

The Honorable Frank Kendall II
Secretary of the Air Force
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington DC 20330-1670

December 20, 2023

Dear Secretary Kendall,

We write to follow up on the Air Force's letter from July 16, 2021 identifying Selfridge Air National Guard Base as an indispensable source of Air Force refueling capacity and as the location for a future tanker aircraft. The Michigan Congressional Delegation expresses our strong belief that Selfridge is the ideal location for a squadron of KC-46A refueling tankers and a recapitalization of the A-10 squadron into an advanced fighter. With this in mind, we urge the Air Force to base a squadron of twelve KC-46s at Selfridge in addition to a future replacement fighter mission due to its strong operational track record, exceptional personnel, and strategic location.

At the heart Selfridge is the 127th Wing of the Michigan Air National Guard, comprised of the 171st Air Refueling Squadron and the 107th Fighter Squadron. The 171st Air Refueling Squadron has expertly operated eight KC-135T Stratotankers for the past 15 years including worldwide deployments to support operations in the Indo-Pacific and Middle East. The 107th Fighter Squadron currently operates A-10 fighters and is home to many of the Air Force's most experienced pilots including five Air Force Weapons School graduates. The 171st and 107th Squadron's valuable experiences provide a value add for Air Mobility and Air Combat Commands at a fraction of the cost of active-duty forces. Losing the 107th Squadron's talented pilots and maintainers, geographic advantages, and fighter experience is unacceptable for the Michigan delegation and would be a loss to the Total Force.

With this in mind, we remain committed to fighting for a future replacement fighter mission at Selfridge. Unfortunately, Michigan has already lost two F-16 squadrons in 1992 and in 2009. After losing its F-16s, in 2009 Selfridge transitioned to A-10s which were relocated from Battle Creek. The A-10s scheduled retirement in Fiscal Year 2027 means it will lose its last fighter mission. We urge the Air Force to continue working with the Michigan Congressional Delegation to find a future fighter mission to ensure Selfridge can build upon its 100 years of fighter experience and more than 18 successful combat deployments.

In your recent visit, you witnessed firsthand this valuable skillset and the 127th Wing's talented and experienced pilots, crews, and maintainers. The base's proximity to a major airline hub at Detroit Metro/Wayne County Airport has allowed the 127th Wing to recruit and retain the highest quality pilots and maintenance personnel for their tanker and fighter missions. This

location provides unique opportunities for citizen airmen and a strong work-life balance leading to a 95% retention rate and continued end-strength gains.

Selfridge has unmatched access to airspace and training ranges and is home to robust and operationally relevant readiness exercises. The Michigan National Guard annually hosts Operation Northern Strike, the largest joint all-domain, live-fire, reserve component readiness exercise in the continental United States. The Michigan Guard also hosts the highly successful “Winter Strike” exercise to test units' operational readiness in arctic conditions. Finally, Michigan is home to National All-Domain Warfighting Center, the largest contiguous joint service range/airspace complex east of the Mississippi River, providing tremendous training and operational readiness opportunities.

We are encouraged by the Air Force’s letter on July 16, 2021, outlining the Air Force’s intent to replace Selfridge’s current KC135 tankers with KC-46 tankers. We understand that as part of the KC-46 beddown, the Air Force must undergo a rigorous Strategic Basing Process. As the Air Force makes basing decisions including Selfridge, we respectfully request a robust and detailed timeline of all KC-46 basing decisions including current planned beddowns, known future KC-46 basing actions, and the number of KC-46s on contract without basing decisions.

In addition to providing these timelines, we respectfully request responses to the following questions:

1. What are the decision timelines associated with KC-46 basing plans?
2. What is the expected basing decision timeline for the KC-46s at Selfridge?
3. How is the Air Force preparing for this potential KC-46 transition for Selfridge?
4. What Air Force budgetary actions must be made to facilitate this KC-46 transition for Selfridge?
5. What personnel and economic impacts will the replacement KC-46s have on the 171st Squadron and on Selfridge?
6. The Air Force is procuring F-35As and F-15EXs to distribute across the Total Force. Would you please state which obstacles remain that prevent Selfridge from being included in the Air Force recapitalization plan for the A-10 with advice for how these shortcomings may be remedied?

We know Selfridge’s advantages, its exceptional operational track record, and the 127th Wing’s outstanding personnel make Selfridge an ideal candidate for a squadron of KC-46s and a future fighter mission. Our delegation and state are totally dedicated to fighting for Selfridge with Governor Whitmer’s proposed \$100 million investment in base and runway improvements a tangible example of this commitment. We look forward to working closely with you and your office to ensure Michigan continues to be a value add to the Total Force.

Sincerely,

Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator

Gretchen Whitmer
Governor of Michigan

Gary C. Peters
United States Senator

John James
Member of Congress

Elissa Slotkin
Member of Congress

Bill Huizenga
Member of Congress

Tim Walberg
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Daniel T. Kildee
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Debbie Dingell
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Jack Bergman
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Haley M. Stevens
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Lisa C. McClain
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Hillary J. Scholten
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Shri Thanedar
Member of Congress