

## United States Senate

October 29, 2015

The Honorable Deborah L. James  
Secretary of the Air Force  
1670 Air Force Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20330-1670

Dear Secretary James:

In light of today's KC-46A basing decision, I am writing to invite you to visit the 434<sup>th</sup> Air Refueling Wing (ARW) at Grissom Air Reserve Base (ARB) in the coming year.

While I am disappointed that Grissom ARB was not selected as the Air Force's preferred location for the third KC-46A Main Operating Base (MOB 3) in today's decision, I appreciate your assessment that the 434<sup>th</sup> ARW was among the top candidates for this mission nationwide. As you have noted in our past conversations, Grissom's strong performance as a finalist in this round bodes well for the future.

In 2011, the Air Force contracted with Boeing to acquire 179 KC-46A refueling tankers to recapitalize the aging tanker fleet. This remains a top Air Force acquisition priority, and there will be additional KC-46A basing actions in the coming years. As you are the deciding authority on these basing actions, I believe it would be of significant value for you visit Grissom ARB in person, given the likelihood that its strategic location, ample infrastructure, and outstanding Airmen will make it a top candidate again in future KC-46A basing rounds.

The air refueling mission is critical to our nation's defense, and Grissom ARB is home to one of the Air Force's best refueling wings. With proximity to refueling tracks and airspace availability, Grissom ARB's strategic location allows for superior mission effectiveness. The base has ample capacity to support additional aircraft, including hangar, runway and ramp space. Situated in a low-cost area with minimal environmental concerns, any infrastructure needs can be easily accommodated. What truly sets Grissom ARB apart, however, are the men and women of the 434<sup>th</sup> ARW whose experience, expertise, and commitment to excellence poise the base for a smooth transition to the KC-46A mission, given the opportunity.

I appreciate your personal engagement throughout the assessment process for this basing decision, and I look forward to maintaining a strong partnership as the Air Force continues to meet our national security needs in an exceedingly difficult budget environment. In these difficult times, I hope you will continue looking to the Air Force's Reserve Component as a valuable tool to achieve savings while maintaining mission effectiveness across the Total Air Force. The 434<sup>th</sup> ARW is a prime example of how valuable a capability we have in the Air Force Reserve.

Thank you for your service and leadership. I look forward to hosting you at Grissom ARB in the coming months.

Sincerely,



Joe Donnelly  
United States Senator