

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 17, 2024

Frank Kendall
Secretary of the Air Force
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330-1670

Dear Secretary Kendall:

Thank you for beginning the Main Operating Base (MOB) 7 evaluation and selection process for the Air National Guard (ANG) KC-135 recapitalization to KC-46A. As you continue to evaluate locations against the basing criteria, we write to express our strong support for the Sumpter Smith Air National Guard Base, host of the 117th Air Refueling Wing (ARW), in Birmingham, Alabama based on the many benefits its selection would provide to the Air Force and our national security.

First, the selection of Sumpter Smith would result in cost savings for the Air Force. Sumpter Smith ANG's existing hangars, ramp, underground refueling systems, base infrastructure, and manpower are prepared to support the KC-46A today with nominal investment or construction.

Additionally, Birmingham-Shuttlesworth International Airport is home to a 12,000-foot runway, which enables the 117th ARW's aircraft to launch with a full fuel capacity. This significantly outpaces the 11,250-foot average runway length for refueling wings in the continental United States. The full fuel load results in more fighter jets being refueled within a greater radius and over a longer flight time. As we see threats increasing throughout the world, we will need as much fuel capability in our tankers as possible.

Alabama's climate is uniquely suited to rapid, dependable, and consistent launch, making Sumpter Smith an ideal choice by Air Force combat wings. Geographically, Sumpter Smith's homeland defense radius can support Canada to the North, Cuba to the South, and nearly all of Texas to the west. It is the only ANG base that covers this radius of our homeland.

The 117th ARW has a long history of performance. It was organized in 1917 and has supported missions from the Pacific Theater in the 1940s through its current deployments to Indo-Pacific Command and Central Command regions, as well as training exercises with the Romanian Army Engineer Battalion.

Importantly, the 117th is good at what it does. It was the first and only Air National Guard wing to win the U.S. Strategic Command's Omaha Trophy, beating out all active-duty tanker wings, demonstrating it is the best strategic aircraft wing in the nuclear enterprise.

With approximately 3,217 personnel and families living off base in the community, Sumpter Smith is a fixture in our community and receives wide community support in return. It has an eager recruiting pool that keeps the wing at an impressive 104% manning. Additionally, Sumpter Smith has an estimated economic impact of \$119 million in the Birmingham region, and it is greatly supported by the state and local government and the surrounding community.

As we face increasing threats globally, it is imperative that we have the most prepared and ready force. That continues with the selection of the Sumpter Smith ANG for the recapitalization to KC-46A. We greatly appreciate your commitment to this process and your consideration of Sumpter Smith.

Sincerely,



Terri A. Sewell
Member of Congress



Mike Rogers
Member of Congress



Robert B. Aderholt
Member of Congress



Dale W. Strong
Member of Congress



Barry Moore
Member of Congress



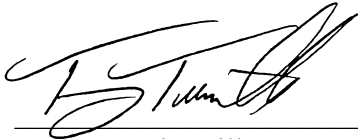
Jerry L. Carl
Member of Congress



Gary J. Palmer
Member of Congress



Katie Boyd Britt
United States Senator



Tommy Tuberville
United States Senator