



18 November 2020

Alaska Civilian Armed Services Team (ACAST)

Memorandum of Support for Replacing Alaska Air National Guard KC-135s Stratotanker Air Refueling Aircraft at Eielson AFB Alaska with KC46 Pegasus Air Refueling Aircraft

Greetings from the Alaska Civilian Armed Services Team (ACAST). ACAST is a volunteer/pro-bono advisory activity, and participants serve as appointed by the Governor of the State of Alaska. ACAST was established by State of Alaska Administrative Order 291, under State of Alaska Governor Bill Walker. The Purpose and Duties of ACAST is to “provide strategic and actionable recommendations to the Governor in the form of task-specific briefings and reports informed by strategic planning documents, and recommend appropriate strategies for direct, ongoing civil-military collaboration, to:

1. Maintain and increase Alaska’s military capacity and capability in both the active component and guard and reserve forces; and
2. Acquire future missions, infrastructure, and recurring military exercises in Alaska for military forces based inside and outside of the state.”¹²

As a cross-functional and multidiscipline team of leaders, ACAST respectfully advocates the U.S. Air Force to replace the existing KC135 “Stratotanker” Air Refueling aircraft at the 168th Air Refueling Wing, Alaska Air National Guard Eielson AFB, Alaska with KC-46 “Pegasus” Air Refueling aircraft.

In light of rising Great Power Competition in the Arctic, U.S. force posture in Alaska is ever more critical to preserve and defend U.S. national interests, which includes the U.S. Homeland.

The Russian Federation military continues to test U.S. and Canadian resolve in approaching U.S. and Canadian Air Defense Identification Zones (ADIZ) via Long Range Aviation conducted by Russian strategic (such as the Tupolev Tu-95 “Bear”) bomber aircraft.

The U.S. Air Force 5th Generation F-22 aircraft assigned to 11th Air Force and under command of the Alaska NORAD Region of the Canada-U.S. North American Aerospace Defense Command continue to respond to these tests, are critically reliant on Eisenhower era (1950s) KC-135 aircraft assigned to the Alaska Air National Guard. The need to upgrade these aircraft to longer range and modern KC-46 “Pegasus” air refueling aircraft to provide 11th Air Force fighters extended range to intercept these and other threats to the homeland to better protect U.S. citizens who call Alaska home, is overdue.

The State of Alaska ACAST understand the competition for allocating KC-46 aircraft in the Pacific region is keen. However, Alaska is geographically aligned to simultaneously close to Europe (via polar routes) and the Asia Pacific region. The understood alternatives to stationing KC-46 aircraft in the Pacific region are Hickam AFB Hawaii and Anderson AFB Guam. Based on the benefits of the

¹ <https://gov.alaska.gov/admin-orders/administrative-order-no-291/>

² ACAST is Co-chaired by Mr. Bill Popp, President and Chief Executive Officer of Anchorage Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) private nonprofit corporation (IRS code 501(c)(6)), operating since 1987 in Anchorage Alaska. Fellow Co-chair is Randy “Church” Kee, Maj Gen, USAF (Ret), Executive Director of the Arctic Domain Awareness Center at the University of Alaska Anchorage.



high latitudes (and corresponding shorter distances in great circle navigation, stationing KC-46 at Eielson AFB provides greater flexibility to support challenges across eastern Asia more readily than KC-46 aircraft stationed at Hickam AFB Hawaii. Meanwhile, stationing KC-46 aircraft at Anderson AFB Guam separates air refueling aircraft from any nearby co-located permanently stationed fighter aircraft...necessitating staging/deploying the aircraft to an alternate location to provide needed escort of the range limited fighters over the vast distances of the Pacific.

In sum, stationing KC-46 aircraft at Eielson AFB in lieu of either Hickam AFB Hawaii or Anderson AFB Guam provides the U.S. Air Force the ability to “swing” between theaters...supporting U.S. Northern Command & NORAD and U.S. Indo-Pacific Command...while providing “at the ready” air refueling to support the “no-fail” mission of NORAD and Alaska NORAD region.

In order to best support America’s Air Force in the high latitudes and the Indo Pacific region, and protect the homeland, locating KC-46 Pegasus aircraft in Alaska serves as a deter and dissuade role for America’s potential adversaries, who will see such a basing decision well aligned to American resolve to secure and defend the nations’ interests in way that best leverages geography and the enabling capability of this remarkable new weapon system.

Respectfully presented.



RANDY KEE, Maj Gen, USAF (Ret)
ACAST Co-Chair
Executive Director,
Arctic Domain Awareness Center
University of Alaska



BILL POPP
ACAST Co-Chair
President and CEO
Anchorage Economic Development
Corporation

