

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4704

March 22, 2004

The Honorable Donald Rumsfeld
Secretary
Department of Defense
The Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20330

Dear Secretary Rumsfeld:

I am deeply concerned about recent comments by Secretary James Roche regarding re-opening competition to supply aerial refueling tankers to the US Air Force.

The Air Force has already conducted a careful and open competition to build the required tankers. As Secretary Roche outlined in his testimony to the Senate Commerce Committee in September, Boeing won that competition based on the superiority of its design, technology, delivery schedule, and overall risk reduction plan. Although Airbus demanded that the General Accounting Office review that decision, the review was dismissed almost immediately as lacking merit. Rather than honorably accept the competition's outcome, Airbus has resorted to a campaign of distortion and half-truths in an effort to kill the proposed Air Force tanker lease program.

I have fully supported thorough reviews of all aspects of this program, and will continue to support constructive modifications based on recommendations from those reviews. However, I will not tolerate Airbus's attempts to undermine the program itself by forcing the government to revisit careful determinations about specific issues that have already been made, reviewed, re-reviewed, and validated by responsible government entities. The outcome of the initial tanker competition is one such issue that has been clearly and conclusively settled.

Airbus's corporate behavior on this matter cannot be tolerated by the US government. Its actions are further delaying our ability to meet a key military requirement, and if successful, will result in the outsourcing of thousands of American manufacturing jobs to a foreign corporation that is unfairly subsidized by European governments and that unfairly competes with the only US aircraft manufacturer. Such an outcome represents ill-conceived public policy, and will also unfairly punish the nearly 30,000 workers who will be employed should the Air Force tanker lease program proceed with a domestic manufacturer, as currently planned.

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