

Excerpt from Press Briefing with Pentagon Press Secretary Geoff Morrell discussing News Reports of a Potential Delay in the KC-X Tanker Program, March 11, 2009

Q What -- on the aerial-tanker question, where is the program today? And has the White House formally requested the Pentagon consider delaying the tanker (contest ?) by five years?

MR. MORRELL: I'm not going to get into, Tony, what's been requested of us.

I will tell you this, that there -- I mean, I've seen these reports out there that there were some suggestions made, from OMB, with regards to options that we would look at in the budget process.

I think it's fair to say that this is -- there's nothing new or different about that, that they provide options -- they provide suggestions, as do a number of people -- but they should not be confused with a directive of any kind, and that decisions about all these programs, as we've said a number of times, will be made in the context of the budget as a whole.

That is still very much -- we are still very much in the midst of that process. I can assure you that no decisions have been made, about any one of the programs that are under review, and that if you hear contrary, you're hearing false information. The secretary, as he said, is going to wait till the very end to make these very consequential decisions.

Q You're implying that the tanker could be delayed.

MR. MORRELL: I'm not implying anything. I'm recognizing the fact that there have been suggestions, options, advice given, and that it should not be confused with a directive, and that we are in the midst of this budget process. And the secretary is going to make his decisions based upon what is in the best interest of our nation's security.

He will make recommendations to the president according to that fundamental tenet of this process. And ultimately it's up to the president and the Congress to decide if they want to adhere to his advice.

Q Is there still -- does this building still see buying new tankers as a priority?

MR. MORRELL: Tony, all these -- every program imaginable is subjected to this very, very harsh scrutiny that is under way right now, as a part of the budget process. I wouldn't distinguish one from another.