

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

July 29, 2019

The Honorable Matthew Donovan  
Acting Secretary of the Air Force  
1670 Air Force Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20330-1670

Dear Acting Secretary Donovan,

In the seven plus decades since its founding, the United States Air Force has been one of the most versatile and flexible elements of our national security. Every day, our Air Force executes combat sorties in the deserts of the Middle East, conducts intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance patrols to provide critical information to national security officials, and flies the most advanced aircraft anywhere in the world.

Our national security capacity is directly tied to the depth of our Joint Force, including National Guard and Reserve elements. Flexibility to respond to the full suite of national security challenges requires strong cooperation between the Active Duty, Reserves, and Air National Guard to ensure the right assets are best placed to ensure Air Force readiness. For this reason, we strongly encourage you to increase the number of KC-135 Stratotankers assigned to the 161<sup>st</sup> Air Refueling Wing (ARW) and take full advantage of the City of Phoenix's offer to double the size of Goldwater Air National Guard Base (ANGB) by considering additional force structure appropriate at a larger, more capable Goldwater ANGB in the near future.

As representatives from Arizona, we are proud that our state is home to premier installations for combat air power. These include the 56<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing's F-35 Joint Strike Fighter training mission at Luke Air Force Base (AFB), the 355<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing's A-10 Warthogs at Davis-Monthan AFB, and the 162<sup>nd</sup> Wing's F-16 Fighting Falcon training mission at Morris ANGB. The leaders of each of these installations have recognized that availability of air refueling is a key element in the effort to train the best pilots in the world and that additional refueling aircraft would be "a mission readiness multiplier" that allows pilots to be sent to combat "more prepared, more ready, and more lethal."

As you know, the 161<sup>st</sup> ARW currently has the highest demand for in air refueling of any tanker Wing in the Air Force, with an average of 32 aircraft within a 30-minute flight, about 20 more average aircraft than the next closest Wing. Arizona is at the center of the largest area of unmet air refueling demand – demand that will soon grow. Scores of additional aircraft are slotted for delivery at Luke AFB, Davis-Monthan AFB, Morris ANGB, and Marine Corps Air Station Yuma. This coming increase of in-state aircraft does not include out-of-state units that use Barry M. Goldwater Range Complex for their essential training needs, including live-fire missions.

In the near term, the 161<sup>st</sup> ARW must be the prime candidate to host additional KC-135 aircraft. In addition to the increasing demand, the 161<sup>st</sup> ARW has the infrastructure and manning to support additional assets. Flight crews and ramp space are in place to meet current demand. All that is missing is aircraft. The delivery of additional assets to the 161<sup>st</sup> ARW would have immediate benefits across the Air Force enterprise including Air Education and Training Command, Air Mobility Command, and Air Combat Command.

The security of our nation depends on the combat readiness of our Air Force. We are proud of the support our state has demonstrated to this national security mission via the City of Phoenix's airport expansion plans, and we strongly support basing decisions that ensure the Air Force is capable of meeting Defense Department requirements. The 161<sup>st</sup> ARW is an important piece of that strategy, and its advantageous location and opportunities for expansion in a large and growing area should not be overlooked.

We respectfully request you provide our respective offices with a briefing outlining how the Air Force plans to address unmet and future air refueling demand for units across the western United States, focusing on Air Force and Joint Force assets making use of the Barry M. Goldwater Range complex, out-of-state use of Arizona refueling facilities, and how an expanded Goldwater ANGB would be best utilized to support our National Defense Strategy.

Sincerely,



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Kyrsten Sinema  
United States Senator




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Martha McSally  
United States Senator



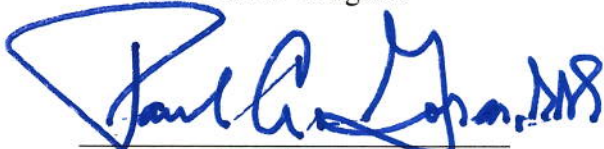
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Andy Biggs  
Member of Congress



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Ruben Gallego  
Member of Congress



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Paul Gosar  
Member of Congress



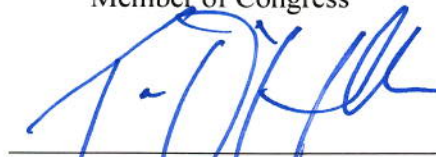
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Ann Kirkpatrick  
Member of Congress



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Debbie Lesko  
Member of Congress



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Tom O'Halleran  
Member of Congress



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David Schweikert  
Member of Congress



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Greg Stanton  
Member of Congress