoned the interests of America and the American people during the selection process
- Questioning the patriotism of the men and women of OUR Air Force
- Claiming there is a problem with manufacturing by not-to-be-trusted foreign nationals, when all military modifications made to the aircraft will be done by Northrop Grumman under the strict standards of the Air Force – a fact Boeing supporters fully understand

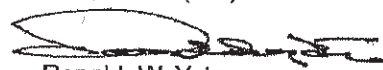
We are unwavering in our support of the military and civilian members of the Air Force team, and know that they embody a commitment to integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all they do. The Air Force team rightly focused on delivering the most capability to the Warfighter – and their integrity, honor, and truthfulness should not be denigrated without factual information to the contrary, by those serving other interests.

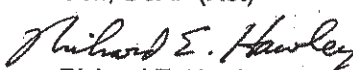
Delays in the tanker program will only serve to put the lives of crews flying these aging systems in greater jeopardy. We fully support the Air Force in its desire to provide the best and most capable tanker to our Warfighters and urge you to continue to stand up and help defend them from scurrilous and politically motivated attacks that have no basis in the source selection criteria for our next tanker.

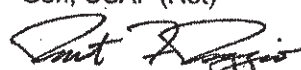

Michael E. Ryan
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Charles A. Horner
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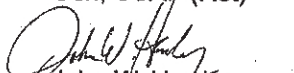

Gregory S. Martin
Gen, USAF (Ret)

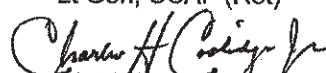

Ronald W. Yates
Gen, USAF (Ret)


Richard E. Hawley
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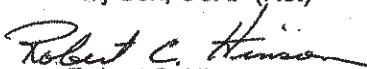

Robert F. Raggio
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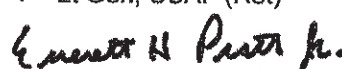

Thomas McInerney
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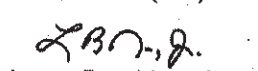

John W. Hawley
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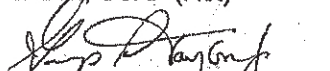

Charles H. Cookidge, Jr.
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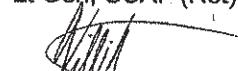

Walter Kross
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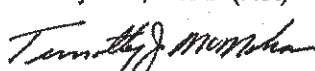

William Welser III
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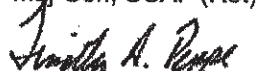

Silas R. Johnson, Jr.
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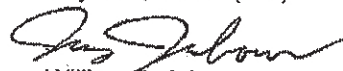

John D. Becker
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Timothy A. Peppe
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